Ash Dykes extreme adventurer, urges UK to scale new heights to defeat killer diseases

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Wales' extreme adventurer Ash Dykes urges UK to scale new heights to defeat killer diseases

Malaria survivor and British Adventurer Ash Dykes is announced as a Special Ambassador for Malaria No More UK, a charity also supported by David Beckham and Andy Murray.

Yesterday Ash climbed onto the stage with legendary singer Annie Lennox to call for the UK Government to lead the world in the battle against deadly diseases.

Dykes issued a statement in Westminster's Portcullis House calling on MPs and Department for International Development ministers to replenish the Global Fund which spearheads the world-wide fight against malaria and other fatal infections.

Ash said: "'I nearly died from malaria earlier this year on my expedition crossing Madagascar. It was a life changer. I also saw how this disease rips communities apart – with the majority of victims being young children. That's why the Global Fund and UK leadership is so important, and it's making a real difference - over 550 million mosquito nets have been distributed since 2002. That's an incredible achievement."

The Global Fund is an international public-private partnership set up in 2002 to combat the scourge of fatal infections. It mobilises and invests nearly US$4 billion a year providing affordable and effective treatment to TB, AIDs and HIV, and Malaria - supporting prevention health programs run by local experts in countries and communities most in need.

Having saved 17 million lives since its founding in 2002, the UK is being asked to donate £1.2billion to help save a further eight million over the next three years.

Victory Within Reach

Crucially, the Global Fund's funding of scientific advances means defeating the three main infectious disease killers is within grasp - as long the momentum is not lost.

The Global Fund has set a US$13 billion target ahead of its replenishment meeting in Canada in September to avert hundreds of millions of new infections.

That means donor nations will have to increase their contribution by an average of 20%. Such an increase from the UK Government would alone help save 1.1 million lives.

Canada, the European Union and Japan have already committed to the increase -- but the Global Fund will only reach its target if the UK government makes a 20% in increase in its contribution.

Singer Annie Lennox (pictured) urged the new UK Government to remain a thorn in the side of killer diseases such as AIDS and HIV, Tuberculosis and malaria yesterday.

The former Eurythmics star and vocal AIDS campaigner Annie Lennox echoed Dykes' call on the UK Government to continue its strong leadership by pledging £1.2 billion to the Global Fund, which has saved 17 million lives over the last 15 years - and aims to save 8 million more by 2020 by tipping the balance against deadly diseases.

Lennox said: "We should be proud of the strong leadership role and dedication to global public health that the UK has shown to date.

"With the upcoming replenishment of the Global Fund, and amid the political uncertainty, now is the time for the UK government to demonstrate that Britain will continue its strong and brave leadership, inspiring other governments with its dedication to saving and improving the quality of life for millions around the world."

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The Scottish star warned failure to donate to the Global Fund pot would see a funding shortfall that would undo the advancement to date and lead to “a genocide, an apocalypse” among the most vulnerable victims of the three diseases - teenage girls and women of reproductive age.

Executive Director of the Global Fund, Mark Dybul said: “The UK is world leader in fighting these diseases. Britain set the global standard for others to follow in helping others with its 0.7% commitment of national income to overseas development.

“It is the UK’s strong global leadership that we hope will continue and go on inspiring others as we face an important time in our history fighting these diseases.”

Parliamentary *Under Secretary* of State at Department for International Development Nick Hurd, agreed that Britain should seek continue its leadership role under new Prime Minister Theresa May.

He thanked Dykes and Lennox and UK charities including ONE, Malaria No More UK, Results, Stop Aids HIV Alliance for “holding our feet to fire” to ensure “this extraordinary partnership to save lives and bear down on these three deadly diseases, continues”.

The All Parliamentary Party Group meeting was co-organised by leading NGOs and charities The ONE Campaign, STOPAIDS UK, International HIV/AIDS Alliance, Malaria No More UK, RESULTS UK and Comic Relief.

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