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DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

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Deputy Secretary-General Hails ‘Incredible’ Efforts of Haitian Front-Line Workers, Communities, in Remarks at Haiti Technical Conference on Cholera Elimination

Following are UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed’s remarks at the Haiti Technical Conference on Cholera Elimination in Port-au-Prince today:

Excellencies, friends and colleagues. And I am also very pleased to be joined by Dr. Tedros [Adhanom Ghebreyesus] of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the colleagues of UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund). I would like to also thank all our colleagues who are online and couldn’t be here today.

I am honoured to join you to take stock of the remarkable efforts of the Haitian people in their fight against cholera, and to lay down the next steps in this critical battle — the scientific evidence.

The efforts of the Haitian people over the past 11-and-a-half years have brought Haiti to the brink of an historic moment. As we look to eliminate cholera in Haiti, it will be the first country in modern times to do so following a large-scale outbreak. Haiti’s efforts have made it an example for the world. You have led the way and confirmed that national expertise and leadership can make the changes that are needed. Eliminating cholera is a long and complex process. But Haiti is on its way to achieving this historic objective.

It was not an easy road, as we have witnessed every step of the way. In fact, this is only possible thanks to the strong national leadership and the strong engagement of front-line

workers and communities. The decisive leadership of national authorities has been truly remarkable — including the Ministry of Health and Population and DINEPA, the national water and sanitation agency. The dedication of front-line workers throughout the country has been truly inspiring.

I still carry vivid memories of these front-line workers that I witnessed, their incredible efforts, during my visit in 2017, when cholera was still spreading through the country. In the years before the visit, and in the years since, more than 60 rapid-response teams worked in close coordination with the Government to respond to every suspected cholera case.

With an innovative strategy called “labo-moto”, nurses across the country collected samples, while motorbike drivers were organized to transport the samples to the labs that partners worked so hard to establish. Authorities, communities and their partners worked tirelessly to ensure clean water was available and sanitation systems were installed and improved wherever and whenever an outbreak was identified.

The Secretary-General and I were honoured to accompany these efforts. We are also grateful for the support of the international and national partners that have helped to make all of this possible — in particular, our deep gratitude to WHO, to UNICEF, to UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), PAHO (Pan American Health Organization), all who have made the elimination of cholera in Haiti an absolute priority.

It is precisely because of this combination of ambition, national leadership, community engagement, targeted investments and partnerships that we are able to hold today’s conference — not to celebrate the achievements to date, but to give another push, together, to ensure that we can close the tragic chapter of cholera as quickly as possible.

Today offers an opportunity to look closely at all the scientific evidence that confirms that transmission has been interrupted and to determine the next steps to cross the finish line. We must remain focused and determined as we look ahead. The final mile is never an easy one.

These next steps will be critical, not only for Haiti, but for all countries experiencing outbreaks of cholera around the world. Clear and measurable criteria will be essential to guide the next phase, and ultimately, to allow us to close this tragic chapter in Haiti’s history with dignity.

But let’s be clear: when Haiti leaves cholera behind, we will continue to draw attention to the victims and survivors of cholera and their communities. We cannot and should not forget the victims and the communities that have been most severely affected by this deadly but avoidable disease. I have met many of these courageous survivors in previous visits, and we will continue to accompany them in their future endeavours.

While nothing can erase the past, I am hopeful that our joint efforts and continued support for the people of Haiti can be seen as yet another step in our new relationship. The United Nations remains side by side with the Haitian authorities and the people to not only win the battle

against cholera and stand with the victims, but to realize this nation's aspirations for peace, prosperity and sustainable development that is shared by all Haiti's people.

Let me also pay tribute to the lady who is not here today but started this with us some years ago, Josette Sheeran. She was a special adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General, and she made sure that the efforts that we are trying to make here were heard loud and clear on the other side of Haiti, in the corridors where decisions could be made to support this initiative. We thank her for that partnership and leadership.

Once again, thank you very much for making us a part of a truly remarkable effort about to bring an end to cholera in Haiti. Perhaps [inaudible], I would like to pay tribute to the Prime Minister, who also has been at the front line of cholera so many years ago, and I understand the Minister of Health as well. So, there are many around this table that would understand the lift that we had to get to where we are today.

As I said, not so much a celebration, but an acknowledgement that this must never happen again and that we must put in place all the checks and balances to keep the people of Haiti safe.

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