**MEDIA UPDATE: 13 August 2018**

**Polio case confirmed in Eastern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea**

*Risk of further spread of polio within the country is high*

13 August 2018, PORT MORESBY – A new polio case was reported today by the National Department of Health of Papua New Guinea (NDOH) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in a 22-month old girl from Eastern Highlands Province. This is the fourth case in the country, following confirmation of two cases from Morobe Province in June and July 2018 and a case from Enga in early August.

The confirmation was made on Friday, 10 August 2018 by the Victorian Infectious Disease Reference Laboratory—a WHO Collaborating Centre in Australia. The girl had an onset of paralysis on 8 July. Based on initial laboratory results, this case is genetically linked to the current outbreak in the country.

The NDOH has enhanced surveillance system and continuously receives reports of suspected acute flaccid paralysis. To date, there are 65 suspected cases being investigated.

The identification of the case highlights the risk of polio in children under 5 years of age. Children can be protected from polio only with vaccination. Given substantial vaccination coverage gaps across the country, the risk of further spread of polio within the country continues to be classified as high.

The NDOH calls on parents to bring every child under 5 years of age to the nearest health center or vaccination point for polio drops during the next round of the polio campaign in August on the following schedules:

- 20 August - 2 September 2018: Morobe, Madang and Eastern Highlands provinces
- 27 August - 9 September 2018: Enga, Chimbu, Southern Highlands, Western Highlands, Jiwaka and Hela
- September and October 2018: nationwide polio vaccination campaign

Children will need to receive multiple doses of oral polio vaccine, irrespective of previous immunization status. The vaccine is safe, free and has a unique ability to stop person-to-person spread of the virus.

**Media Contacts**

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