

# Leprosy, Human Rights and the Global Appeal

Leprosy is one of the oldest diseases known to humankind. Long feared for its disfiguring effects, it is now fully curable with multidrug therapy (MDT), a treatment introduced in the 1980s. Today, the annual number of new cases reported worldwide is around 200,000. With early diagnosis and treatment, the damage caused by leprosy can be prevented.

However, deep-rooted myths and misconceptions about the disease mean that persons affected by leprosy, and even their family members, continue to suffer discrimination in many parts of the world. Leprosy is not just a health issue, it is also an issue of basic human rights.

Responding to the appeals made by Mr. Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman of The Nippon Foundation, who also serves as the WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination and as Japanese Government Goodwill Ambassador for the Human Rights of Persons Affected by Leprosy, the Government of Japan took an initiative to submit a series of resolutions on this issue to the UN. In December 2010, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution A/RES/65/215 “Elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members.” The resolution is accompanied by Principles and Guidelines drawn up by the UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee to achieve the goals of the resolution.

However, much remains to be done. The most recent resolution A/HRC/RES/29/5 submitted by Japan, along with Brazil, Estonia, Ethiopia, Morocco, Portugal and Romania, was adopted unanimously at the UN Human Rights Council in July 2015 and stressed the importance of seeing that the Principles and Guidelines are fully implemented.

Every year, in conjunction with World Leprosy Day (the last Sunday in January), Mr. Yohei Sasakawa leads a Global Appeal to End Stigma and Discrimination Against Persons Affected by Leprosy. The Global Appeal is designed to raise awareness of the obstacles that persons affected by leprosy live with, and call for an end to the discrimination they face.

Each year, the Global Appeal is endorsed by influential individuals and organizations.

## 2006

World leaders including Nobel Peace Prize laureates the 14th Dalai Lama, former US President Jimmy Carter, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Elie Wiesel.

## 2007

Representatives of persons affected by leprosy from 13 countries.

## 2008

Major human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Save the Children.

## 2009

Leaders of the main religious faiths.

## 2010

Top executives from companies including Toyota, Virgin Management, Tata Group, Johnson & Johnson, Renault and Novartis.

## 2011

Heads of over 100 leading universities.

## 2012

World Medical Association and the medical associations of 50 countries.

## 2013

International Bar Association and 46 bar associations in 40 countries.

## 2014

National human rights institutions from 37 countries and 2 regions.

## 2015

International Council of Nurses and 132 national bodies.

## 2016

Junior Chamber International and its branches in 130 countries.

## 2017

Inter-Parliamentary Union, which numbers 171 Parliaments around the world as members.



## Global Appeal 2017

To End Stigma and Discrimination Against Persons Affected by Leprosy

THINK LEPROSY NOW

Date: January 30, 2017

Venue: Taj Palace Hotel, New Delhi, India



## PROGRAM

# Global Appeal 2017

To End Stigma and Discrimination Against Persons Affected by Leprosy

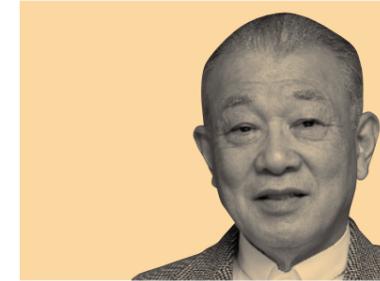
## Global Appeal 2017 Launch Ceremony 11:00-12:30

10:30-11:00	<b>Registration of Guests</b>
11:00-11:05	<b><i>Vaishnav Jan To</i>*</b> Choral Performance by Children from the Colonies
11:05-11:10	<b>Opening Remarks</b> <b>Mr. Tarun Das</b> Chairman, Sasakawa-India Leprosy Foundation
11:10-11:20	<b>Screening of <i>Leprosy in Our Time</i></b>
11:20-11:40	<b>Keynote Speeches by The Nippon Foundation and Inter-Parliamentary Union</b> <b>Mr. Yohei Sasakawa</b> Chairman, The Nippon Foundation, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination <b>The Honorable Mr. Saber Chowdhury</b> President, Inter-Parliamentary Union
11:40-12:00	<b>Remarks by Special Guests</b> <b>Mr. Vagavathali Narsappa</b> President, Association of People Affected by Leprosy <b>Representative from World Health Organization</b>
12:00-12:10	<b>Remarks by Dignitaries</b> <b>The Honorable Smt. Sumitra Mahajan</b> Speaker of Lok Sabha, Parliament of India
12:10-12:20	<b>Launch of Global Appeal 2017</b>
12:20-12:30	<b>Closing</b>

