

***President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Urges Prime Minister of Japan,
H.E. Yasuo Fukuda,
to Act on Health-Related MDGs***

In 2000 at the Okinawa G9 Summit Japan launched the Okinawa Infectious Disease Initiative. While highlighting the urgency of the communicable disease facing developing countries, it established a new vision of the possible and helped to shape the development assistance agenda for the years ahead.

When we look back over the eight years since Okinawa we see unprecedented progress across many areas of international health and development.

- ***The Global Fund to Fight AIDS TB and Malaria***
- ***The US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief***
- ***The GAVI Vaccine Alliance***
- ***UNITAID***
- ***The International Financing Facility for Immunization***
- ***The Affordable Medicines Facility; to stimulate research into new vaccines through the Advance Market Commitment model.***

Development spending on health increased from \$6 billion in 2000 to more than \$14 billion last year and this year we expect to see \$10 billion spending on the response to AIDS.

This effort has delivered impressive results:

- ***2.5 million people are now receiving AIDS treatment***
- ***Tuberculosis rates are stabilizing across the world;***
- ***Polio is closer to eradication than at any time in human history;***
- ***Measles deaths have fallen by 70%;***

- *Malaria is being pushed back in many countries*

Yet we must not be complacent nor underplay the scale of the challenge ahead. At the halfway point to 2015 we need to take stock of where we are making a difference, where too little progress is being made and where we must re-double our collective efforts.

Unfortunately we have not seen the same progress in reducing child deaths (MDG4), or in reducing the number of women who die tragically during pregnancy (MDG5), a figure that has not changed since 1990.

Unless we take action, millions of children and their mothers will die. Growth and prosperity will continue to be drained, and the world community's promises to the weakest and the most venerable will be broken.

Everyone agrees that action is needed and as a response the Global Campaign for the Health Related MDGs was launched last September. The Campaign is a movement for all – which donors, international agencies and stakeholders can join – showing that action is being taken to get back on track to achieving the MDGs by 2015, even the ones affecting mothers and children directly.

In July this year Japan will again host the G8 Summit. We look to Japan to again push the boundaries of the possible, to lead the G8 effort against all the MDGs, but in particular those related to health. This means setting an ambitious agenda backed by the level of resources to make a difference over the seven years to 2015.

Prime Minister Fukuda recently stated “among the health-related Millennium Development Goals, the issues of safe

motherhood and health of children under five years of age in particular remain serious as before, with some 500,000 pregnant women and 10 million children under five dying annually.” Delivering improvements in these areas requires stronger health systems. And Japan’s post-war experience in building community health systems shows how countries can deliver improvements to maternal and child health and tackle infectious diseases at the same time.

The health systems that underpin the delivery of health care must be strengthened: making sure there are adequate numbers of trained staff where needed; building the networks of clinics and district hospitals; ensuring reliable supplies of life saving medicines and vaccines; fair financing that does not prevent the poor from using services and the supportive management and information systems to make the systems. As members of the Network of World Leaders supporting the Global Campaign for the Health Related MDGs, we would warmly welcome leadership and commitments from the G8 in the fight to reduce maternal and child mortality.