

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.¹ 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,”² 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.³

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.

¹ “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>).

² 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).

³ “New UN System Approach on Cholera in Haiti” (online at 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

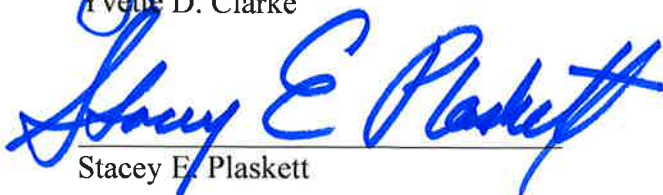

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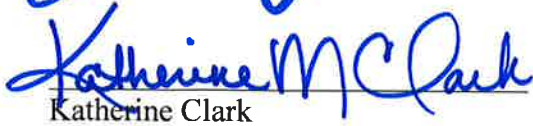
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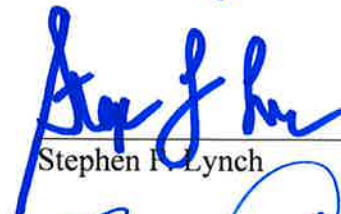
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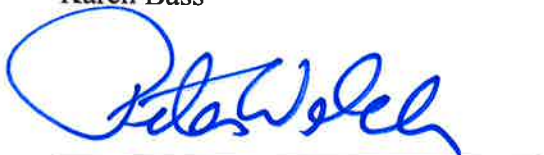
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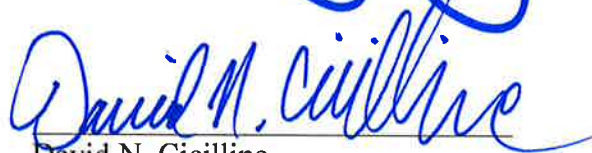
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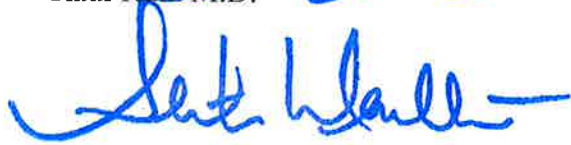
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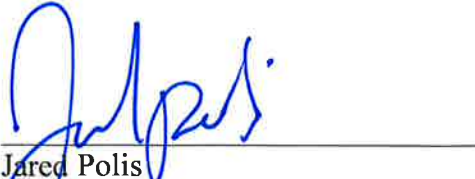


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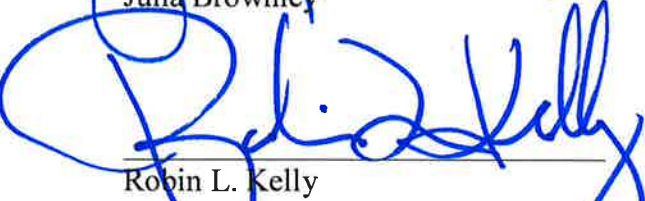

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