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Ethiopia Signed on Historic Ball “Kick Polio out of Africa”



22 March 2010, Addis Ababa – A soccer ball, the mascot of the “Kick Polio out of Africa”, has been signed by H.E. Ato Girma Woldegiorgis, President of the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic, and Partners in a colorful ceremony that took place at the Ghion Hotel. In Ethiopia, the campaign was organized by the Rotary International, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Ministry of Health, WHO, the CDC and Unicef, and was launched in the presence of H.E the President, Diplomats, Dignitaries, Polio Victims and families, Partners, Rotarians, and invited guests.

Ato Nahusenay Araya, Past District Governor of Rotary, publicly expressed His Excellency Ato Grima’s dedication, commitment as well as support to Rotary and Rotarians – the engine behind this kick polio campaign – in their contribution to eradicate polio from the face of the world. “This campaign is of vital importance for [Rotarians] to remain focused to raise the balance of the 200 million dollars needed to match 355 million dollars challenging grants given by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for Global Polio Eradication Initiative Fund,” Ato Nahusenay explained the rationale behind the kick polio campaign.

On the Occasion, H.E. Ato Girma Woldegiorgis appreciated all polio eradication initiative partners and allies for taking focused attention on the last inch

of ending polio. “Kick Polio out of Africa campaign is a ceremony which all of us taking part, but our common celebration of ending polio is not far” he stressed. H.E. Ato Girma Woldegiorgis not only thanked the ministry and partners for the commendable accomplishment so far, but showed his personal commitment by giving his blessings as saying “we haven’t finished the polio eradication yet, but we are on the verge of the same. Keep it up!”

Having signed on the Kick Polio out of Africa ball, H.E. Ato Girma Woldegiorgis passed the historic ball to Dr. Kebede Worku, State Minister of the Ethiopian Ministry of Health, who handed it out to the partners. While doing so Dr. Kebede appreciated Partners support and appealed to them to keep funding such initiative.





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Dr. Fatoumata Nafo-Traoré, WHO Representative, spoke on behalf of the partners that the polio victims weren't reached with vaccine on time. Partners will continue working hand in hand with the government to eradicate polio. "It is important to note that although we have some polio victims with us here, the polio eradication initiative has saved more than 5 million children who would have been paralyzed by polio, since the initiative was launch. This is a very great achievement and we cannot fail now that we are very close to finishing the job as revealed by the recent statistics", Dr. Nafo-Traoré underscored.

The Kick Polio out of Africa ball kicked off its journey in South Africa on 23 February 2010 travelling through 22 polio affected countries in Africa as part of the campaign to raise awareness about the disease. At the end of the occasion in Ethiopia the historic ball was passed to Sudan, its next stop, to continue

its journey before finally going to Canada in June for Rotary International's annual convention.

On the occasion it was noted that Ethiopia is about to mark two years of being polio free next month. "The progress is mostly attributed to the strong political leadership, just like we are observing at this function today, and also community ownership" Dr. Nafo-Traoré reiterated.

It is to be recalled that the polio eradication initiative was launched in 1988. Ever since there has been a decline of polio cases from more than 350,000 cases



per year in 126 countries to 1,606 cases in 2009 with only 4 endemic countries: Nigeria, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. Since the beginning of 2010 our continent, Africa has confirmed nine polio cases.

