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Date: 04 September 2017

Dr David Sergeenko
Minister of Labour, Health and Social Affairs
Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs
144, Ak. Tsereteli Ave.
0119 Tbilisi
Georgia

Our reference:
Notre référence:
Unser Zeichen:
См. наш номер:

Your reference:
Votre référence:
Ihr Zeichen:
На Ваш номер:

Dear Sir,

Status of measles and rubella elimination in Georgia, 2016

I have the honour of providing you with an update on the status of measles and rubella elimination in your country from the European Regional Verification Commission for Measles and Rubella Elimination (RVC). At its sixth meeting, held on 15–17 June 2017 in Bucharest, Romania, the RVC reviewed the annual status updates (ASUs) and related documentation for 2016 that had been provided by national verification committees (NVCs) to determine whether interruption of endemic measles and/or rubella virus transmission had been achieved at the country level and, in view of that, to assess progress towards measles and rubella elimination in the WHO European Region.

The RVC concluded that, as of the end of 2016, 42 (79%) of the 53 WHO Member States in the European Region had interrupted endemic measles transmission. Of these, 33 Member States (62%) provided evidence to demonstrate the elimination of endemic transmission of measles for a period of at least 36 consecutive months. In addition, endemic rubella transmission had been interrupted in 37 Member States (70%), of which 33 (62%) provided evidence to demonstrate the elimination of endemic transmission for at least 36 consecutive months. Thirty-one Member States (58%) provided evidence of the elimination of both measles and rubella for at least 36 consecutive months. The RVC also concluded that it considered 9 Member States (17%) as still endemic for measles transmission, while 14 (26%) remained endemic for rubella transmission. Nine Member States (17%) were considered as still endemic for both measles and rubella.

On the basis of the information provided by the NVC, the RVC concluded that endemic transmission of measles and rubella was ongoing in Georgia in 2016. The RVC recognizes the efforts that have been made towards measles and rubella elimination. At the same time, the RVC urges the national health authorities to consider further efforts to achieve and maintain high vaccination coverage with both doses of measles-rubella-containing vaccines at all administrative levels through routine and supplemental immunization activities. The RVC also urges efforts to increase the rate of viral detection for rubella cases. Please find further details in the documents enclosed with this letter.

I respectfully voice my concern over the issues and challenges noted by the RVC in its conclusion. While urging that all necessary steps be taken to ensure that the RVC's recommendations and requests are fully implemented, I also pledge the political and technical support of the Regional Office in

achieving measles and rubella elimination in Georgia. The technical teams are ready to provide any assistance you may require.

We have to guard our steady but hard-earned progress towards measles and rubella elimination over the past years. Sustained high immunization coverage and population immunity, high-quality surveillance with timely detection and response to cases and outbreaks, and a well-informed population that demands immunization as a right and responsibility are preconditions for disease elimination and its verification, and indicators of commitment to the elimination goal.

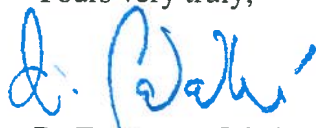
The status of measles and rubella interruption at the national level will be reviewed annually. Based on the regional verification framework, verification of measles and/or rubella elimination for the Region will be possible only when all 53 Member States have documented that endemic measles and/or rubella transmission has been interrupted for at least 36 consecutive months.

The WHO Regional Office for Europe plans to endorse and make public the report of the RVC's Sixth meeting by 10 September 2017. In that regard, I kindly request that you submit any comments that you may have to the Secretariat by 08 September 2017.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr Patrick O'Connor (oconnorp@who.int) or one of the other technical officers in the vaccine-preventable diseases and immunization programme (eurvc@who.int).

I send you my very best wishes and strong assurance of WHO's continuing dedication to measles and rubella elimination.

Yours very truly,



Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab
Regional Director

Encls:

Annex 1: Status of measles and rubella elimination in all Member States in 2016

Annex 2: Sixth meeting of the European Regional Verification Commission for Measles and Rubella Elimination, 15–17 June 2017, Bucharest, Romania: Conclusions and recommendations

Annex 3: Status of measles and rubella elimination in Georgia in 2016, with RVC comments

Copy for information to:

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