

**Minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee  
of the UN Haiti Cholera Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund  
Wednesday, 20 May 2020, 3:00 to 4:00 p.m., New York**

**Chairpersons**

Ms. Josette Sheeran, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Haiti  
Ms. Michelle Gyles-McDonnough, Director, Sustainable Development Unit, EOSG

**Advisory Committee Board Members**

**Canada:** Ms. Catherine Nadeau, First Secretary  
**Chile:** Ms. Leyla Vásquez, Third Secretary  
**France:** Ms. Sophie Lecoutre, Humanitarian Counsellor  
**Japan:** Mr. Satoshi Ezoe, Counsellor  
**The Republic  
of Korea:** Mr. Byung-seok Yoo, Counsellor  
**Norway:** No participant  
**United Kingdom:** Mr. Stacy Weld-Blundell, Senior Policy Adviser  
**United States:** Mr. Joshua Hodges, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator  
for Latin American and the Caribbean, USAID

**Board Member Observers – Permanent Mission of Haiti to the UN**

H.E. Mr. Patrick Saint Hilaire, Ambassador, Permanent Representative  
Mr. Fritzner Gaspard, Deputy Permanent Representative  
Mr. Willy Louis, Minister Counsellor  
Ms. Celine Pierre Fabre, Counsellor

**UN System**

Mr. Bruno Lemarquis, DSRSG/HC/RC, UN Country Team  
Ms. Maria Luisa Fornara, Representative, UNICEF Haiti  
Mr. Luis Codina, Representative, PAHO Haiti  
Mr. Anthony Marro, Chief, Emergency and Cholera, UNICEF Haiti  
Dr. Mauricio Cerpa, Chief, Surveillance, Prevention and infectious Diseases, PAHO Haiti

**Ex-Officio Members**

Ms. Jennifer Topping, Executive Coordinator, MPTF Office  
Ms. Eva Saenz, Portfolio Manager, MPTF Office  
Ms. Cristina Bertarelli, Secretariat Support, MPTF Office

**Office of the Special Envoy for Haiti**

Mr. Ramsey C. Ben-Achour, Representative of the Special Envoy  
Ms. Dianne Fairweather, Senior Programme Assistant

## **Agenda**

1. Welcome and Introductory Remarks
2. Introductory Remarks by the Government of Haiti
3. Inclusion of the United States as an Advisory Committee Board Member
4. Situation Update on Haiti
5. Presentation of the Funding Framework and Financial Status of the UN Haiti Cholera Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund
6. Review of Project Proposal and Fund Allocation
7. AOB
8. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

## **Opening of the 5<sup>th</sup> Advisory Committee Meeting on the United Nations Haiti Cholera Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) – Welcome and Introductory Remarks**

Ms. Josette Sheeran, Special Envoy for Haiti and Ms. Michelle Gyles-McDonnough, Director, Sustainable Development Unit, Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG), opened the 5<sup>th</sup> Advisory Committee Meeting of the United Nations Haiti Cholera Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) which was held virtually.

Ms. Sheeran informed that she was not well but did not want to miss the meeting. She welcomed and greeted the participants, Board Members, Observers as well as the DSRSG/HC/RC on the ground in Haiti and the representative of USAID, Mr. Joshua Hodges, who joined the Advisory Committee Board at this time. Ms. Sheeran noted that USAID was the single largest contributor, joining the other nations in the eradication of cholera in Haiti. She expressed her appreciation to the participants for their continuous support.

Ms. Sheeran went on to state that the UN Haiti Cholera Response MPTF had more unity of nations than any other MPTF and that Haiti was now in the final stages of the fight to eradicate cholera, as there had been no confirmed cases since February 2019. She noted the importance of maintaining strong epidemiological and infectious disease control systems to continue the cholera response, and that those same systems could serve as the backbone of the COVID-19 response. She highlighted that there was a great and dedicated team on the ground in Haiti that had been leading the response and were operating under a jointly devised plan by the Government of Haiti and the United Nations (UN). Finally, she noted that the UNDP MPTF maintained a transparent methodology, so anyone was able to see how funds were allocated and disbursed. She thanked everyone again and referred to their important leading roles and gave the floor to the representative of the Government of Haiti for his introductory remarks.

