

July 17, 2012

The Honorable Susan Rice,  
United States Ambassador to the United Nations  
Permanent Mission to the United Nations  
799 UN Plaza  
New York, NY 10017-3505

Dear Ambassador Rice,

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding the ongoing cholera epidemic in Haiti and to ask you to strongly encourage the United Nations to take a leadership role in addressing this catastrophic public health crisis. The outbreak began in October 2010, ten months after Haiti's tragic earthquake, and "has become one of the largest cholera epidemics in modern history" according to the Pan-American Health Organization. To date, at least 7,200 Haitians have died from the disease and more than 530,000 people have been infected. So as to ensure that this devastating disease is brought under control, we call on you to urge UN authorities to support efficient treatment and prevention of the epidemic and to help Haiti acquire adequate water and sanitation infrastructure.

As acknowledged by the UN's Special Envoy to Haiti, former President Bill Clinton, UN troops introduced the cholera bacterium "into the waterways of Haiti, into the bodies of Haitians" and, as such, were the "proximate cause" of the epidemic. We welcome your statement in March to the Security Council calling on the United Nations to "redouble its efforts to prevent any further incidents of this kind and to ensure that those responsible are held accountable."

As cholera was brought to Haiti due to the actions of the UN, we believe that it is imperative for the UN to now act decisively to control the cholera epidemic. UN authorities should work with Haiti's government and the international community to confront and, ultimately, eliminate this deadly disease from Haiti and the rest of the island of Hispaniola. A failure to act will not only lead to countless more deaths: it will undermine the crucial effort to reconstruct Haiti and will pose a permanent public health threat to the populations of neighboring nations.

According to the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), Haiti is one of the most underserved countries in the world in terms of water and sanitation infrastructure. These infrastructural weaknesses have made Haiti particularly susceptible to waterborne disease. Cholera had not been present in Haiti for over a century prior to October 2010, making Haitians 'immunologically naïve' and even more vulnerable to the disease.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has done a remarkable job in partnership with the Haitian government in distributing treatment supplies, providing treatment training, and establishing a national cholera surveillance system. The CDC estimates that cholera will likely persist in Haiti absent the development of water and sanitation systems, the cost of which has been estimated at \$800 million to \$1.1 billion.

On January 12th of this year, the presidents of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, joined by UN agencies PAHO, World Health Organization and UNICEF and the U.S. CDC, appealed to donor countries to honor pledges and provide funds for water and sanitation infrastructure. However, there has been little response to this appeal from the international community. Moreover, with the onset of the rainy season, the number of deaths from cholera is rising once again.

Accordingly, we call upon you to urge UN authorities to play a central role in addressing the cholera crisis. First, by helping ensure that resources are in place to provide adequate treatment

and prevention of the disease in the short term. Secondly, by taking the lead in helping Haiti and the rest of the island of Hispaniola acquire the necessary funding to develop the water and sanitation infrastructure needed to effectively control the cholera epidemic.

Finally, we ask that you encourage UN authorities and all donor governments involved in the effort to fight cholera to intensify their cooperation with the Haitian state and people through capacity-building and the active inclusion of government representatives in decision making and through the regular consultation of civil society actors.

Sincerely,