\* *Vaishnav Jan To* is a Hindu hymn composed by the 15th century poet Narsinh Mehta and is known to have been a favorite of Mahatma Gandhi.

- Photo session will be held upon the arrival of Indian dignitaries.
- Lunch will be served from 12:30 at Mumtaz Hall.

## INTRODUCING THE SPEAKERS



### Mr. Yohei Sasakawa

Chairman, The Nippon Foundation

The WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination since 2001, and Japanese Government Goodwill Ambassador for the Human Rights of Persons Affected by Leprosy since 2007, Mr. Sasakawa has made eliminating leprosy and the stigma and discrimination it causes his mission in life. This has been one of the key priorities of The Nippon Foundation, the Tokyo-based NGO of which he is Chairman, for more than four decades. In recent years he has emphasized the importance of implementing the “Principles and Guidelines for the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members” that accompanied a historic UN General Assembly resolution in December 2010. Wherever he travels, Mr. Sasakawa takes every opportunity to raise awareness of the disease and the issues that persons affected by leprosy face, stressing the key messages that leprosy is curable, treatment is free and social discrimination has no place.



### Mr. Saber Chowdhury

President, Inter-Parliamentary Union

A distinguished politician with an impressive track record in public service in Bangladesh, Mr. Chowdhury became the President of the IPU in October 2014. Having begun his career as an entrepreneur, Mr. Chowdhury embraced full-time politics in 1996. He was instrumental in the repeal of the 1898 Lepers Act through a Private Member's Bill he tabled in the Bangladesh Parliament. The repeal of the act did away with the segregation of those with the disease and facilitated their treatment and integration into society.

**Mr. Tarun Das**

Chairman, Sasakawa-India Leprosy Foundation

Mr. Das has spent his professional career in the development and promotion of Indian industry. Starting in November 1963 with the predecessor body of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), he was the Director General and Chief Executive of CII from April 1967 to May 2004 and Chief Mentor from June 2004 to October 2009. He is Chairman of the Sasakawa-India Leprosy Foundation (S-ILF) and the Institute of Economic Growth (IEG) and also Chairman of the Advisory Board of JCB India. He serves as Co-Chair of groups for strategic dialogue among the US, Japan and India and as Co-Chair of the India-Israel Forum. He is a member of the India-Singapore and India-China strategic dialogue projects, the India-Turkey Forum, the US-India Climate Change Dialogue and the Trilateral Commission. Mr. Das has received the Padma Bhushan, one of India's highest civilian awards, from the President of India for his contributions to the field of trade and industry and also the Singapore National Award (Public Service Medal) from the Government of Singapore for his efforts toward the strengthening of economic ties between India and Singapore.

**Mr. Vagavathali Narsappa**

President, Association of People Affected by Leprosy, India  
Diagnosed with leprosy at the age of nine, he was cast out from his home village and taken to the Victoria Leprosy Rehabilitation Home in Nizamabad District near Hyderabad, India. In 2004, he created the Society of Leprosy Affected Persons (SLAP) as a way to fight against stigma associated with the disease and promote a better quality of life. In 2012, Mr. Narsappa received the National Award for the "Best Individual Working for the Cause of Persons with Disabilities (Leprosy)."

**Smt. Sumitra Mahajan**

Speaker of Lok Sabha, Parliament of India  
Smt Mahajan was first elected to Lok Sabha (House of the People) in 1989 and is now serving her eighth term as a Member of Parliament. In June 2014, she was elected unopposed as the second woman Speaker of Lok Sabha. She has made an enormous contribution to parliamentary debates, enriching them with her eloquent and incisive speeches. She has championed the cause of women by effectively articulating their issues and set an example in upholding the values and traditions that enhance the dignity of the Parliament. She has rich administrative experience, having served as a minister in key social and economic ministries in the Government of India. She is widely respected across the political spectrum for her affable and non-partisan approach as Presiding Officer in Lok Sabha.

