



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

26 June 2020

Dear Special Rapporteurs,

I would like to thank you for your joint letter dated 28 April 2020 on the implementation of the United Nations New Approach to Cholera in Haiti. I thank you also for your work and express my appreciation and gratitude to you and all others who continue to draw much needed attention to this matter.

I welcome your acknowledgment that important progress has been made in recent years in the fight against cholera in Haiti. At the onset of my mandate, I made Haiti, and ending cholera transmission and addressing its devastating impacts in particular, a top priority of the entire United Nations system. Since that time, with the support of my Special Envoy for Haiti, Ms. Josette Sheeran, and a dedicated focus of the United Nations Country Team, we have seen an extraordinary decline in both the number of suspected and confirmed cases of cholera in Haiti. I am heartened to inform you that for 17 consecutive months, there has been zero laboratory confirmed cases of cholera anywhere in Haiti. Sustaining this record for an additional 19 months will result in Haiti being declared cholera-free.

This achievement was the result of a joint and highly innovative plan executed by the Government of Haiti and the United Nations, and championed by dedicated Haitian emergency cholera response teams, fully knowledgeable and attuned to country context and needs. It required investments in water and sanitation, health infrastructure, laboratory testing capacity, epidemiological investigation capacity and vaccinations. This battle against cholera was funded by over US\$705 million in investments, including more than US\$139 million mobilized by the United Nations and its agencies.

Special Rapporteurs

One component of a broader system-wide resource mobilization strategy has been the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF). You correctly noted that approximately US\$20.6 million has been raised through the MPTF. The MPTF, however, is only one of many important funding mechanisms, and accounts for just a fraction of the total investment of the United Nations in cholera control in Haiti. Contrary to the description as a comprehensive “fund-all” mechanism, the MPTF has been strategically used to provide targeted funding to ensure no gaps or disruptions in the efforts to end cholera transmission, and to launch initial investments into the hardest hit communities under Track 2.

In the past month, the MPTF Advisory Committee released a further US\$4 million to reinforce the cholera control systems of Haiti in such a way as to ensure eradication status by 2022, while also supporting the ability of Haiti to respond to other infectious diseases. This is in line with the stated goal of the National Plan to Eliminate Cholera put forward by the Government of Haiti that investments in the cholera response should be made with the additional aim to increase resilience against and ability to combat other diseases in Haiti.

While we are on the cusp of stopping cholera in its tracks in Haiti, we cannot forget the victims of this terrible disease. I share your frustration that more funding for victims has not been forthcoming, despite the decision of the General Assembly that enables voluntary contributions. We continue in our relentless effort to raise funds from Member States to deploy in support of this commitment, as outlined in the New Approach to Cholera. Presently I am sending out a new round of funding requests specifically for Track 2. While this and future appeals continue, we are ensuring that initial funds are deployed into the hardest hit communities in a way that is determined by victims from those communities.

To maximize the impact of these extremely limited funds, the United Nations has deployed an innovative community support programme in 25 of the hardest hit communities. The programme empowers victims of cholera in targeted communities to self-direct a broader consultative process whereby they identify the priorities of the wider community of victims, design projects that respond to them, and work hand in hand with the United Nations to implement their projects. Victims are identified through a grassroots community-driven and self-identification process, while the prioritization and project development work leverages and builds on community systems and resources. Experience to this point has shown us that intracommunity dialogue and local leadership has been essential in facilitating community healing.

While these efforts do not preclude broader support or alternative approaches if funds are made available, given the current context, we are preparing to expand this current community approach to upwards of 20 new communities in the near future. In total, we aim to target 134 of the hardest hit communities throughout Haiti, which have been identified exclusively using available epidemiological data.

I have taken note of a number of questions in your letter regarding Track 2 of the New Approach. As valued members of the United Nations system and community, I encourage you to engage with my colleagues in the Office of the Special Envoy, who have been available as a key resource to you since July 2017.

Haiti's monumental achievement in stopping the spread of cholera demonstrates the power of unified and determined action, guided by brilliant and dedicated champions at national and community level. I appeal to the world not to forget the victims of cholera. With the investments already made, we have managed to stop the transmission of cholera. With a new round of investment, we can seek to close this terrible chapter with dignity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'António Guterres', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above a long, thin horizontal line that extends to the right.

António Guterres