## **Introductory Remarks from the Government of Haiti**

H.E. Mr. Patrick Saint Hilaire, Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Haiti to the United Nations, thanked the Special Envoy, wishing her a speedy recovery, and the MPTF Office for convening the 5<sup>th</sup> Advisory Committee meeting, noting that it was a challenging time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that the meeting provided the opportunity again to thank all the contributing Member States, including USAID, on behalf of the Government of Haiti, for their contributions to the Fund. He also thanked the UN team and the Haitian health authorities and local communities who shared credit for the progress made in the fight against the cholera epidemic. He stated that they remained encouraged by the tireless dedication and leadership of the Special Envoy.

Ambassador Saint Hilaire continued by noting that it was a crucial time for his country which has a responsibility to provide lasting responses to a combination of crises. He highlighted the challenge to the Government to remain focused on the fight to eliminate cholera, while at the same time contending with the new situation created by COVID-19. He informed that Haiti had recorded 596 officially confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection and 22 deaths, and that an acceleration of the pandemic in the coming weeks risked putting Haiti in grave danger. He called on international partners to support the Government, which is working to provide basic health services, information, supply of drinking water, sanitation, hygiene and nutrition for the affected people and communities. Additionally, lessons learned from the cholera strategy, in particular the establishment of rapid response teams, could certainly be used in the response to the coronavirus.

In concluding, Ambassador Saint Hilaire said that now, more than ever, decisive action was needed. The eradication of the cholera epidemic was within reach and the improvement of the national health system was possible. While the main challenge for his Government remained the lack of technical and financial resources commensurate with health challenges, it could be overcome with combined political will to rebuild the national health system by mobilizing adequate and predictable resources. Further, significant changes in international aid modalities was required but that international aid must be part of a clear strategy for the sustainable strengthening of national capacities and sustainable development. The current health crisis required major changes in terms of strengthening country resilience, partnership, and concerted action on health indicators.

*His remarks were complemented by the reassurances from the Director of the Sustainable Development Unit in maintaining the cooperation with partners on the Committee and the solidarity of the UN to complete the last mile to eradicate cholera in Haiti. She paid tribute to the Haitian partners, health workers who were critical to*

*the success in the journey thus far to eliminate cholera. Health system strengthening would continue to be a priority.*

### **Inclusion of the United States as an Advisory Committee Board Member**

*The Director of the Sustainable Development Unit extended a warm welcome to the representative of USAID, Mr. Joshua Hodges, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Latin American and the Caribbean, and noted that the Committee was pleased to have USAID/him on the Committee and invited Mr. Hodges to speak.*

Mr. Hodges thanked her for the introduction and for formally welcoming USAID. He informed that USAID planned to optimize the use of funds to support the continued work on eliminating cholera in Haiti and to integrate efforts and expand and coordinate activities. He concluded by stating that USAID appreciated building a partnership and acknowledged the progress made over previous years.

### **Situation Update on Haiti**

*Ms. Gyles-McDonnough thanked Mr. Hodges again and moved to the situation update on Haiti, inviting the Representative of the Special Envoy, Mr. Ramsey Ben-Achour, to address the Committee.*

The representative of the Special Envoy, Mr. Ramsey Ben-Achour, informed the Advisory Committee that there had been no laboratory-confirmed cases or deaths related to cholera for 16 consecutive months, demonstrating that Haiti was well on its way to declaring cholera eliminated. To formally declare an end to cholera in Haiti required meeting three major prerequisites developed by the Global Task Force on Cholera Control: i) evidence of the interruption of cholera transmission, with no locally acquired cases reported during the previous three years; ii) a proven capacity to prevent the re-establishment of cholera transmission and to maintain the elimination status; and iii) the presence of a well-functioning surveillance and response system that was able to identify potential cases of cholera.

Mr. Ben-Achour noted that the first and second of the three criteria were currently being met, as evidenced by a consistent and progressive improvement in annual trends in both incidence as well as rate of positivity. The third and final criterion required additional support to meet global standards. By strengthening the Ministry of Health and Population's (MSPP) surveillance and alert-response system at the institutional and community level and increasing water, sanitation and hygiene preventive measures, Haiti would be on track to be declared cholera-free by early 2022. In addition to working towards the cholera eradication declaration, investments in cholera control systems were also having positive impacts on Haiti's abilities to respond to other health crises. This is in line with the stated goals of the Government of Haiti's National Plan to Eliminate Cholera, that investments in the

cholera response should be made with the additional aim to increase Haiti's resilience against and ability to combat other diseases, including the current COVID-19 pandemic.

