For the kind attention of  
Dr. Margaret Chan  
Director General, The World Health Organization

(Please convey the following message to Dr. Chan)

Dear Dr. Margaret Chan,

The People’s Health Movement (PHM) takes great pleasure in welcoming you as the next Director General of the World Health Organisation.

As you know, the PHM was active, along with others, in trying to ensure that the election was conducted in a manner that was transparent and which would ultimately identify the best candidate to lead an organisation dedicated to protecting and promoting the health of people worldwide, with a particular responsibility of reducing inequalities in health and health care.

You were one of the candidates who took the trouble to respond to a set of questions that we posed to all the candidates. We appreciate your replies, particularly those which reflect your commitment to:

• “the Alma Ata principles of Primary Health Care”
• “revitalise WHO health system agenda to support countries in building their sustainable national capacities”
• “work of the Commission of the Social Determinants of Health in narrowing health inequalities through their recommendations for action on the social determinants”
• “the strengthening of relations with Civil Society” and “listening closely to grassroots voices”
• “transparency; removal of influence of special interests; evidence-based practice; and the work ethic based on competencies; collaboration and pride in achieving results for Health”.

Only a strong team with good leadership and a pool of skills and experiences can take WHO forward into the 21st century. We hope that you will recruit individuals into your senior management team with the following competencies to complement those that you already demonstrate:

• the will and passion to institutionalise WHO’s work on a rights-based and equity-oriented framework;
• ability to communicate and develop the principles of the Alma Ata Declaration and the Primary Health Care Approach as the basis for all WHO activities;
• intellectual leadership and expertise and experience from the social, economic and political sciences to enable WHO and its member states to take action on the social determinants of health;
• sustained experience of working in developing-country contexts;
• diplomatic skills to bring coherence to a fragmented and chaotic global health landscape; and
• courage and expertise to champion public health over profits and the narrow expediencies of commercial activity.

It is time that WHO becomes an organisation of the people, and not just an organisation of governments and officials. We look forward to a renewal and strengthening of WHO’s civil
society initiative and commit ourselves to working with you to enhance your efforts through a
positive collaboration. We would like to recall a message from the late Dr. Lee Jong Wook to
the delegates of the Second People’s Health Assembly, which was held in Cuenca last year.
He noted:

“Our objective is the same, and our methods complement each other: working
with governments and with non-governmental groups to protect and promote
the health of all peoples. By combining our strengths and uniting our efforts,
we have achieved a great deal and we will achieve a great deal more
together…. as the People’s Charter for Health puts it, our common vision is “a
healthy life for all”. Thank you for adding your voices and your strength to the
pursuit of this great objective”.

The future success of WHO will also depend on it being properly funded and freed from too
many donor-driven agendas. The secretariat must also be allowed to function without
inappropriate and undue influence from the vested interests of particular countries or
corporate interests. PHM will endeavour to campaign for a more enabling environment for
WHO itself.

We offer you our solidarity in working towards equity in health and request a formal meeting
with you at the earliest convenient time. Please let us know with whom we should liaise in
order to set up such a meeting.

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of People’s Health Movement,

Hani Serag, Egypt
PHM Global Secretariat Coordinator
Fran Baum, Australia
PHM Commissioner, WHO-CSDH
Ravi Narayan, India
Outgoing Coordinator, PHM Global Secretariat
David McCoy, UK
WHO Advocacy Circle - PHM
Zafrullah Chowdhry, Bangladesh
Gonoshasthya Kendra, PHM Bangladesh
Martin Khor, Malaysia
Third World Network
David Sanders, South Africa
Global Health Watch, PHM South Africa
David Legge, Australia
International People’s Health University, PHM Australia
Prem John, India
India Asian Community Health Action Network
Maria Zuniga, Nicaragua
PHM, Nicaragua
Delen de la Paz, Philippines
PHM Philippines
Bala, Sri Lanka
Health Action International
Manoj Kurian, Geneva
World Council of Churches, PHM Geneva
Slim Slama, Geneva
Geneva Hospital, PHM Geneva

Thelma Narayan, India
PHM India

Ghassan Issa, Lebanon
PHM Lebanon

Arturo Quizhpe, Ecuador
PHM Ecuador

Alexis Benos, Greece
PHM Europe

Ted Shrecker, Canada
University of Ottawa

Ron Labonte, Canada
University of Ottawa

Kumanan Rasanathan, New Zealand
PHM New Zealand

Wim de Ceukelaire, Belgium
PHM Europe