

# The Colombo Declaration on Eliminating Malaria

Colombo, Sri Lanka

## Malaria Elimination Group

*guidance and evidence for  
malaria elimination*

Against the backdrop of a global call to eradicate malaria from the world, an international group of experts called the Malaria Elimination Group (MEG) held its ninth meeting in Sri Lanka from October 14–17, 2014. The MEG is chaired by Sir Richard Feachem of the University of California San Francisco's Global Health Group and was first convened in 2008 to generate evidence and provide support to countries that are on a pathway to eliminating malaria.

Sri Lanka has reported no locally transmitted malaria since November 2012 and experts traveled to Colombo from 17 countries to learn from Sri Lanka's progress and to take lessons and best practices back to their own countries and organizations. Participants included global authorities on malaria, representatives of Ministries of Health from malaria endemic countries in Asia and Africa, representatives of the World Health Organization, Roll Back Malaria, the Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance, and the Asia Pacific Malaria Elimination Network and international donors including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the US President's Malaria Initiative. The Malaria Elimination Group made the following declaration:

**Recognizing** Sri Lanka's remarkable health achievement in having reported neither a single death due to indigenous malaria since 2007 nor a single indigenous case of malaria since November 2012,

### **Bearing in mind**

1. the early success of Sri Lanka's malaria program in driving down malaria to just 17 cases in 1963,
2. the malaria resurgence from 17 cases in 1963 to 537,705 cases in 1969 due to the loss of focus on malaria because of perceived success in elimination, and the consequential additional resources that were then needed to control the resurgence,
3. the strong political will, well-defined partnerships, excellent technical and management capacities, dedicated health staff and multi-sector collaboration that made it possible to reduce malaria cases from over 210,000 in 2000 to zero local cases in 2013,
4. the success of the elimination program since 2009 that emphasized intensive surveillance and response, vector control, active case detection and community engagement,
5. the high prevalence of anophelene vectors of malaria in the country,
6. that 95 imported cases of malaria were reported in 2013—the majority of which were among Sri Lankans returning from overseas travel—and that these cases present a risk of re-introduction,

### **Considering**

1. that malaria elimination is feasible given the current tools, strategies and resources available,
2. that 11 countries in the world have successfully eliminated malaria in the past decade, and other countries are making great progress towards elimination,

### **Understanding**

1. that achieving and maintaining malaria elimination requires continued investment in financial and human resources for an efficient surveillance and response system,
2. that the benefits of preventing reintroduction and sustaining a malaria-free country far exceed the costs of managing another resurgence of the disease and its associated development consequences,
3. that continued investment in malaria, a disease that hardly exists due to successful health programming, can be viewed in the same light as continued investment in immunization programs for preventable childhood illnesses,

**Acknowledging** the Government of Sri Lanka's commitment to improving the health and development of its people, and

**Emphasizing** the unique opportunity for Sri Lanka to maintain the gains and to assert regional and global leadership in malaria elimination, particularly as the peaceful nation transitions to a phase of strong economic growth and development,

### **We hereby:**

1. Pledge to reinforce the Ministry of Health and the national malaria elimination program to hold the line on malaria elimination by:
  - a. Joining other partners in providing continued technical support to implement cost effective, long-term surveillance and response measures which safeguard the country from resurgence,
  - b. Promoting Sri Lanka's regional leadership in achieving and maintaining zero local malaria cases,
  - c. Championing Sri Lanka's successful malaria elimination efforts at the global level as a demonstration that elimination is achievable and contributes to overall health and development.
2. Call upon Sri Lankan government to to:
  - a. Sustain its commitment and investment in malaria elimination and prevention of re-introduction,
  - b. Strengthen malaria surveillance and response to actively detect and treat cases of imported malaria, among both Sri Lankans returning home and visitors from neighboring and more distant malaria endemic countries,
  - c. Continue to exercise strong leadership and to extend its influence to support the elimination of malaria in the Asia Pacific region.

**Sir Richard Feachem and the Malaria Elimination Group  
Colombo, Sri Lanka | 17 October 2014**