

7 April 2014

**Message of H.E. John W. Ashe
President of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly,
for World Health Day**

Around the world, countries and communities take this opportunity to recognize the importance of world health and to celebrate the day with activities aimed at promoting good health for everyone.

The enjoyment of good health is a fundamental human right for all people, wherever they live, whatever their religion, political beliefs, or economic status. World Health Day is an opportunity to remind us all of these fundamental principles that were agreed upon by representatives of 61 Member States here in New York back in July 1946. In line with the global WHO theme this year, I urge the international community to draw their attention to vector-borne diseases.

More than one million people die from diseases carried by mosquitoes, flies, ticks and bugs every year. These vector-borne diseases – which include malaria, dengue, yellow fever, Japanese encephalitis, Chagas disease and leishmaniasis – cause chronic illness and immense suffering for hundreds of millions of people. These diseases thrive among communities with poor living conditions, particularly those lacking access to adequate housing, safe drinking water and sanitation. Malnourished people and those with weakened immunity are especially vulnerable.

Vector-borne diseases exacerbate poverty since they impose a significant economic burden on families and countries, both in health care costs and lost productivity. With ever-increasing globalization of travel and trade in conjunction with ongoing changes to the world's man-made and natural environments, more people are being exposed to the vectors that transmit these diseases.

As we look to advance the Post 2015 Development Agenda, we know that we already have effective means of preventing and treating many of these diseases. Between 2004 and 2013, international donors funded over 700 million bednets to protect families against malaria in sub-Saharan Africa.

Sustained political commitment and financial backing aimed at amplifying the global effort would save millions of more lives and protect over a billion people against needless suffering.

This World Health Day, I remind all Member States, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders that we need to act against this threat to human health and development. Let us work together to make vector control and disease prevention a priority in the global health agenda.