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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
CABINET DU SECRETAIRE GENERAL

REFERENCE:

26 July 2012

Dear Mr. Sasakawa,

Thank you for your letter to the Secretary-General of 12 June 2012, in which you requested a video message for an upcoming series of symposia on leprosy. The Secretary-General attaches great importance to global efforts to eliminate leprosy and thus would be pleased to provide a video. We hope to schedule a recording session in late August or early September, well in time for the next symposium, which we understand will be held in October in India. We will be back in touch as the date of the recording draws near.

Thank you again for your ongoing advocacy as WHO Goodwill Ambassador, and for the Nippon Foundation's wide-ranging support for the work of the United Nations.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Meyer
Director of Communications

Mr. Yohei Sasakawa
Chairman
The Nippon Foundation
WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination
Tokyo

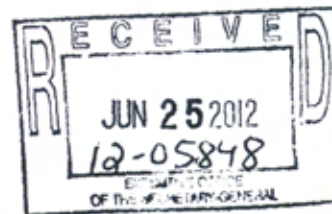


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The Nippon Foundation

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SIA-5552
12 June, 2012

The Honorable Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General
The United Nations

ACTION *mem*
COPY

Excellency:

It was a great honor for me to meet you at the United Nations celebratory event for the 30th anniversary of UNCLOS last week. As I told you in our short conversation, I believe that we have several potential avenues of cooperation. This time, I am writing to ask for your help in my work as the World Health Organization's Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination and the Japanese Government's Goodwill Ambassador for the Human Rights of People Affected by Leprosy.

*12-05848
11-12064*

First of all, please allow me to write the same request that I did in the last December. I know how busy you are and feel sorry to do this, but I would appreciate it if you could spare time to reconsider.

As you are aware, in December 2010, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members, referring to Principles and Guidelines on same that were drawn up by the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee. "UN Resolution A/RES/65/215" represents a historic step toward advancing the rights of people affected by leprosy, who for centuries have been stigmatized and discriminated against on the grounds of this ancient disease.

As you also aware, leprosy is now easily curable and the number of cases continues to fall, yet discrimination against persons with leprosy persists. To address this issue, The Nippon Foundation, together with various partners, is organizing a series of five regional symposia to draw attention to the Principles and Guidelines on eliminating discrimination and to foster their implementation.

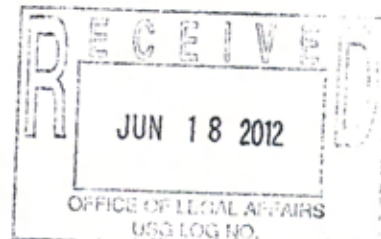
To give this series of symposia every chance of success, I would be most appreciative if you would consent to give a brief video message, welcoming the adoption of the General Assembly Resolution in 2010 and calling on all relevant partners to refer to the Principles and Guidelines as a tool for the concrete and steady advancement of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people affected by leprosy. Kindly refer to the enclosed document for more details.

I deeply appreciate your consideration on this matter, and look forward to your reply.

Respectfully yours,

佐々川 陽子

Yohei Sasakawa
Chairman, The Nippon Foundation
WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination
The Japanese Government Ambassador for the Human Rights of People Affected by Leprosy



Request for a Message

From UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for

The Regional Symposia on Leprosy and Human Rights

Background

Over the centuries, the stigma visited upon people affected by leprosy represents one of the most pervasive forms of social injustice suffered by any one group of human beings. Long feared as contagious and incurable, leprosy has condemned countless millions to the margins of society.

In the early 1980s, however, the outlook for leprosy changed with the introduction of an effective treatment in the form of multidrug therapy. Since then, some 16 million people have been cured worldwide. Thanks to the efforts made by governments of leprosy-endemic nations, the WHO, international and local NGOs and other stakeholders, the number of leprosy patients has declined dramatically. The annual number of new cases reported globally is now below 250,000 per year.

However, while medical efforts to conquer leprosy have made tremendous progress, efforts to tackle the disease's social consequences have lagged behind. Due to the general public's ignorance, misunderstanding, indifference or fear, millions of people cured of leprosy and even their families still suffer from the stigma associated with the disease.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." This includes every person affected by leprosy – yet legal, social and economic discrimination persist.

For society to live up to Article 1, it is essential that the inherent rights of people affected by leprosy, embodied in the Declaration, are acknowledged.

Putting this age-old issue to rest will help to realize a society in which every human being is able to enjoy his or her fundamental human rights, and in which the dignity of every human being is recognized.

In recent years, much effort has been put into approaches to the United Nations Human Rights Council and related organizations by various stakeholders, including The Nippon Foundation, to draw attention to this issue. As a result, in December 2010, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution referring to the Principles and Guidelines for the elimination

of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members. In the long history of discrimination suffered by people affected by leprosy, "UN Resolution A/RES/65/215" represents a historic breakthrough. However, there is still much work to be done.

Series of Regional Symposia on Leprosy and Human Rights

The Nippon Foundation, led by Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination and Japanese Government Goodwill Ambassador for the Human Rights of People Affected by Leprosy, is planning to organize five regional symposia on the issue together with partner organizations, governments and civil society.

The purpose of these symposia is to raise awareness of the resolution and to explore ways that the Principles and Guidelines can be implemented by governments, civil society organizations, educational institutions, business enterprises, medical associations, health services and other bodies.

