

The Atlanta Declaration

U.S. Leadership in Improving the World's Health | 21 May 2012

“It is timely and important that we celebrate America’s global health successes, and that we continue to lead—investing in partners who are moving toward self-reliance.”

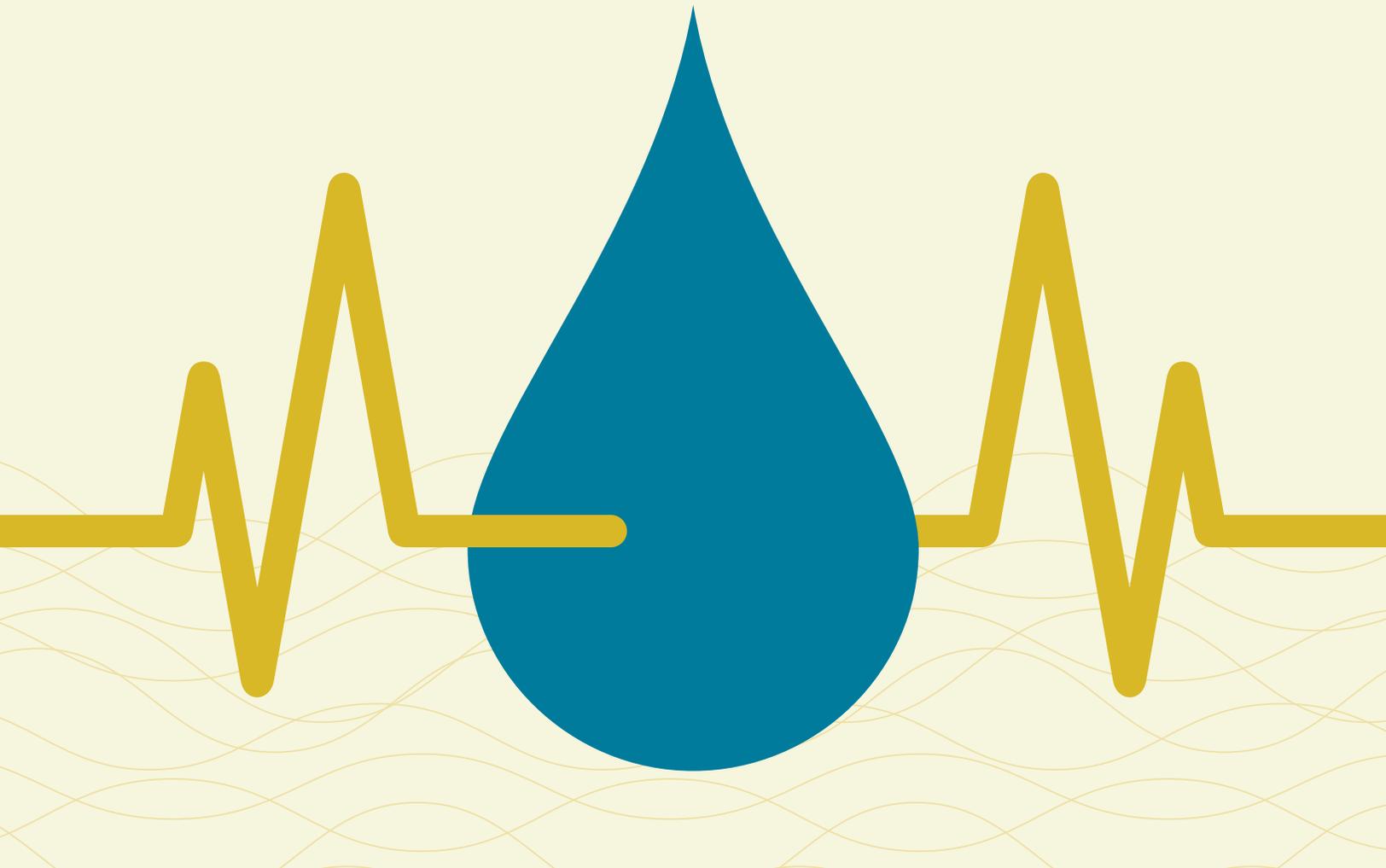
— Helene D. Gayle, President and CEO, CARE USA

Preamble

Atlanta, Georgia, is home to some of the leading global health and development organizations in the nation and the world. It has played a critical role in the movement for civil rights and social justice. It has a rich network of organizations bridging government, business, higher education and the non-profit sector. And its experience through many years has demonstrated the link between access to clean and safe water and sanitation and the health and economic growth in communities. Atlanta has made and will continue to make major contributions to global health and health equity.

This Atlanta Summit addresses how the next U.S. Congress and presidential administration can best sustain United States leadership in improving world health, with a particular focus on the role of safe water and sanitation. The three sponsors—CARE, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the World Affairs Council of Atlanta—have prepared this Declaration to mark recent historic achievements and to articulate a vision for U.S. leadership. The Declaration draws on expert insights from the Carter Center, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the CDC Foundation, Emory University's Global Health Institute and Rollins School of Public Health, the Georgia Research Alliance, the Morehouse School of Medicine, and the Task Force for Global Health.

