

May 10, 2022

Dear President Biden:

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected every part of the world, causing over an estimated 14.9 million deathsⁱ and trillions of dollars of lost economic productivityⁱⁱ.

While people in the United States have had access to vaccines for more than a year, and Covid-19 testing and treatments are widely available, countries across the global South continue to be devastated. Almost 3 billion people remain entirely unvaccinated. The Covid-19 death toll is estimated to be four times higher in lower-income countries than in rich countries. With global Covid-19 infection rates again on the rise and millions more unvaccinated including refugees due to the wars in Ukraine, Yemen and other conflicts, much work remains undone to end the acute phase of the pandemic globally.

Billions of people are being ignored, as many parts of the rich world turn away from them, and in turn being left unprotected from this cruel, deadly and debilitating disease.

Mr. President – your leadership can revive the global Covid-19 response. We value that the U.S. is co-hosting a second Global Covid-19 Summit on May 12. We write to express our wholehearted hope that your administration will step up to provide leadership on financing the global response, encouraging other countries to follow you, as is both urgent and necessary to help save lives across the world.

We specifically urge your government to appropriate the minimum \$5 billion that is needed immediately for the international response. We recognize that the U.S. stepping up its commitment is vital to incentivising pledges from other nations.

We underline that global financing is absolutely mission critical, alongside a truly comprehensive intellectual property waiver which you have supported at the World Trade Organization, and the transfer of technologies through the World Health Organization. Financing is essential if we are to increase access to vaccines across the world, as it is for testing and equipment, and for building the staffing and the capacity to deliver these medical treatments.

The U.S. has a long and distinguished history of global health leadership. We applaud your vision in convening last year's Global Covid-19 Summit: Ending the Pandemic and Building Back Betterⁱⁱⁱ. During that conference, you called on other world leaders to meet the World Health Organization target of 70 percent global vaccination coverage by September 2022. You pledged to help vaccinate the entire world. You announced that the U.S. would donate 1.1 billion vaccine doses to low- and middle-income countries by September 2022 and that "America will become the arsenal of vaccines as we were the arsenal of democracy during World War Two."^{iv} Your bold promise gave hope to millions of people in developing countries waiting at the back of the line for lifesaving Covid-19 vaccines that those shots were on the way. Indeed, we value and recognize that the U.S. has delivered over half a billion donated vaccine doses to over 100 countries.

Yet today our world is off-track. Only 15% of people in low-income countries have received at least one Covid-19 vaccine dose^v, while the U.S. is not meeting its own dose donation targets. The lack of funding endangers the lives of people in the U.S. and around the world and risks the emergence of new and more deadly virus variants that will prolong the pandemic. As WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus noted, the pandemic "will not be over anywhere until it's over everywhere"^{vi}.

The consequences of the lack of critical funding for the global Covid-19 response^{vii} are clear. It will damage global vaccination and Covid-19 treatment efforts. We understand that without additional funding, the U.S. will have to cut short efforts to get vaccines into arms in low- and middle-income countries, leaving doses that your government has already purchased and donated to expire on the shelves. In addition, your government will be unable to provide more life-saving supplies, tests, therapeutics, oxygen, and humanitarian aid to countries struggling to manage a heavy Covid-19 disease burden.

Mr President – governments, communities, and families the world over are looking to you for leadership. Responsibility for the global Covid-19 response is shared amongst nations, but the United States has a unique leadership role in global health and a special duty to lead the world’s response - as it did before on HIV, helping to save millions of lives.

By meeting its responsibilities, the U.S. can lead the world out of the pandemic. The upcoming second Global Covid-19 Summit must be a pivotal point in confronting a common global threat. We appeal to the U.S. government to promptly approve at least \$5 billion for the international effort, so that the critical work of containing the global pandemic can continue. Lives and livelihoods depend on it.

Sincerely,

Joyce Banda – President of the Republic of Malawi (2012-14)

Gordon Brown – Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (2007-2010)

Helen Clark - Prime Minister of New Zealand (1999-2008)

Shirin Ebadi – Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (2003)

Leymah Roberta Gbowee — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (2011)

Elfriede Jelinek — Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature (2004)

Tawakkol Karman — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (2011)

Sir Richard J. Roberts, Ph.D. F.R.S. – Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine (1993)

Mary Robinson – President of Ireland (1990-97)

Juan Manuel Santos – President of Colombia (2010–18) and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (2016)

Joseph E. Stiglitz — Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics (2001)

Jody Williams – Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1997)

Muhammad Yunus – Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (2006)

ⁱ <https://www.who.int/news/item/05-05-2022-14.9-million-excess-deaths-were-associated-with-the-covid-19-pandemic-in-2020-and-2021>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2021/10/12/world-economic-outlook-october-2021>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/24/global-covid-19-summit-ending-the-pandemic-and-building-back-better/>

^{iv} <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/22/remarks-by-president-biden-at-virtual-global-covid-19-summit/>

^v <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations>

^{vi} <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19-and-ukraine-9-march-2022>

^{vii} <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/15/fact-sheet-consequences-of-lack-of-funding-for-efforts-to-combat-covid-19-if-congress-does-not-act>