September 19, 2016

His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon
United Nations Secretary-General
United Nations Headquarters
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

We, the undersigned experts on international law, human rights, public health, and development, are writing regarding the United Nations’ recent acknowledgment that it played a role in causing the cholera epidemic in Haiti. The United Nations now has a critical opportunity to develop a response consistent with its international legal obligations and with international human rights norms. To do so, the response must include a public apology, compensation for victims, and full funding for cholera elimination. Moreover, the process must be inclusive and transparent, and involve participation of Haitians throughout.

In order to discharge its duties to victims, the Secretariat must build on its acceptance of responsibility through concrete actions. Established human rights principles, coupled with the rule of law, require an effective remedy, which entails acknowledgment of responsibility, specific institutional steps to guarantee non-repetition, and meaningful reparations. Human rights and rule-of-law commitments further require inclusivity and transparency of process in the development of a remedy. Any solution the United Nations adopts must observe these substantive and procedural norms.

An effective remedy requires: (1) issuing a formal, public apology to the victims of cholera in Haiti, (2) ensuring full funding of the previously announced but largely unfunded cholera elimination plan, (3) committing to providing victims of the epidemic with material compensation in a timely fashion, and (4) implementing a transparent and participatory process. The Secretariat must also exercise the leadership necessary to ensure robust funding for its new approach.

We emphasize that the substantive content of the United Nations’ remedial program must be matched by a fair process for development of the program. Transparency and substantive participation of the persons most affected by the epidemic will both enhance the credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations’ response and affirm the dignity of the Haitian people. An effective process will further incorporate expert perspectives from the fields of public health and development and should respect the role of the government of Haiti.

We are writing to urge the United Nations to demonstrate that it is willing to move from evasion to accountability and from secrecy to transparency in responding to the cholera epidemic. The United Nations must seize the opportunity to chart a new course, restore its credibility and integrity, and finally bring this tragic chapter to a close.
Sincerely,

Upendra Dev Acharya*  
Associate Professor  
Gonzaga University School of Law,  
Spokane, WA

Olivier De Schutter*  
Professor, Catholic University of Louvain  
Former Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food (2008-2014)

Muneer Ahmad*  
Clinical Professor of Law  
Yale Law School

Dr Carla Ferstman*  
Director of REDRESS

Lea Brilmayer*  
Howard M. Holtzmann Professor of International Law  
Yale Law School

Martin S. Flaherty*  
Leitner Family Professor of International Human Rights Law  
Founding Co-Director, Leitner Center of International Law and Justice  
Fordham Law School  
Visiting Professor, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs

Christen Broecker*  
Associate Director, Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights

Laurel E. Fletcher*  
Clinical Professor of Law  
University of California Berkeley

Christine Chanet*  
Former Chair of the UN Human Rights Committee

Rosa Freedman*  
Professor of Law and Global Development  
Director of the Global Development Division  
University of Reading

Dr Richard Collins*  
Lecturer in International Law  
University College Dublin

Felice Gaer*  
Director Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights  
UN Committee Against Torture

Gen Romeo Dallaire (ret'd)*  
Founder of the Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative

Paolo Galizzi*  
Clinical Professor of Law  
Director, Sustainable Development Legal Initiative (SDLI)  
Leitner Center for International Law and Justice  
Fordham Law School

Tom Dannenbaum*  
Lecturer in Human Rights, Director MA in Human Rights  
University College London

Gráinne de Búrca*  
Florence Ellinwood Allen Professor of Law  
Director, Hauser Global Law School  
New York University School of Law

*All titles are for identification purposes only
Kul Gautam*  
Former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF

Gregg Gonsalves*  
Co-Director, Global Health Justice Partnership of the Yale Law School and the School of Public Health

Ian Hurd*  
Associate Professor of Political Science and Director of International Studies Northwestern University

Jens Iverson*  
Assistant Professor of Public International Law University of Leiden

Professor Sarah Joseph*  
Director, Castan Centre for Human Rights Law Monash University, Melbourne

Albert Icksang Ko, M.D.*  
Professor and Chair, Department of Epidemiology of Microbial Diseases Yale School of Public Health

Nico Krisch*  
Professor of International Law Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva

Nicolas Lemay-Hebert*  
Senior Lecturer University of Birmingham

Stephen Lewis*  
Co-director, AIDS-Free World

Frédéric Mégret*  
Associate Professor William Dawson Scholar McGill University

Alice M. Miller*  
Co-Director, Global Health Justice Partnership of the Yale Law School and the School of Public Health

Carole D. Mitnick, Sc.D.*  
Associate Professor, Department of Global Health & Social Medicine Harvard Medical School

Aoife Nolan*  
Professor of International Human Rights Law School of Law, University of Nottingham

Manfred Nowak*  
Professor of International Human Rights University of Vienna Secretary General

Deborah Alejandra Popowski*  
Executive Director Center for Human Rights and Global Justice NYU School of Law

Fran Quigley*  
Clinical Professor and Director, Health and Human Rights Clinic Indiana University McKinney School of Law

Nikki Reisch*  
Adjunct Professor of Clinical Law/Legal Director Center for Human Rights and Global Justice NYU School of Law

Allan Rock*  
Professor Faculty of Law University of Ottawa

*All titles are for identification purposes only
Simon Rushton*
Centre on Global Health Security, Chatham House

Margaret L. Satterthwaite*
Professor of Clinical Law
NYU School of Law

James J. Silk*
Clinical Professor of Law
Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic
Yale Law School

Marie St. Fleur, Esq.*
Former, State Representative,
Massachusetts

Krister Thelin*
Chief Justice of Appeal (ret.), Sweden

Theo van Boven*
Professor of International Law
Maastricht University, Netherlands
Former Special Rapporteur on the right to Restitution, Compensation and Rehabilitation for Victims of Gross Violations of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

Sten H. Vermund, MD, PhD*
Professor of Pediatrics and Director
Vanderbilt Institute for Global Health

Philippa Webb*
Reader (Associate Professor) in Public International Law
King’s College London

Inga Winkler*
Lecturer in the Discipline of Human Rights
Institute for the Study of Human Rights / Political Science Department
Columbia University

*All titles are for identification purposes only