

Dear Prime Minister Fukuda

In 2000, at the Okinawa G8 Summit, Japan launched the Okinawa Infectious Disease Initiative. This highlighted the urgency of responding to the communicable disease burden facing many developing countries. It set out a new ambitious vision of the possible and helped to shape the development assistance agenda in the years ahead. Looking back at the eight years since Okinawa we see unprecedented levels of commitment to respond to that challenge and substantial investment through a number of initiatives including the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM).

This effort has delivered impressive results. Development spending on health increased from USD 6 billion in 2000 to USD 14 billion in 2005. In addition, this year we expect to see, for the first time, USD 10 billion spent on the response to AIDS. As a result more than two million people are now receiving AIDS treatment, tuberculosis rates are stabilising across much of the world, polio is closer to eradication than at any time in human history, measles deaths have fallen by 70%, and malaria is being pushed back in many countries.

Sadly we have not seen the same progress in addressing other health and development priorities. This is particularly so as regards reducing child mortality (MDG 4) and reducing the number of women who die during pregnancy and childbirth (MDG 5), an area where there has been little progress over the past 20 years. Yet everyone agrees that urgent action is needed to prevent millions of children and their mothers dying needlessly each year.

HE Mr Yasuo Fukuda  
Prime Minister of Japan  
Tokyo  
Japan

At the halfway point to 2015 we need to take stock. To look where we are making a difference and where we must intensify our collective effort if we are to realise the Millennium Development Goals. Last September saw the launch of the Global Campaign for the Health Related MDGs – a movement to refocus and accelerate international efforts, to get us back on track to meet the MDGs by 2015 and to deliver on the world's promise to the weakest and the most vulnerable.

In July this year Japan will again host the G8 summit. As you yourself have pointed out, “among the health-related Millennium Development Goals, the issues of safe motherhood and health of children under five years of age remain serious as before, with some 500 000 pregnant women and 10 million children dying annually”. It is difficult to accept that in 2008 a woman dies in pregnancy or childbirth every minute.

We now need the same step change in investment in relation to MDGs 4 and 5 that we have seen in recent years in relation to MDG 6. Japan's post-war experience in building community health systems shows how countries can improve maternal and child health and tackle infectious diseases at the same time.

In 2008 we again look to Japan to lead the G8 in pushing the boundaries of the possible, by setting an ambitious agenda backed by the level of resources needed to make a difference in the seven years remaining to 2015.

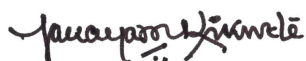
Yours sincerely



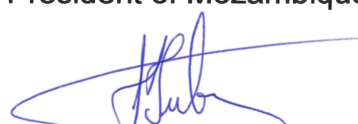
Michelle Bachelet  
President of Chile



Armando Guebuza  
President of Mozambique



Jakaya Kikwete  
President of Tanzania



Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva  
President of Brazil



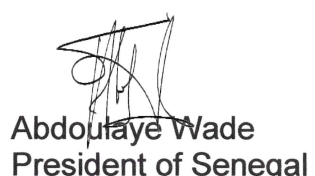
Ms Graca Machel



Ellen Johnson Sirleaf  
President of Liberia



Jens Stoltenberg  
Prime Minister of Norway



Abdoulaye Wade  
President of Senegal