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Building on a Decade of Transformation

The last decade saw a leap ahead in the health of the world's poor. Today, more people have voice, access, benefits, and resources to improve their health than at any time in history.

For example, the United States has been a leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS and has helped to show the huge impact that investing in health can have. More than seven million persons living with HIV now receive life-sustaining anti-retroviral treatment.

Just a short while ago HIV/AIDS was threatening to devastate southern and eastern Africa. Today, advances in treatment and prevention allow us to envision dramatically reducing new cases of HIV in the next decade.

Our investments have also paid huge dividends in fighting vaccine-preventable diseases. In 1974 only 5% of the world's children were vaccinated against major diseases; by 2008 that figure had risen to 80%. Since 1988 the number of polio cases around the world has fallen by more than 99%, from more than 350,000 cases that year to 600 cases in 2011.

U.S. leadership has been at the forefront of these historic, global changes. Presidents Bush and Obama have championed major new programs to reduce infectious disease, enhance maternal and child health, control pandemic influenza, and strengthen health systems. These programs have won the confidence and active support of both parties in Congress, the faith community, scientists, businesses, foundations, and universities. They have relied on the political leadership of developing-country partners, rising budgetary commitments, and a new generation of health professionals. And they have rallied other donors and helped launch innovative shared-financing instruments.

But we cannot be complacent. Budgets are under stress. Bipartisanship is frayed. The gains of the past decade could unravel if attention wanes. In many low-income countries high maternal and infant mortality persists. Nearly one billion people lack access to improved water sources; fully two and a half billion people lack access to adequate sanitation. These populations are unduly burdened by neglected tropical diseases.

The United States has an enduring national interest in creating a healthier, safer world. The U.S. can build on the substantial progress of recent years to seize new opportunities, broaden and deepen the commitments of others, and achieve major health gains. It will not be easy. But we remain optimistic that it can be done—if the next presidential administration and Congress ensure that U.S. global health leadership is a foreign policy priority.

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A Strategy for the Future

To lead effectively, the United States must articulate clear, concrete goals around which members of both political parties can rally, goals that focus on those challenges the U.S. can affect most powerfully—infectious diseases; maternal, newborn and child health; pandemic preparedness; and a new priority, safe drinking water, hygiene, and sanitation.

Over the next four years, priorities should include:

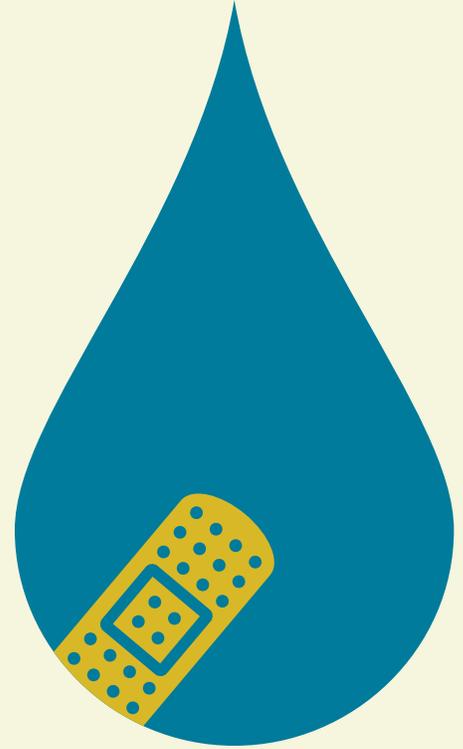
Accelerating host-country self-reliance in managing and financing the health sector. That requires up-front, continued U.S. direct investments in building national capacities—public health skills; financial management; budgeting processes; and supply chains. Long-term sustainability requires smart, negotiated transition plans, so that by the end of the next administration several developing-country partners will have successfully expanded their capacities and graduated from substantial external support.

Working with others wherever possible on problems too great to solve on our own. This requires that we commit to build stronger, better-financed and better-managed international organizations—the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; the GAVI Alliance; UNICEF; the World Health Organization; and the World Bank—that can share responsibility over the long term.

Convincing emerging powers to bring their full potential to the fight against infectious diseases, maternal and neonatal mortality, and chronic diseases. Emerging powers hold the key to improving the health of a vast portion of the world's poor and underserved, both inside their borders, where such populations are concentrated, and outside their borders, where directly and through international organizations they have the ability to do much good.

Integrating safe water, sanitation, and hygiene into every aspect of U.S. global health policy. Water and sanitation services will undergird progress in almost all global health and development priorities—nutrition and food security; child mortality; cognitive development; neglected tropical diseases; respiratory disease; and the ability of those with HIV and AIDS to live healthy and productive lives.

Despite our differences, and despite the challenges we continue to face, Americans remain resiliently proud of how U.S. leadership in health at home and abroad has made a better, healthier, safer world. It is vital that we close ranks to preserve these historic achievements and advance global health—including safe water, sanitation and hygiene—in the next administration and Congress.



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