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15 December 2017

Dear Blessi,

I am writing in response to the “*Open letter regarding need for transparent, thoughtful process to determine the next WHO Global TB Program Director*” that you sent to me on 11 December 2017.

First, let me say that I appreciate your support and commitment to working together to end TB. TB is a very high priority for me personally and for WHO. As you know, in September we included TB as an R&D priority in the *WHO Priority Pathogen Report*.

By any measure, the WHO Global Ministerial Conference in Moscow last month gave us a significant boost moving into next year’s UN High-Level Meeting on TB. I am convinced that we have an historic opportunity to finally make real progress in the fight against TB.

Of course the fight against TB is part of a broader global movement for Universal Health Coverage. Increasing access to basic healthcare for every person – wherever they live – has been central to my work in Ethiopia and now as the Director General of WHO. And I am deeply grateful for the unprecedented support that UHC received at this week’s UHC Forum that was sponsored by the Government of Japan, WHO and other partners.

In your open letter, you correctly note that I have invested significant time and energy engaging with TB organizations and civil society. You can be assured that I will continue to listen and engage with all stakeholders.

Later today, I will be announcing the appointment of eight new Directors - including the Director of WHO’s TB Program that you refer to in your letter. This follows the appointment of two new Deputy Director Generals and 11 new Assistant Deputy Generals in October. These DDG and ADG appointments drew widespread recognition for the quality of the individuals and our commitment to ensuring gender and geographical diversity. For the first time, women outnumber men in the top leadership of WHO.

The new directors being announced today are also highly-qualified. They come from eight countries – and importantly – seven of the eight new directors are women, continuing my commitment to gender equity. I will continue to do the same because it is the right thing for the organization and for global health.

You and some of your colleagues suggest that the TB Director should be selected in the same manner as has been done in past years. But with WHO facing urgent challenges – and unique opportunities such as the High-Level UN Meeting on TB – I felt strongly that we needed to fill these new director positions with high-quality individuals who could hit the ground running urgently, without waiting for the unusually long recruitment process.

And I am confident that we have found the right person to lead the TB Program at WHO – Dr. Tereza Kasaeva, who is currently the Director of the Department of Medical Care in the Ministry of Health in the Russian Federation. Dr. Kaseava is an MD with a Ph.D. in public health focusing on the perfection of technologies for outpatient TB treatment and 25 years of public health experience. In addition, she has a master's degree in international relations with a focus on world politics and governance.

I was elected on a campaign promise to quickly strengthen WHO and its efforts to improve the health of the world's citizens as well as bring gender equity and geographic diversity in merit based manner. With appointments like these, I am delivering on my campaign promise.

Looking forward, with WHO's leadership team now in place, we are already working with experts on refining the recruitment process to tackle some of the unconscious biases that have created gender and geographic inequities – and to ensure we can more quickly and efficiently bring in diverse talent where we have gaps. My aim is to make WHO a model organization for gender equity and parity and geographic diversity in the coming few years.

In leading the TB program, Dr. Kasaeva will be working closely with WHO's Deputy Director Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, who is herself a renowned TB expert, and myself. We are committed to make WHO's TB program truly world-class. In doing this, we will work effectively with stakeholders across all sectors and regions – including civil society. As I hope I have already demonstrated, I operate with an open-door policy for both internal and external stakeholders, so please don't hesitate to reach out any time.

Working together, I am confident we can take advantage of the extraordinary opportunity we have and finally make real, meaningful progress against TB.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General