

Sarah Champion MP
Chair, International Development Committee
House of Commons, United Kingdom

Geneva, 5 February 2024

Dear Ms. Champion

Evidence to the UK International Development Committee's Small Island States Inquiry

I am pleased to share with you evidence relating to the UK Small Island Developing States Strategy 2022-2026 Inquiry following your conversation earlier in January with Tenu Avafia, Unitaid's Deputy Executive Director.

Unitaid saves lives by making new health products available and affordable for people in low- and middle-income countries. It identifies innovative treatments, tests and tools, helps tackle the market barriers that are holding them back, and gets them to the people who need them most – fast. Since 2008, Unitaid has unlocked access to more than 100 ground-breaking health products, from the first in class medicines for children with HIV and tuberculosis (TB) to next-generation mosquito nets to protect families from malaria. Every year, more than 170 million people benefit from Unitaid's investments. Unitaid is a partnership hosted by the World Health Organization.

Climate change, natural disasters and rising temperatures increase the vulnerability of many Small Island Developing States, often having major health implications. During the COP26, in Glasgow 2021, and in those subsequently, these issues are increasingly recognised globally. The United Kingdom has been an effective champion by advancing the connection between climate and health. Many Small Island Developing States committed to the Alliance on Transformative Action on Climate and Health (established by the UK at COP26) and/or the more comprehensive [COP28 Health Ministerial Declaration](#), both of which include a commitment to low carbon systems.

In December 2023, Unitaid launched its [Milligrams to Megatons](#) report, which looked at the two-way relationship between health supply chains and climate change, the environment and health. Experts from NHS England were members of the report's Sounding Board and provided invaluable contributions. The report looks at ten key health products through the lens of both their impact on the environment and the risks that they face due to climate change, potentially jeopardizing access. The report highlights key areas for health systems in general. Specifically for Small Island States, Unitaid would like to draw the Committee to the need for:

1. **Resilient Supply Chains** –Climate presents a major risk to the supply chain. For example, reduced active ingredient from plants that are susceptible to changes in heat and moisture; or manufacturing sites that have increased probability of natural disasters; and finally, transportation and storage, where exposure to heat can be a major issue. Few Small Island Developing States have the capacity

to produce and manufacture their own medicines and medical devices, as such they are among the most vulnerable.

2. **Disposal** – Waste at the point of use of disposal; for example, by 2030 mosquito bed nets are expected to generate over 100,000 tons of plastic waste every year with almost no means of recycling.

The report makes 20 readily implementable recommendations, which responds to these issues. These include technical solutions that could reduce emissions by 40% at zero cost with a further 30% at cost, which is essential to maintain the affordability. Such solutions include process improvement, product redesign, circularity improvements in manufacturing. As a first entry point, Small Island Developing Countries need to footprint their vulnerability to environmental and nature risks, while calculating the carbon footprint of their health system including health products.

In response to the report, Unitaid is working to address the issues highlighted in the report through successfully bringing [Climate Smart Health Products](#) to scale. Climate-smart health products have a strong public health value, are relevant for affected communities, support objectives for mitigation and adaptation, and are more sustainable than current products and interventions. Importantly, they **do no harm** to the climate and nature, are **resilient** and **responsive** to climate risks, and are **locally adapted** and **produced regionally**. For example, Unitaid is supporting vital research into promising vector control tools like spatial repellents, easily portable products that are permeated with slow-release chemicals that ward off mosquitoes, protecting families wherever they are – even if they are displaced from their homes after a severe storm or flood. These kinds of health products will be essential for Small Island Developing States, and other low- and middle-income countries, as they respond to the health challenges created by climate change, natural disasters, and rising temperatures.

May I wish the Committee well as it continues this important Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Philippe Duneton
Executive Director