

# GLOBAL APPEAL 2016

To end stigma and discrimination  
against people affected by leprosy

Tuesday, January 26, 2016

Tokyo, Japan

## Statement by

Dr. Otmar Kloiber

Secretary General

World Medical Association

Honorable Chairman of The Nippon Foundation,

Mr. Sasakawa,

Distinguished Guests,

First of all, let me express the gratitude of the World Medical Association for your initiative to support the victims of Leprosy, to fight stigma and discrimination. But let me also say thank you for involving the World Medical Association in this appeal.

Coming from a country where leprosy can only be seen on TV, your visit to the World Medical Association in 2011 and your invitation to join the Global Appeal was a wake-up call for me. We all too often see only what we are used to seeing, or what we want to see, and Leprosy, I must confess, was not on our list.

The World Medical Association usually does not focus on individual diseases or illnesses. Since the organization was founded in 1947, we have been the global platform for developing the rules for the medical profession. When we speak out about a single disease, we do this because we know it needs our attention. Leprosy needs the attention of all of us.

On the initiative of the Nippon-

the right of people affected with leprosy and members of their families, that they should be treated with dignity and free from any kind of prejudice or discrimination. Physicians, health professionals and civil society should be engaged in combating all forms of prejudice and

Although it can affect everybody, those populations around the world which are economically disadvantaged clearly appear to be more affected than affluent communities.

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The diagnosis of leprosy came and unfortunately still comes with the mechanisms of stigmatization and segregation. This drives patients with leprosy and their families into an even steeper downward social spiral. A development that is unfair, unnecessary and damaging.