## A Conversation Between The Nippon Foundation Chairman and the IPU President

**Mr. Yohei Sasakawa:**

The Nippon Foundation launched its first annual Global Appeal in 2006. It is a privilege to issue this 12th Global Appeal with the endorsement of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. IPU is an organization with a long, distinguished history and global scope. Could you tell us about IPU, your objectives and activities?

**Hon. Saber Chowdhury:**

IPU is a global organization of national Parliaments. Currently our membership count stands at 171 Parliaments, comprising over 45,000 Members of Parliaments who in turn represent 6.5 billion people across the globe.

Founded in 1889 well before the League of Nations and the United Nations itself at the initiative of two Parliamentarians and men of peace, William Randal Cremer (United Kingdom) and Frederic Passy (France), both of whom were subsequently recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize, the IPU is a unique organization and represents the first permanent forum for political multilateral dialogue and negotiations.

Other than working for stronger democracies and effective Parliaments that deliver on people's expectations and promoting global peace, prosperity and sustainable development, Parliamentary diplomacy represents an important focus of the work of IPU. It has a growing and deepening relationship with the United Nations and shares its values and ideals. It adds the important Parliamentary dimension to work of the UN.

Protecting and promoting human rights has all along been an overriding priority of the IPU and we also have a unique mechanism for ensuring human rights of Parliamentarians as human rights defenders.

**Sasakawa:**

The Global Appeal seeks to promote the human rights of persons affected by leprosy. Could you tell us more about how you see the role of Parliaments in ensuring human rights?

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**Chowdhury:**

As Parliamentarians, legislation is one of our primary functions and we constantly have to review how it can be used as a tool to ensure a better life for the people we represent.

In particular, from a human rights perspective as well as our aspirations for an inclusive society, laws that are discriminatory whether they relate to gender or to any section of the community or to individuals must be identified and repealed.

**Sasakawa:**

Mr. Chowdhury, I understand you have played a leading role in efforts to end discrimination against persons affected by leprosy in Bangladesh. How did you become involved, and what have you achieved?

**Chowdhury:**

In Bangladesh, the Lepers Act of 1898 effectively segregated persons with leprosy from society. This legislation permitted discrimination against persons afflicted with leprosy and also had a provision for imprisonment. By repealing this law through a Private Member's Bill that I promoted and tabled in the Bangladesh Parliament,



persons with leprosy can be integrated into society and they will also be entitled to receive treatment in all hospitals of Bangladesh, which was not the case earlier.

**Sasakawa:**

That is an outstanding achievement. Discrimination against persons affected by leprosy exists everywhere, unfortunately, not only in developing countries but also in developed countries. Around the world, I have seen people who have lost their job, their marriage or their place in society just because they were afflicted by this disease. Through no fault of their own, they have been marginalized and left behind. We need to ensure we create an inclusive society in which persons affected by leprosy can live with dignity. Does IPU have any actions in mind?

**Chowdhury:**

“Leaving no one behind” is the aspirational statement and objective of IPU’s Agenda 2030 and this means that we have to attend to and give priority first to those who are last and most marginalized in society. Whether it is through legislation, formulation of appropriate policies or allocation of necessary resources, Parliamentarians can make a difference and have a major role to play.

Given its global membership platform as mentioned earlier, IPU first wishes to sensitize as many Parliamentarians and Parliaments as possible on leprosy, and second, promote affirmative action, especially in those countries where this is still a challenge.

**Sasakawa:**

In closing, please tell us what sort of society IPU envisions in the future through its activities?

**Chowdhury:**

A society that is truly democratic, open, equitable, just and inclusive and one that is based on peace and shared prosperity for all. It is one that not only takes into account the aspirations of the people but also delivers on them.

**Sasakawa:**

We share the same vision. I hope many people will join us in taking action. ■