



August 22, 2013

His Excellency Ban Ki-moon  
Secretary General  
United Nations  
760 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017

Your Excellency:

We, the undersigned Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD) Special Envoys for the Sabin Vaccine Institute's Global Network for Neglected Tropical Disease program, commend the work of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons and the release of its post-2015 development agenda report on May 30, 2013. In particular, we applaud the inclusion of NTDs in the universal goal for health (Ensure Healthy Lives).

As you may know, poverty reduction and the elimination of NTDs go hand-in-hand. NTDs afflict 1.4 billion people worldwide, including more than 500 million children. They cause blindness, massive swelling in appendages and limbs, severe malnutrition and anemia. They are a leading cause of pregnancy complications among women and are a key source of poverty, reducing school attendance and learning capabilities among children and worker productivity for adults.

The tools to fight NTDs exist, but too often do not reach those who need them most. For a cost of approximately USD 50 cents per person per year, effective treatment for the seven most common NTDs can be administered, making NTD control programs one of the most cost-effective interventions available in global health today. Furthermore, the existing NTD response already exemplifies many elements of a successful collaboration, including donations from pharmaceutical companies of nearly all the required medicines; country-led programs that often utilize existing infrastructures, such as schools, community centers, and volunteers who go door-to-door and village-to-village providing these vital medicines; and, substantial contributions to health system strengthening by extending coverage to those who are most marginalized.

As NTD Special Envoys, we are a part of the effort to scale up global partnerships, under the banner of the London Declaration on NTDs—a unifying effort by 13 pharmaceutical companies, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, development agencies, endemic countries, research organizations, and civil society organizations, to accelerate the implementation of the WHO roadmap for NTDs. Unique aspects of this partnership include the diverse array of participants and the attention placed on endemic countries whose leadership is imperative in forming and driving national NTD control and elimination plans. While several partners have committed to the success of the London Declaration, additional support is needed from across the global community to meet the WHO goals. Opportunities also exist for the inclusion of cross-sectoral development partners such as water and sanitation, child development and food security and nutrition organizations. The control and elimination of NTDs can also contribute to efforts to improve hygiene, overcome malnutrition, and minimize childhood stunting. We should not allow these ancient diseases to continue affecting the most vulnerable in the 21st century and we can give a world free of NTDs to the next generation.

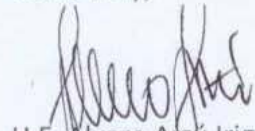
Although the High-Level Panel recommendations and the Report of the Global Thematic Consultation on Health both mention NTDs specifically, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)'s June 2013 report, "An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development" does not. We request that this oversight be corrected as the universal health goals and targets for the post-2015 development agenda moves forward. Particularly, since the SDSN report acknowledges that to achieve health goals, health systems need to be supported by enabling actions in other sectors, such as gender equality, education, improved nutrition, water, sanitation, and hygiene—all areas of development that would directly benefit from integrated NTD control and elimination programs. NTDs are a striking indicator that we have failed so far in moving forward in providing a sustainable development for all.

To end extreme poverty by 2030, a lofty goal recently set by World Bank president Dr. James Kim, we need to expand the growing recognition of the adverse impact that NTDs have on a variety of aspects of development—social, economic, and environmental—and, translate that knowledge into action.

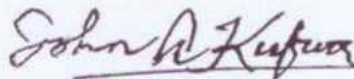
The plain fact is that the control and elimination of NTDs is crucial to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and deserves explicit mention in the final framework of the post-2015 development agenda. We hope that you will agree that by addressing the inequity caused and perpetuated by NTDs, we can successfully move forward to ending poverty for the world's poorest people once and for all, thus allowing them to achieve their full potential.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. We are delighted to be of assistance in this important and timely work.

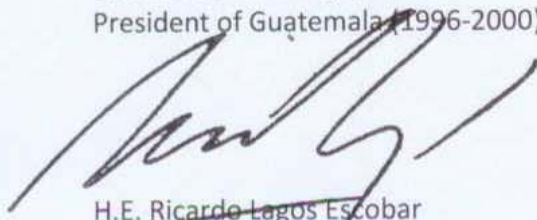
Yours truly,



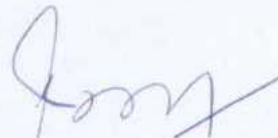
H.E. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen  
President of Guatemala (1996-2000)



H.E. John A. Kufuor  
President of the Republic of Ghana (2001-2009)



H.E. Ricardo Lagos Escobar  
President of Chile (2000-2006)



Dr. Mirta Roses Periago  
Director of the Pan American Health Organization  
(2003 – 2013)

Attachments:

Neglected Tropical Diseases and the Post-2015 Development Agenda Policy Brief  
Annex I: Illustrative Goals and Targets, High Level Panel Report, May 30, 2013 (pp.38-39)