Invitations are being sent to political leaders, government officials (both national and local), representatives of international organizations, intergovernmental organizations, UN agencies, foundations, international and local NGOs, human rights groups, scholars, organizations of/for people affected by leprosy, and journalists to brief them on leprosy-related stigma and discrimination and to bring to their attention the Principles and Guidelines as a tool for tackling same.

The first of these regional seminars is planned for Brazil in February 2012, around the time that World Leprosy Day is celebrated. We then will be hosting regional seminars in Asia (India, 2012), Africa (Ethiopia, 2013), the Middle East (Egypt, 2013), and Europe (Geneva, 2014). After these regional symposia, we hope to organize an international symposium at UN Headquarters in New York in late 2014 and produce a report and commentary on how to take things forward and ensure that UN Resolution A/RES/65/215 and its accompanying Principles and Guidelines are implemented in both spirit and letter.

Principles and Guidelines

The UN General Assembly resolution encourages governments, the UN system, intergovernmental organizations and national human rights bodies to give due consideration to

the Principles and Guidelines in the formation and implementation of policies and measures concerning persons affected by leprosy and their family members.

The Principles and Guidelines declare that "States should promote, protect and ensure the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons affected by leprosy and their family members without discrimination on the grounds of leprosy."

To this end, they call on States to (among others):

- 1) abolish existing laws, regulations, policies, customs and practices that discriminate directly or indirectly;
- 2) guarantee equal and effective legal protection;
- 3) support reunification of families separated in the past as a result of policies and practices;
- 4) identify persons living in isolation or segregated from their community and provide social support;
- 5) allow people to continue to live in the leprosariums and hospitals that have become their homes, if they so desire;
- 6) provide opportunities for education and jobs;
- 7) abolish the usage of discriminatory language;
- 8) encourage participation in public, cultural and recreational activities;
- 9) provide for the early detection of leprosy and ensure prompt treatment;
- 10) create or design a committee that includes persons affected by leprosy to address activities relating to the human rights of persons affected by leprosy and their family members.

These are among the key issues to be addressed at the series of regional symposia we are organizing, as we believe these points are fundamental to the improvement of the lives of people affected by leprosy and their families.

Secretary General's Message

In requesting a message from the UN Secretary General, we have in mind a statement that underscores the right of every person affected by leprosy to live fully and equally in society, enjoying all their human rights and fundamental freedoms. It would welcome the adoption of

the General Assembly Resolution last year and urge all relevant actors to refer to the Principles and Guidelines in formulating policies and taking steps to eliminate discrimination against people affected by leprosy and their family members. Finally, it would remind the world that leprosy is a curable disease, treatment is available free of charge and that social discrimination on the grounds of leprosy has no place in our world.

*Proposed text for a video message to be delivered by The Honorable Ban Ki-moon,
Secretary-General, The United Nations, at a series of International Symposia on
Leprosy and Human Rights*

Over the centuries, the stigma visited upon people affected by leprosy represents one of the most pervasive forms of social injustice suffered by any one group of human beings. Once feared as contagious and incurable, leprosy condemned countless millions to the margins of society.

Today, the medical outlook is very different. Leprosy is an easily cured disease. Since the introduction of multidrug therapy, some 16 million people have been treated and cured worldwide.

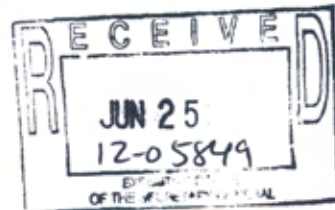
Yet despite medical advances, the public's perception of leprosy remains largely rooted in the past. Due to ignorance, misunderstanding, indifference or fear, the reality is that millions of people cured of leprosy and even their families still suffer from the stigma associated with the disease.

In recent years, much effort has been put into approaches to the United Nations Human Rights Council and related organizations by various stakeholders to draw attention to this issue. As a result, in December 2010, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution that referred to Principles and Guidelines for the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members.

In order to follow up this resolution and implement the Principle and Guidelines, voluntary efforts by states and other stakeholders are essential. If we are to live in a world without leprosy and the discrimination it causes, then international organizations, states and civil society should work together closely to resolve this issue. That's why this series of symposia on leprosy and human rights is so important. I wish it every success.

Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General
The United Nations

ACTION *mlm*
COPY *CAC*



Note to Ms. Malcorra

Letter to the Secretary-General from Mr. Yohei Sasakawa,
Chairman of the Nippon Foundation

1. I refer to the Roundtable Discussion Panel to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, held on World Oceans Day, 8 June 2012, where the Secretary-General made welcoming remarks.
2. After his remarks, the Secretary-General had a brief conversation with Mr. Yohei Sasakawa, the Chairman of the Nippon Foundation, who requested assistance on his work related to elimination of leprosy.
3. I am forwarding the letter from Mr. Sasakawa addressed to the Secretary-General for his consideration. In the letter, Mr. Sasakawa inquires about the possibility of the Secretary-General to give a brief video message for the series of symposia to be organized by the Nippon Foundation and other partners where the Secretary-General will welcome the adoption of the General Assembly resolution in 2010 on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members (A/RES/65/215), among others.
4. In this regard, kindly note that the letter from Mr. Sasakawa includes proposed text for the video message to be delivered by the Secretary-General.


Patricia O'Brien
21 June 2012

cc: Mr. Kim

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