

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

June 14, 2018

The Honorable António Guterres  
Secretary-General  
The United Nations  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Secretary-General Guterres:

We write as friends of Haiti in the United States Congress to urge you to ensure that the United Nations complies with its legal and moral obligations to provide appropriate remedies to victims of Haiti's devastating cholera epidemic. As you know, cholera was introduced into Haiti in 2010 by United Nations peacekeepers as a result of the improper disposal of human waste, which contaminated a local river. The resulting epidemic has killed approximately 10,000 Haitians and infected several hundred thousand people in total.

We are concerned that the UN's 2016 plan – the “New Approach to Cholera in Haiti” (New Approach) – to eliminate cholera and provide redress for victims is not meeting victims' rights and needs, despite the UN's promises to place victims “at the centre” of its work.<sup>1</sup> In particular, we are concerned that, although you have expressed your personal commitments to a “new spirit of partnership” with the Haitian people and “meaningful community and individual consultations with victims of cholera,”<sup>2</sup> the UN appears unwilling to provide compensatory payments to cholera victims or engage directly with those affected about their needs and priorities for compensation.

The UN's acceptance of moral responsibility for the cholera epidemic in 2016 was a welcome development. Then Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon apologized to the Haitian people, and the UN launched the New Approach to Cholera in Haiti. The New Approach is a significant commitment not only to cholera elimination efforts, but also to addressing victims' right to redress by delivering a “package of material assistance and support to those Haitians most directly affected by the cholera epidemic.” The New Approach also represents a significant commitment to developing that package in consultation with victims and local communities.<sup>3</sup>

We applaud your personal commitment to delivering on the promises of the New Approach, and we commend your pledge to do so through genuine consultation and dialogue with victims, as you articulated in your 2017 op-ed in the *Miami Herald*. Furthermore, we are proud that the United States Congress recently appropriated \$10 million to support the material assistance package promised in the New Approach.

---

<sup>1</sup> “A new approach to cholera in Haiti: Report by the Secretary-General” (A/71/620) (paragraph 26) (online at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1639267.pdf>).

<sup>2</sup> António Guterres, “Op-Ed: U.N. is committed to partnership with Haiti that works,” *Miami Herald* (Nov. 1, 2017) (online at [www.miamiherald.com/opinion/op-ed/article182199506.html](http://www.miamiherald.com/opinion/op-ed/article182199506.html)).

<sup>3</sup> “New UN System Approach on Cholera in Haiti” (online at [http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/haiti/Haiti\\_UN\\_System\\_Cholera\\_Dec16.pdf](http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/haiti/Haiti_UN_System_Cholera_Dec16.pdf)).


Despite the progress since 2016, we are increasingly concerned that the UN is failing to fulfill its important promises and appears unwilling to engage in meaningful consultations with victims about their perspectives on compensation. The UN also seems determined to assist victims through charity-based community development projects only, despite pledging in the New Approach to consult victims about their needs and consider the possibility of providing direct payments to the most affected households.

The UN's unwillingness to follow through with its commitment to consider compensating victims directly is particularly concerning given the economic devastation that cholera has wrought on Haitian households. Cholera deaths and illnesses have grave ripple effects, especially for the poor. Families borrow money to pay for funerals and cannot repay their debts; families who lose breadwinners plunge deeper into poverty; and children are pulled out of school. The Haitian government estimates that thousands of children have been orphaned and thus may become another generation condemned to poverty.

We question whether community projects alone will redress the harms to affected families and allow them to recover. We are also troubled that it appears that the UN is, once again, dismissing legitimate calls from cholera victims and their advocates for compensation, and ignoring its legal obligations to provide effective remedies.

After so much progress, it would be a tragedy if the United Nations were to break its promises. We respectfully request that you explain the steps the UN has taken to explore providing direct payments to cholera-affected households and to meaningfully consult victims about the development of the promised material assistance package. We urge you to personally lead efforts to ensure that the UN's new spirit of partnership with Haiti meets its obligations and effectively repairs the harms caused by cholera. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the promises made to Haiti are kept.


Sincerely,

  
Maxine Waters

  
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen


  
Frederica S. Wilson

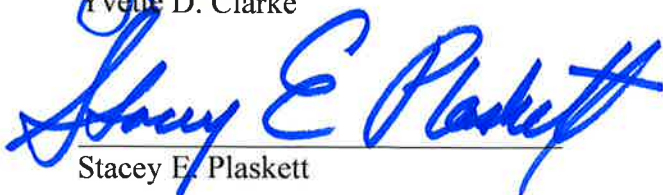
  
Mario Diaz-Balart

  
Barbara Lee

  
Carlos Curbelo

  
Yvette D. Clarke

  
Eliot L. Engel

  
Stacey E. Plaskett

  
Raúl M. Grijalva

Alan Lowenthal

Alan Lowenthal

Donald M. Payne, Jr.

Donald M. Payne, Jr.

