

# FOR THE Elimination OF Leprosy

- Leprosy is curable
- Free treatment is available
- Social discrimination has no place



President of India Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam welcomes Goodwill Ambassador Yohei Sasakawa and his party in New Delhi on September 15, 2006.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE GOODWILL AMBASSADOR

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### Good Job, Keep It Up

This year, I have been heartened by the progress made by a number of countries in eliminating leprosy as a public health problem.

India, which accounts for 70% of the world's leprosy cases, announced in January that it had achieved the WHO's target, as did Angola. In August, Madagascar declared that it too had reached the threshold. Brazil, which I visited in June, is on track to achieve elimination either at the end of this year or early in 2007. I would like to offer my warm congratulations to all the people involved who have worked so hard to make this possible.

I now look to the remaining countries — Mozambique, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nepal — to redouble their efforts and follow in the footsteps of India, Angola, Madagascar and the rest. I believe Angola, where I traveled in August, can serve as a good role model. Before I left Luanda, I encouraged officials there to share Angola's strategy for success with others yet to reach the goal.

For those who feared that achieving elimination

would signal the end of a country's commitment to leprosy control, I can say these fears are without foundation. In India and Angola, the authorities view the achievement as a milestone, not the end of the road. They have not slackened in their efforts and remain committed to building on their achievements.

Just last month I had the opportunity to meet with the president of India, His Excellency Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam. In the course of our conversation, Dr. Kalam expressed his concern over the continued existence of leprosy colonies in India — there are over 700 — and spoke also of the need to rehabilitate persons with leprosy-related disabilities.

Breaking down the barriers that separate persons affected by leprosy from mainstream society and caring for those with medical problems related to the disease are important themes. As we push ahead toward a world without leprosy, we must do all we can to help those people whose lives have already been affected.

— Yohei Sasakawa, WHO Goodwill Ambassador

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