

**Mark Suzman**  
**World Health Summit Remarks**  
**Event Date: October 16, 2022**

Thank you. It's an honor to be here at this pivotal moment for global health.

The deadline that UN member states set to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals is just eight years away. But we are on track to achieve almost *none* of them.

A few years ago, we were telling a different story. In the first two decades of the 21st century, the world made incredible progress against infectious diseases, child mortality, and extreme poverty. But the COVID-19 pandemic set this back.

So, now is the time to increase support for the innovations and partnerships that will dramatically accelerate the pace of progress—because global goals aren't an academic exercise. Beneath the metrics are the stories of billions of people. And when the numbers move in the right direction, so does the quality of people's lives.

That's why our foundation is dedicated to fighting infectious diseases that disproportionately affect people who already face the greatest challenges.

Take polio. For parents in most countries, it's a distant memory. But for parents in the remote areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan, the last two countries where wild polio remains endemic, the disease remains a constant threat to their children's health.

Of course, it's not just a threat to individual children and families. Polio also stands in the way of creating more equitable, resilient health systems.

Over the last few decades, we've come incredibly close to eradicating polio. Even if you *only* look at what the eradication effort has accomplished with its targeted disease, it's amazing. Cases have been cut by 99.99 percent. Just a few years ago, wild polio cases were down to the single digits—*worldwide*.

That didn't happen by accident. It happened because countries and multilateral partners came together with a shared sense of urgency—and the resources to match.

That global solidarity helped protect millions of children from paralysis. But that's not all it has done for the world.

Polio eradication efforts have played a critical role in strengthening health systems. The same health workers who go door to door to administer polio vaccines also distribute nutritional supplements, mosquito nets to protect against malaria, and other life-saving vaccines.

And the systems that countries like Pakistan and Nigeria have developed to monitor polio—day by day and case by case—have been used to track and respond to other threats like COVID-19.

These are *exactly* the kinds of tools the world needs to confront compounding health threats *and* finish the job on polio. But we won't get there by maintaining the status quo.

Not when catastrophic flooding in Pakistan has ground basic health services to a halt and displaced millions, allowing the virus to regain a foothold across the country when it had been nearly stamped out. Not when new wild polio cases have now appeared in Malawi and Mozambique. Not when strains of the virus have been found in New York, Jerusalem, and London. Until every country eradicates this disease, no country will be totally free from risk.

We always knew the final steps toward polio eradication would be the toughest—but I'm not sure anyone could have envisioned the confluence of global crises that would make it this tough. The question is not *whether* to act—it's *how*.

If we don't *all* step up and meet GPEI's \$4.8 billion goal, polio will spread. That's why today, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is pledging \$1.2 billion to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative.

Alongside partners like the Government of Germany, Rotary International, WHO, the US CDC, Gavi, and UNICEF, we will continue to apply lessons learned from successful vaccination campaigns until we reach a world completely free from polio.

Few people I've met are as committed to that future as Bill Gates, the co-chair of our foundation. Bill has been laser-focused on ending polio for as long as I've known him.

It's my honor to introduce Bill.