Michelle Lujan Grisham

Michelle Lujan Grisham

Val B. Demings

Val B. Demings

John Lewis

John Lewis

James P. McGovern

James P. McGovern

Lois Frankel

Lois Frankel

Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Scott H. Peters

Scott H. Peters

Ruben Gallego

Ruben Gallego

John Yarmuth

John Yarmuth

Salud O. Carbajal

Salud O. Carbajal

Frank Pallone, Jr.

Frank Pallone, Jr.

Pramila Jayapal

Pramila Jayapal

Colleen Hanabusa

Colleen Hanabusa

Ro Khanna

Ro Khanna

Earl Blumenauer

Earl Blumenauer

Donald S. Beyer Jr.

Donald S. Beyer Jr.

Brenda L. Lawrence

Brenda L. Lawrence

Nanette Diaz Barragan

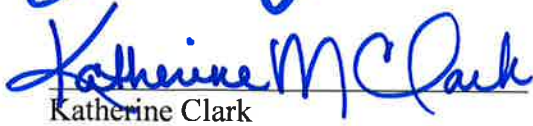
Nanette Diaz Barragan



Zoe Lofgren



Michael E. Capuano



Katherine Clark



Mark Pocan



Derek Kilmer



Bonnie Watson Coleman



Hakeem Jeffries



Adriano Espaillat



Robert A. Brady



Kathy Castor



G. K. Butterfield



Eleanor Holmes Norton



Danny K. Davis



Bobby L. Rush



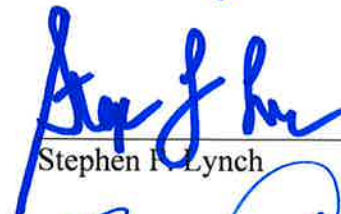
Gregory W. Meeks



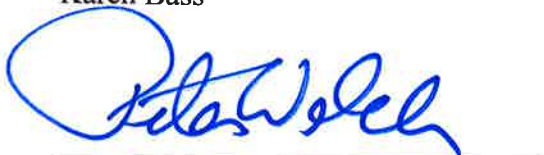
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.



Karen Bass



Stephen F. Lynch



Peter Welch



Emanuel Cleaver, II

David Price

David E. Price

Keith Ellison

Keith Ellison

Albio Sires

Albio Sires

William R. Keating

William R. Keating

Jose E. Serrano

Jose E. Serrano

Bill Pascrell, Jr.

Bill Pascrell, Jr.

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.

Rosa L. DeLauro

Rosa L. DeLauro

Ted Deutch

Ted Deutch

Jackie Speier

Jackie Speier

Jerrold Nadler

Jerrold Nadler

Nydia M. Velázquez

Nydia M. Velázquez

Marcia L. Fudge

Marcia L. Fudge

Alcee L. Hastings

Alcee L. Hastings

Jan Schakowsky

Jan Schakowsky

Steve Cohen

Steve Cohen

Luis V. Gutiérrez

Luis V. Gutiérrez

Judy Chu

Judy Chu

Mike Quigley

Mike Quigley

Eddie Bernice Johnson

Eddie Bernice Johnson



Rick Larsen



Elijah E. Cummings



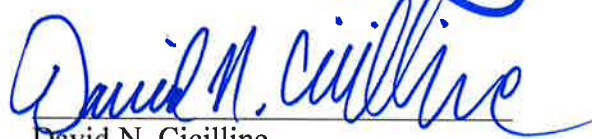
Anna G. Eshoo



Wm. Lacy Clay



Madeleine Z. Bordallo



David N. Cicilline



Mark DeSaulnier



Joyce B. Beatty



Alma S. Adams



Sheila Jackson Lee



Ruben J. Kihuen



A. Donald McEachin



Sean Patrick Maloney



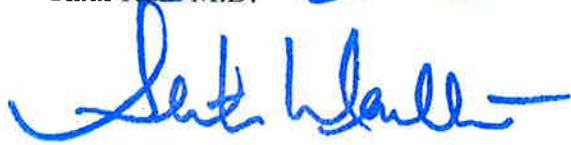
Susan A. Davis



Raul Ruiz M.D.



Al Lawson

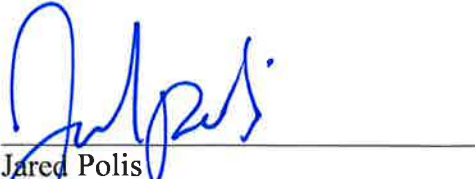


Seth Moulton



Donald Norcross

  
Peter A. DeFazio

  
Jared Polis

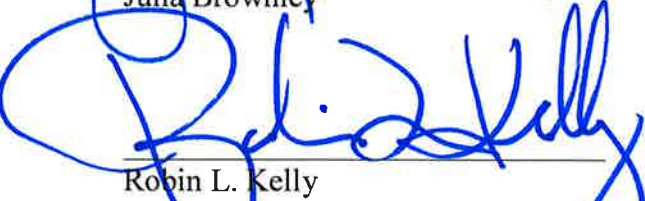
  
Richard M. Nolan

  
Bennie G. Thompson

  
Eric Swalwell

  
Julia Brownley

  
Tim Ryan

  
Robin L. Kelly

  
Marc Veasey

  
Juan Vargas

  
Norma J. Torres

  
Darren Soto

  
Chellie Pingree