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The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush,

If you please, take a few moments to imagine a number as big as 40 million. In comparison, this number equals to about 15,000 times the number of deaths from the 9/11 terrorist attacks and 13,000 times the number of fallen U.S. soldiers in Iraq. Perhaps you would be astonished to learn the fact that this actually is, in our world, the number of people with HIV crying out for help in order to attain one goal: to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. This is Millennium Development Goal (MDG) #6 that the UN is trying to accomplish by 2015, as a part of the Millennium Project. However, this project is missing a piece of its puzzle: the effective assistance of you and that of our country, Mr. President. Without the major support of the United States of America, this project would be a completely futile effort; that is why we, as Americans, must step in to provide smart funding and educate those who do not know very well about the transmission of many fatal diseases.

In order to understand the reason behind why the spreading of diseases has rapidly increased, as well as the importance of fighting these illnesses, we must first consider the past. Let's take HIV as a general example. For a virus such as HIV, there have been many different theories that have developed over the years that could provide a possible explanation of how exactly it began to spread. Although one may come up with endless evidence to support any of

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these theories based on the origin of this disease, the more important subject is how HIV has affected the lives of human beings that walk on the earth. Children have become orphaned, families have been mistreated and socially excluded, and a myriad of people have died. Despite knowing this, some nations continue to neglect the needs of those around them. It is possible that some countries do not feel that HIV relates to their citizens, simply because the prevalence of HIV is low in their respective countries. This is only a selfish, ignorant act, because the world is interconnected when it comes to health, in many ways. Neighboring countries are bound to have similar health problems- about 60% of the world's HIV-infected people live in Sub-Saharan Africa. No matter where you live and how many people have HIV in your region, you are affected by it in some way. About more than 1 million Americans are HIV-positive, whether one may already know or not. So is ignorance really bliss?

And what's happening now, in the present? Certainly, people have joined hands and currently stand together to reverse the spreading of such diseases. Upon hearing this statement, one may ask, "What exactly is the problem then, if these ill people are fighting for their recoveries and trying their best to stop the spreading of all these sicknesses?" The answer to that question would be that even with all the groundbreaking medical field discoveries and technological advances of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, there is no 100% "cure" that magically treats HIV/AIDS (as well as other diseases like malaria and tuberculosis) yet, as you know. Antiretroviral (ARV) therapy is continuing to improve and is lengthening the life spans of many HIV-positive patients, and certain drug therapies can be used to fight against severe effects of malaria. In low and middle income families and nations, however, such medications are

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almost impossible to come by in the state of poverty they live in. Dependant on more affluent nations for help, some die without even getting access to the health care that they desperately need. Mr. President, on May 30th, 2007, you announced that you would make a \$15 billion commitment over five years in order to assist in combating HIV/AIDS. This commitment of \$15 billion seems miniscule compared to the \$626 billion worth of military expenditures in 2007; furthermore, this commitment was only for your own relief plan, PEPFAR. According to Dr. Roger Coate, an author and professor of international relations from the University of Southern California, “An estimated additional \$18 billion above what is currently pledged is required to fund HIV/AIDS worldwide efforts over the next three years.” Furthermore, Dr. Coate states that “all but \$1 billion of the \$15 billion pledged is to be spent on bilateral programs in only 15 targeted countries.” This can only mean that the money that our nation invested for the purpose of combating diseases is evidently not enough, since it is not reaching out to as many people as we would like. I believe that by uniting with all the other international programs such as the UN programs and the Global AIDS Fund for the support of HIV/AIDS, and other diseases, United States of America will truly be lending a hand to those who truly need it. The process of reversing the spread of diseases not only involves providing as much funding as possible, but also requires multilateralism. Right now, right here. I am confident in your ability to persuade other nations and organizations to make this fight a joint effort, Mr. President. All over the world, such diseases are devouring the precious lives of infants, youth, adults, and seniors alike, even as I write- all because there isn't “enough money” being provided altogether? Deciding which countries to send funding to, and what resources should be provided by each organization should

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be discussed as a whole, not independently. Hence, inadequate and uncoordinated funding by nations such as ours is a problem as to why disease spreading rates are not decreasing- this must be changed immediately.

One can only dream of a brighter future if more action is not taken. Only with the drastic measures and endless efforts that the UN has put in to stop the spreading of diseases, some improvements have been shown throughout the world. MDG 6 reports indicate that “HIV prevalence has levelled off in the developing world, but deaths from AIDS continue to rise in sub-Saharan Africa”, which can be seen as an example of sufficient HIV control, but insufficient HIV/AIDS treatment. For numerous other regions, the opposite is true: enough treatment, but not enough control. People must be educated about the transmission and prevention of diseases, Mr. President, so that they may be responsible for their own safeties in the future. If the health care does not reach out to enough people in time to save their lives, nations can at least attempt to stop new cases from appearing in the future through spreading knowledge. One method of educating people (of practicing abstinence or safe sex to prevent HIV, for example) is to set up schools and conferences globally to make sure that people know how serious diseases can be. This method is much cheaper than providing the treatments needed for already ill patients as well. Education of individuals worldwide, therefore, should be considered one of the top priorities in which America should consider assisting with.

By effectively funding and spreading knowledge, will the spreading of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases come to a halt? No one knows for sure, but the best we can do for now is try. There is no harm in trying to make the world a better place to live in. Mr. President,

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the power is in your hands to stand up and be the center of positive change. Millennium Development Goal 6 can be reached and made a reality with time-consuming efforts, and perhaps one day, people all around the world can say, “The diseases are gone. HIV, AIDS, malaria, and all the other fatal, incurable diseases are finally gone.”

Sincerely,

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