



In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Opening Remarks

to the

**INTERCOUNTRY WORKSHOP ON SURVEILLANCE OF VACCINE PREVENTABLE
DISEASES AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF NATIONAL
IMMUNIZATION PROGRAMMES**

Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, 4-6 December 2010

Dear Colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this Intercountry Workshop on Surveillance of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases and Monitoring and Evaluation of National Immunization Programmes. I would like to welcome and thank our colleagues from WHO headquarters in Geneva, WHO country offices and UNICEF country offices. I would like also to express my deep thanks and great appreciation to our colleagues from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta and Network for Education and Support in Immunisation for their participation in this workshop and for their unlimited support and collaboration. A special word of welcome is due to the national EPI managers, data managers and surveillance focal points who are giving this part of EPI the importance it deserves.

Dear Colleagues,

Immunization programmes are witnessing unprecedented expansion in all countries, in order to meet the global, regional and national targets of control, elimination and eradication, to introduce new childhood vaccines, and to expand immunization programmes beyond infancy. Systematic monitoring and evaluation of performance and impact of the immunization programmes are crucial to provide the data necessary for priority-setting, decision-making, planning, resource mobilization and allocation. They are also vital for measuring success in

implementing the set strategies, identifying gaps and documenting progress towards achieving the targets.

Recognizing the importance of availability of accurate information to guide planning, implementation and evaluation of all EPI activities, the Global Immunization Vision and Strategy (GIVS) addresses surveillance as one of the strategic areas for achieving the GIVS goals. In addition, WHO has developed the global framework for surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases and monitoring EPI activities, in order to streamline global efforts to strengthen immunization programmes. In addition to the major progress in AFP surveillance, WHO is continuously strengthening measles case-based surveillance in all countries through providing technical expertise, laboratory supplies and networking facilities. The Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has established regional networks for documenting the burden of those diseases that are targeted by the new vaccines, including surveillance networks for rotavirus, and invasive bacterial diseases, namely bacterial meningitis, bacterial pneumonia and sepsis.

I acknowledge with appreciation the progress made by some of our countries in strengthening surveillance systems of vaccine-preventable diseases, as well as monitoring and evaluation of EPI. Nevertheless, the development of these systems has not yet attained a level at which their efficiency is maximized. Apart from AFP and measles surveillance and surveillance of diseases preventable by new vaccines in some countries, existing surveillance activities for most vaccine-preventable diseases have major limitations. These stem, mainly, from inadequate epidemiological and laboratory capacity, duplication of surveillance activities, weak connection between surveillance and control programmes, and overall inadequate attention to surveillance of these diseases. Similarly, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of routine immunization activities have not yet received the attention they deserve in several countries. The high number of cases of measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases, and the outbreaks occurring in several countries that nevertheless report high routine and campaign vaccination coverage, underline programmatic weaknesses which hitherto were not identified precisely because of inadequate surveillance, monitoring and evaluation activities.

Dear Colleagues,

There is a crucial need to continuously monitor EPI activities, using a strong supervision and monitoring system supported by suitable indicators. It is essential to strengthen and expand measles case-based and laboratory-based surveillance in order to meet measles elimination validation standards. It is important to strengthen surveillance of diphtheria, pertussis, mumps and other vaccine-preventable diseases in order to guide disease control activities and to help in reviewing the immunization schedule based on evidence. It is also equally important to link the surveillance data to the routine vaccination programme, in order to evaluate programme performance, identify gaps and rectify programmatic weaknesses.

As you can see from the agenda, the intention is to discuss the practical issues related to improving surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases and monitoring and evaluation of immunization programmes. This will foster the generating of more reliable data and maximization of the use of these data to improve EPI performance and to monitor the impact of vaccination on disease occurrence. During the course of the workshop, you will also be briefed on the tools available for monitoring, evaluation and validation of EPI data, as well as modules available for data management.

I sincerely hope that this workshop will contribute to improved surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases and monitoring and evaluation of routine immunization activities in your countries. I thank you all for attending this workshop and I wish you all a fruitful workshop and a pleasant stay in Sharm El Sheikh.