With regard to track 2 of the Secretary-General's (SG) New Approach, the UN continued its efforts to raise funds from Member States to deploy in support of this commitment outlined in the New Approach to Cholera. While those appeals continue, the UN was ensuring that initial funds were deployed to the hardest hit communities in a way determined by the affected communities and victims. To maximize the impact of these extremely limited funds, the UN has deployed an innovative community support program in 25 communities, empowering victims of cholera to identify their and their communities' priorities, design projects that responded to them, and work hand in hand with the UN to implement these projects. He noted that while these efforts did not preclude broader support if funds were identified, the UN was preparing to expand this project to upwards of 20 new communities in the near future. In total, the UN aimed to target 134 of the hardest hit communities throughout Haiti.

Mr. Ben-Achour noted that he would provide additional detail on track 1a later on in the meeting during the presentation of the funding proposal. He handed over to the DSRSG who was on the ground in Haiti to update on COVID-19.

*Ms. Gyles-McDonnough thanked Mr. Ben-Achour and invited the DSRSG/RC/HC of BINUH to add any update on the COVID-19 pandemic.*

The DSRSG/RC/HC of BINUH, Mr. Bruno Lemarquis, wished the Special Envoy well, greeted the Ambassador of Haiti and members of the Advisory Committee and other participants. He started by emphasizing that it was important to invest in the resilience of Haiti's health systems which were fragile and had undergone shocks under COVID-19. A more resilient health system was needed. He noted that COVID-19 came late to Haiti but in the past week, exposure on the ground was exploding, as if the health workers were being hit by tsunamis. While the Government of Haiti was responding via the Ministry of Health and Population and a Presidential Commission to combat COVID-19, it was important to build on lessons learned from cholera. Testing in Haiti, which relied on laboratory capacity and access to test kits, was an important priority for the response, as were hospital care capacity and public education. He noted that there was a lot of denial in the country that COVID-19 really existed, but that notwithstanding, health workers needed to be equipped and trained in COVID-19 preparedness and response. There had been a high number of people who crossed the border from the Dominican Republic and health workers needed to be trained in detecting for COVID-19 at the borders. The DSRSG informed that he was available to provide any other details that may be needed.

*Ms. Michelle Gyles-McDonnough thanked Mr. Lemarquis for the update on the ground and opened floor to Committee members for comments, remarks, or questions. There were none at this time, so she proceeded to the next Agenda item, the Funding Framework and gave the floor to Ms. Jennifer Topping, Executive Coordinator of the*

*Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTFO), in her capacity as Administrative Agent of the UN Haiti Cholera Response MPTF.*

### **Presentation of the Funding Framework and Financial Status of the Haiti Cholera Response MPTF**

After sending her best wishes to the Special Envoy for a swift recovery and greeting the Ambassador of Haiti and all participants, Ms. Topping updated the Advisory Committee Members on the financial status of the Trust Fund. She also informed the participants that the 2019 UN Haiti Cholera Response MPTF Certified Financial Statement would be posted by the end of May on the MPTF Office Gateway, according to the legal agreement. She presented the Funding Framework, circulated before the meeting to the Members, which contained information on donor commitments and contributions, as well as transfers to Recipient Organizations and expenditures reported. Details to date included \$20.5 million deposits received from 43 countries and donors, adding that the Haiti Cholera Response MPTF was one of the most widely subscribed funds. She thanked USAID for its contribution of \$10 million, received since the last meeting and now recorded and available for programming. Transfers to the Recipient Organizations were \$10.2 million, leaving \$10.3 million as the programmable amount available for the next round of decisions to support the Office of the Special Envoy.

