



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

5 July 2013

Dear Congresswoman

I would like to thank you for your letter of 30 May 2013, regarding the cholera situation in Haiti.

I fully share your concern about the devastating impact of the epidemic. I am personally committed to ensuring that the United Nations and the international community spare no effort to help Haiti in this time of need.

The 2010 outbreak of cholera in Haiti further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis triggered by the earthquake in January of that year. While concerted international and Haitian efforts have alleviated much of the suffering and damage, the cholera epidemic continues to take a terrible toll.

Since the outbreak of the disease, the United Nations, in cooperation with other partners, has taken several steps to contain and combat the epidemic and prevent future outbreaks.

Through the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes present in Haiti and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the United Nations has established and upgraded cholera treatment facilities and oral rehydration points across Haiti, and has provided sewage management in nearly 1,500 sites and sanitary facilities in 240 schools. Over 9 million critical items, such as water purification tablets, soap and medical equipment, have been supplied to the Haitian Ministry of Health.

The United Nations has constructed wastewater treatment plants in the municipalities of Croix-des-Bouquets and Morne-à-Cabrit and helped to establish nearly 700 water and temporary chlorination points. It has improved the water supply in the most vulnerable areas of Port-au-Prince and Petit Goave, as well as remote rural areas, and has worked with the *Direction Nationale de L'Eau Potable et de l'Assainissement* (DINEPA) to develop a water quality monitoring system for all 140 communes of Haiti.

United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

The United Nations has supported community-based hygiene campaigns through the training of over 1,400 trainers and 5,200 community workers who have reached over 700,000 families. The Organization has also provided logistical support for the movement of personnel and supplies, including 400 metric tons of health, water and sanitation materials to areas facing cholera outbreaks. The United Nations has devoted more than US\$140 million on cholera treatment and prevention activities since 2010.

These efforts have helped to decrease the rate of new infection by 90 per cent since the outbreak began. The mortality rate has been brought down to around 1 per cent. Still, further progress must be made.

In early 2011, I convened a panel of independent experts to determine the source of the cholera outbreak and to provide the United Nations, the Government of Haiti and the international community with specific recommendations on how to respond to the outbreak and avoid future epidemics. This report was made public by the United Nations.

The lack of access to clean water and sanitation infrastructure pointed out in your letter was identified in the report as a key factor that facilitated the epidemic. The majority of its recommendations have been adopted and are being implemented by the United Nations system. Following the approval of the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) procured 200,000 vaccines and is working closely with the Haitian Ministry of Health on an upcoming vaccination campaign.

In 2012, following the launch of my special effort to support the Initiative for the Elimination of Cholera in the Island of Hispaniola, I appointed Dr. Paul Farmer of Harvard University as my Special Adviser on Community-Based Medicine and Lessons from Haiti. Dr. Farmer has spent the last 30 years delivering healthcare to poor communities in Haiti and other difficult settings.

As my Special Adviser, he was instrumental in convening a WHO/PAHO-sponsored donors meeting in Washington, D.C. on 31 May 2013, at which more than US\$29 million in new funds were pledged, bringing total current pledges in support of the Hispaniola Initiative to US\$207.4 million. Outreach to donors will continue during the World Bank ministerial meeting in October of this year. Meanwhile, UNICEF, following a request by the Government of Haiti, is in the process of setting up a trust fund that will allow for the disbursement of cholera funds through Haitian national and local institutions, including civil society organizations.

As you rightly point out, funding to address the many pressing needs of Haiti is far from sufficient. Moreover, as Haiti enters the hurricane season, when cholera infection rates can be expected to rise, I am concerned that the austere fiscal climate affecting Member States could make it difficult to obtain new financial commitments for addressing cholera in Haiti.

I am working closely with Dr. Farmer to raise awareness and engage with donors. I have also asked United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to make fundraising for the elimination of cholera a top priority as they reach out to Member States bilaterally and to other private funders. In addition, at a recent meeting with some of the world's leading philanthropists and supporters of United Nations causes, I made a special appeal for support to underwrite the cost of the oral cholera vaccine in Haiti.

While the work of the United Nations over the past three years has focused on treatment and prevention, a Boston-based non-governmental organization has led an effort to claim compensation on behalf of certain Haitian cholera victims. The claim was considered by my Legal Counsel and, after careful deliberation, claimants were informed that the claim is not receivable pursuant to Section 29 of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 1946.

I would like to assure you that the legal decision does not in any way diminish my personal commitment, and that of the United Nations, to do all we can to help the people of Haiti overcome the cholera epidemic. Achieving this goal will not be easy, but it is possible.

In my visits to the country, I have been struck by the promise and potential of the Haitian people. They have endured much difficulty, but I am convinced that by joining forces we can help them build a new and better future for their great country. I look forward to working with friends of Haiti such as yourself to make that happen.

A similar letter has been sent to the other co-signatories.

Yours sincerely,

BANKi-moon