

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 18, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

It has been six years since UN peacekeepers brought cholera to Haiti, which was already reeling from the deadly and devastating January 2010 earthquake. As a direct result of their negligence, nearly 800,000 people have been infected with cholera and upwards of 9,500 people have died.¹

In 2014, we wrote you expressing grave concern over the UN's response to the epidemic. Despite overwhelming evidence that cholera was introduced in Haiti when soldiers serving in the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) contaminated the country's largest river system with raw sewage, the UN took nearly six years to acknowledge their role in the outbreak.

While we commend the UN for committing additional resources to fighting the outbreak in Haiti over the last three years, we remain disappointed in the unwillingness of the organization to formally apologize to the victims and their families and to set up a fair and transparent process that allows for victims to seek remediation.

In light of Hurricane Matthew's devastating toll in Haiti, we urge the UN to address this crisis with renewed urgency. This year, there have been 29,000 cholera cases and 267 deaths reported, an uptick in cases from 2014 and 2015. In the month of October alone, cases of cholera surged beyond 3,500, creating a heightened public health emergency in this already challenging time.² Given the impact of Hurricane Matthew on Haitian infrastructure, we need immediate action to prevent a dramatic increase in new cholera cases.

On October 25th, Philip Alston, Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, presented a report to the UN General Assembly outlining the fundamental flaws in the UN's response to the 2010 outbreak. We agree with Alston's analysis that the UN's "existing approach is morally unconscionable, legally indefensible and politically self-defeating."³

We were pleased that in August, the UN finally acknowledged that it must "do much more regarding its own involvement in the initial outbreak and the suffering of those affected by

¹ Francisco J. Luquero et al. "Mortality rates during cholera epidemic, Haiti 2010-2011," *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, vol. 22, No. 3 (March 2016), p. 410.

² OCHA HAITI: Hurricane Matthew Situation Report No. 18 (October 31 2016)

³ Philip Alston. "Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights," United Nations General Assembly (August 2016), accessed October 26, 2016 at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Poverty/Pages/SRExtremePovertyIndex.aspx>

cholera.”⁴ We also commend your administration for recognizing the UN’s “moral responsibility” to the victims and for committing to providing victims and their families with “material assistance and support.”⁵ However, the words and actions to date fall far short.

As Members of Congress representing the United States, the leading contributor to the UN’s peacekeeping activities, we again call for the United Nations to issue a formal apology to the victims of the cholera outbreak and their families. While we applaud the UN’s efforts to secure more funding for cholera treatment and prevention in Haiti, these efforts do not absolve the UN of its obligation to receive legal claims from victims of the epidemic and provide remediation for the affected communities.⁶ We recognize our own country’s leadership role at the UN and fully support the proposed new measures to address cholera in Haiti and will encourage our own mission to allocate UN resources for cholera as appropriate.

Lastly, we also call on the UN to immediately take further action to prevent the spread of cholera in Haiti’s southern cities, which have been the hardest hit by Hurricane Matthew, while ensuring that cholera endemic areas remain protected.

Each day that passes without a formal apology and remediation efforts further erodes trust in the UN and affiliated peacekeeping missions. The UN’s actions on this matter are contrary to the organization’s mission to promote human rights and rule of law around the world.

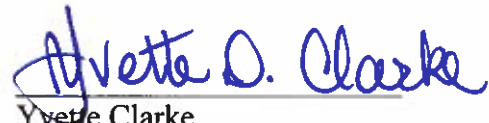
As your time as Secretary General comes to a close, we urge you to act now to address this issue, bring peace to the families of the victims, and take necessary steps to ensure such mistakes never happen again.

We look forward to working with you in your remaining time in office and are committed to working with your successor to find a permanent and sustainable solution to this crisis.

Sincerely,



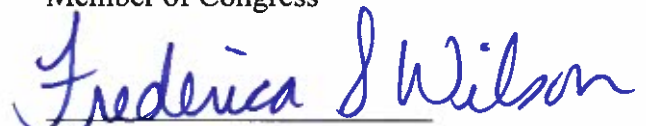
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Yvette Clarke
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

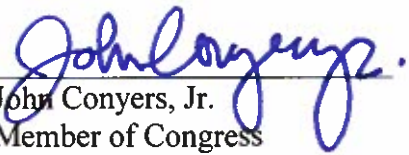


Frederica Wilson
Member of Congress

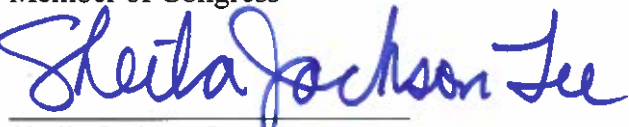
⁴ Jonathan M. Katz. “U.N. Admits Role in Cholera Epidemic in Haiti,” *New York Times* (August 17, 2016). Accessed October 26, 2016 at http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/18/world/americas/united-nations-haiti-cholera.html?_r=0

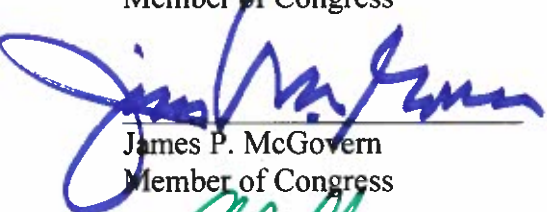
⁵ Michelle Nichols. “U.N. chief: Moral responsibility to help Haiti cholera victims.” *Reuters*, (August 19, 2016). Accessed October 26, 2016 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-haiti-cholera-un-idUSKCN10U1S5>

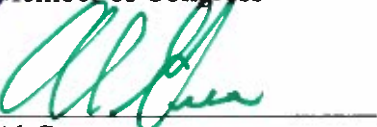
⁶ “Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations”, *General Assembly of United Nations*, (1946). Accessed October 26, 2016 at <http://www.un.org/en/ethics/pdf/convention.pdf>.



John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress



Karen Bass
Member of Congress

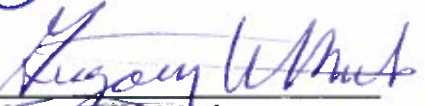

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

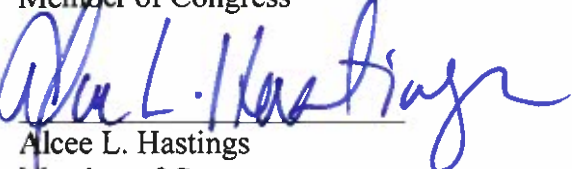

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress


Al Green
Member of Congress


Raul Grijalva
Member of Congress


Jim McDermott
Member of Congress


Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress


Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

CC:
UN Secretary General-Elect António Guterres
Secretary of State John Kerry
Ambassador Samantha Power