



Drugs for Neglected Diseases *initiative*

144th Executive Board of the WHO

DNDI Intervention on Agenda Item 7.6 – World Health Days

Chair, distinguished delegates

At last year's Executive Board, Brazil and other Member States called for a World Chagas day, which was not decided, instead there was a review of all World Health days. 2019 marks the 110th anniversary of the discovery of Chagas disease, which affects more than 6 million people worldwide¹, with approximately 30,000 new cases each year. Chagas can cause irreversible, life-threatening damage to the heart and other vital organs. To date, fewer than 10% of people affected by Chagas disease have been diagnosed, and very few receive treatment. Both drugs used to treat the disease were discovered over 50 years ago, underscoring the persistent lack of investment in research and development. These drugs must be used, but can and should be improved, as well as new ones developed.

For years, people affected by Chagas disease have demanded the establishment of a World Chagas Day. In November 2018, the Chagas platform for clinical research and the Chagas coalition, which gather researchers and organizations working to fight the disease, including DNDi, signed the [Santa Cruz Letter](#) calling for intensification of efforts to control and eliminate Chagas. Among the four critical measures outlined in the letter was the establishment of a World Chagas Day. On their behalf, today we renew this request.

World Health Days are important tools to increase visibility. The neglect of populations living with Chagas is also faced by vulnerable populations globally suffering from the 20 other diseases on the WHO NTD list. The general lack of awareness and clinical experience in recognizing and managing NTDs, highlights the need to explore ways to raise awareness for all NTDs.

Thank you.

¹ Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)