*Ms. Gyles-McDonnough thanked Ms. Topping for her clear presentation on the financial health of the Fund, as well as for the transparent management of the Fund. Ms. Gyles-McDonnough then opened the floor for questions and as none was received, the meeting continued with the presentation of the joint project proposal of UNICEF/PAHO presented by Mr. Ramsey Ben-Achour, the Representative of the Special Envoy.*

### **Presentation and review of the project proposal**

The Representative of the Special Envoy, Mr. Ramsey Ben-Achour, presented the joint proposal of UNICEF and PAHO, which he informed was developed in close coordination with the Office of the Special Envoy for Haiti (OSE), for the continued funding of track 1a of the Secretary-General's New Approach to Cholera. Under the framework of the Government's National Plan, he noted that the proposal aims to bolster Haiti's ability to achieve elimination status by 2022, while simultaneously strengthening Haiti's systems and infrastructure to build its resilience, not only against cholera but also other infectious diseases. The proposal builds on significant investments already made by the UN system, totaling over \$134 million since 2010, as well as investments by the international community in Haiti's epidemiological, water and sanitation, health, laboratory testing and emergency response capacities.

He pointed out that the overall objective of the project was to support the Government of Haiti's National Plan for Cholera Elimination (NPCE, 2013-2022) to achieve cholera elimination status by 2022, while bolstering the capacity of the Ministry of Health and Population and the Directorate of Water Supply and Sanitation (DINEPA) to prevent and respond to new cases of cholera, as well as other infectious diseases, such as the current COVID-19 challenge.

He explained that a significant component of the proposal focused on improving Haiti's surveillance capacity to enable the surveillance system to adapt to new realities on the ground. In particular, he noted that the system was formerly based on identifying suspected cases in the hundreds of cholera treatment centres throughout the country. However, as 16 months had gone by without any confirmed cases, the centres were being progressively shut down. The proposal would allow for a shift in strategy, focusing on fewer sentinel sites throughout the country where specimens could be collected and then transported to laboratories—which had been strengthened and expanded under previous track 1a interventions.

*Ms. Gyles-McDonnough thanked Mr. Ben-Achour and emphasized the importance of the proposal before the Committee. In the next year-and-a-half remaining to declare cholera eliminated, strengthening the health systems was a crucial step at this time, and as well for the COVID-19 response. Ms. Gyles-McDonnough then invited questions, comments, or remarks on the project. The representative of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Byung-seok Yoo, took the floor.*

Mr. Yoo thanked the OSE team for arranging the meeting, wished the Special Envoy a speedy recovery and welcomed USAID to the Advisory Committee Board. He stated that having a US partner would guide the Committee by boosting the political and financial reach of the Committee. He was happy to hear of the project which the Republic of Korea considered a good and important project.

*Ms. Gyles-McDonnough welcomed the comments from the representative of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Byung-seok Yoo, and thanked him for his Government's support of Haiti.*

*There were no further interventions, which Ms. Gyles-McDonnough said she would take as positive and that Members were in agreement with the project. She further stated that she would then move forward with the motion to allocate funding in support of the proposal. The proposal presented by Mr. Ramsey C. Ben-Achour was positively received by the members of the Advisory Committee and approved by consensus. Ms. Gyles-McDonnough thanked the Committee for giving its stamp of approval to move forward.*

### **AOB and Closing remarks**

*Ms. Gyles-McDonnough then returned to Ambassador Saint Hilaire and the Special Envoy for their final comments.*

Ambassador Saint Hilaire thanked the Special Envoy, Ms. Gyles-McDonnough and the members of the Committee for their support. He also thanked the UN team on ground and stated that he was happy to see the US on board. Haiti's national health system was fragile and he knew that everyone was aware of the difficult situation faced by Haiti.

The Special Envoy thanked everyone for their get-well wishes and the Committee for its support and expressed confidence that Haiti would overcome COVID-19.

*Ms. Gyles-McDonnough also welcomed final comments from the representative of the US.*

Mr. Hodges reaffirmed his support and commitment to learn and work together on COVID-19 and cholera. He stated that the US had contributed \$10 billion globally, including \$13.2 million in aid to Haiti. So, he looked forward to working with everyone.

*Ms. Gyles-McDonnough expressed her support for UNICEF and PAHO and their work, noting that the project was a game-changer. She noted the importance of working with PAHO to track and monitor the spread of disease, as early detection leads to a better response.*

*She thanked the Special Envoy and wished her a speedy recovery.*

*She then closed the meeting with thanks again to the national health officials and partners, and the UN team on ground, as they work to finish the job. She welcomed the US again, noting that it was very important to have the US collaboration in the trust fund. All partners were deeply committed to continue the efforts together.*

The meeting was adjourned at 3:56 p.m.