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Secretary-General

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UPON RECEIPT OF POLIO CHAMPION AWARD, SECRETARY-GENERAL
DEEMS IT MOVING

INSPIRATION FOR UNITED NATIONS TO PRESS AHEAD TOWARDS POLIO- **FREE WORLD**

Following are UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks on receiving the Polio Champion Award from Rotary International, in Birmingham, United Kingdom, on Sunday, 21 June:

Hello again, Ladies and Gentlemen. I think you just saw me up there on the screen. With all due respect for modern communications technology, I feel better now that I am here in person and have been restored to real life.

I am honoured to receive this Polio Eradication Champion Award from Rotary International. I am also humbled, because you are the true champions of this cause. I am just one of you, and I am deeply honoured. Without your indispensable support, the world never could have come this close to eradicating polio.

I accept this award fully mindful of the legions of heroic individuals who have contributed to this effort.

Earlier today, I spoke about three humanitarian workers who were killed last year in Afghanistan. They were on their way to prepare for a vaccination drive for children when their convoy was ambushed by a suicide bomber.

This honour is for them: Dr. Mamoon Taher Taheri, Dr. Shamsul aq Kakar and Mr. Azizullah Almas. Let us give them a big round of applause, even though they cannot be with us.

Because we have people like them, who sacrificed their lives, and people like you, who sacrifice your time and energy, we are close to eradicating polio.

And this award is for countless others who have risked their lives so that children can grow up free from this paralyzing disease.

For two decades, vaccinators and other polio staff working for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative have faced tremendous risks. They work in hostile areas where they could be attacked or kidnapped. They work through storms, droughts and natural disasters.

The vast majority of them are volunteers, spending their own time and resources to help people. They are all polio champions. I applaud them. As Secretary-General of the United Nations, I have traveled the world, to dangerous places, and I have been humbled by their work.

I thank you for this award, which will serve as a powerful reminder of how much they have done, and as a moving inspiration to the United Nations to press ahead with our efforts so that one day soon, we will live in a polio-free world.

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