

Tel. direct: +41 22 791 2984  
Fax direct: +41 22 791 4841  
E-mail : shiekhm@who.int  
In reply please  
refer to:

The Honorable Gordon Brown  
*Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great  
Britain and Northern Ireland*  
London  
United Kingdom

Your reference:

Mr Robert Bruce Zoellick  
*President*  
The World Bank  
1818 H Street  
Washington, DC 20433  
USA

Geneva, 15 June 2009

Dear Prime Minister Brown and Mr Zoellick,

### **High-Level Task Force on Innovative Financing**

As you are aware, public health today is facing a serious global challenge with access to trained health workers. This has been a significant obstacle to addressing basic development challenges as well as in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Leadership at the highest level is a critical and necessary key to resolving this crisis. At present, inadequate funding for expanding and strengthening the health workforce is one of the greatest obstacles to addressing this shortage.

The Global Health Workforce Alliance (the "Alliance") is an international partnership of governments, UN agencies, professional associations, NGOs, foundations, research and training institutions and the private sector. The Alliance is dedicated to identifying and facilitating solutions to the health workforce crisis. The Alliance is hosted and administered by the World Health Organization (WHO). The vision of the Alliance is for all people everywhere to have access to a skilled, motivated and supported health worker within a robust health system. Its mission is to advocate and catalyze country and global actions to resolve the human resources for health crisis, to support the achievement of the health-related Millennium Development Goals and health for all.

The Alliance welcomes your leadership in recognizing and articulating the urgent need to put the health workforce at the center of health systems and in striving to strengthen these systems. We applaud you for your efforts in bringing this very important issue to the forefront of discussions on Innovative International Financing for Health Systems. In the lead-up to the 2009 G8 Summit, please permit me to bring to your attention concerns that we have about the current process. In particular, we are requesting the Taskforce to:

- provide greater clarity and transparency with regard to how Working Group One derived its estimates of the number and make-up of health workers required according to the several costing scenarios included in their paper

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- provide greater clarity and transparency on costing assumptions as they relate to health workers, including assumptions about financing retention incentives to serve in rural areas, along with compensation and support for community health workers
- recommend that the G8 considers endorsing the currency transaction tax -- as it offers real promise in helping close much needed financing for health systems
- ensure that any mechanism emerging from HLTF recommendations enables a portion of the funds identified to be effectively allocated to the training and retention of the global health workforce - with attention paid to both professional and non-professional cadres

The creation of the Alliance prompted the first-ever Global Forum on Human Resources for Health held in Kampala last year (March 2008). Building on commitment already made by high-level policy makers from around the world on addressing the global health workforce crisis, the Kampala Declaration and Agenda for Action underscored the critical role played by high-level leadership, the challenges of partnership, the need for behavior change and the key steps needed towards resolving the crisis.

The Alliance recognizes the key role of the Task Force in advocating for increasing investments to scale-up training capacity of health workers, especially in the 57 countries that WHO has identified as priorities and for retaining, equitably distributing and supporting these health workers. New and innovative initiatives are urgently needed to increase the numbers of trained health workers. This requires scaling-up investment in education, skill-mix and remuneration of the workforce as laid-out in the Kampala Declaration and Agenda for Global Action.

I would be pleased to discuss the above further with you and others involved in the Taskforce. I also request that the Alliance be formally invited to be part of the processes that the Taskforce has recommended to further address health systems strengthening. In particular, we would be interested in being fully part of the review on HSS technical assistance (Recommendation 8) and of the processes to establish a health systems funding platform to support national health strategies (Recommendation 9). We would also like to be part of the ongoing consultations and discussions to implement the Taskforce's recommendations and to monitor progress (Recommendation 10).

On behalf of the Alliance, I wish to thank you for this opportunity to express our views and recommendations.

I remain.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Mubashar Sheikh  
Executive Director  
Global Health Workforce Alliance