



RI President Mark Maloney's speech at an 'End Polio Now' event at the House of Commons

“We owe it to the children of the world to finish the job” - that was the message of Rotary President, Mark Maloney, speaking at an End Polio Now event at the Palace of Westminster.

The Rotary International chief praised the role of the U.K. Government who have funded the Global Polio Eradication Initiative to the tune of \$1.6 billion.

Minister of State for the Commonwealth and South Asia, Lord Ahmad, passed on the thanks of Prime Minister, Boris Johnson to the “incredible and courageous Rotary volunteers who have been on the front line in the fight against polio”.

Pakistan remains one of the last two strongholds of the polio virus - the other is Afghanistan.

But Michel Zaffran, Director of Polio Eradication with the World Health Organisation, revealed that with a new polio vaccine being made available this summer, he believed the world now had the tools to finish the job.

Though he acknowledged that in some parts of Pakistan, religious leaders were using polio and the vaccinations as political leverage. “They are using polio as a protest,” added Michel.

Aziz Memon, National Chair of the Pakistan PolioPlus Committee and a Trustee of The Rotary Foundation, disclosed that 40 million children have recently been vaccinated across Pakistan in two swathes of intense polio immunisations

However, he pointed out that social media remains one of the greatest challenges in Pakistan’s bid to become polio free, with the spread of malicious, anti-polio propaganda.

Tragically, 192 polio vaccinators have been killed in Pakistan by fundamentalist gunmen in recent years - 75% of them women - the latest victims last week were aged 23 and 27-years-old.

Aziz said: “We have a challenge to overcome. We hope that by July 2020 we should be able to stop the transmission of the outbreak from last year.

“We then want to move forward so that, by 2023, we can fulfil the promise we made to the children of the world that they should live in a polio-free environment.”