

Ms. Amina J. Mohammed  
Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations  
UN Headquarters  
First Avenue at 46<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10017

Iceland, November 2017

Dear Ms. Mohammed,

I would like to begin this letter by congratulating you on your new position and to wish you all the best.

My name is Audur, and I am the Icelandic nurse who has twice written to Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, the former Secretary-General, to request that increased understanding of the workings of the nervous system be made one of the Development Goals for the years 2015–2030. On his behalf, you responded to my letters in a very positive manner and encouraged me to support that the changes made in the new Development Goals be realised. This I have done to the extent that I have been able.

After the reference on the improved treatment of neurological diseases was adopted into paragraph 26 of the current Policy Declaration of the United Nations, together with other matters relating to neurology, I asked the then Minister for Foreign Affairs in Iceland to submit a proposal to the Nordic Council of Ministers to the effect that the Nordic countries adopt the reference and carry out an analysis and collate Nordic databases in the field of neurology using AI. The goal was to search for shared patterns in the content of the databases, which could help the medical sector increase its understanding of the workings of the nervous system. As you are aware, one of the main reasons why it has proven so difficult to find neurological cures is that medical science does not fully understand the workings of the nervous system.

To make a long story short, the Nordic Council of Ministers sought the opinion of NordForsk, which funds and facilitates Nordic collaboration in the field of science and research infrastructure. NordForsk has now given a very positive opinion on the Minister for Foreign Affairs' proposal, and the Director believes that it should be possible to implement it relatively quickly. The opinion of NordForsk is of the greatest importance, and Iceland will do everything in its power to achieve a political consensus within the Nordic countries as regards this issue.

If the Nordic countries are the first to adopt the reference in question, it is my hope that other countries will follow. My dearest hope is that, in the end, the nations of the world will agree to sign a declaration under the auspices of the United Nations to the effect that they will have their neurological databases analysed and collated for the same purposes as the Nordic countries. In doing so, the reference in paragraph 26 will be firmly established and it will be recognised that neurological problems are one of the issues that the world needs to join hands in solving.

Dear Ms. Mohammed,

I would like to tell you the following and hope that you forgive how personal I am. I am now 69 years of age. When I was 28, I dreamt a remarkable dream. A gifted lady interpreted the dream to mean that I would lay the foundation for a Nobel prize. At the time, I felt that this was completely absurd. When I was 40, my daughter was paralysed as a result of a car accident and also suffered brain damage as you know and has, therefore, diminished hearing and speech. After the accident, I slowly realised that what the dream had told me 12 years before was coming to fruition. I began, therefore, to concentrate on what I believed was my purpose in life. About 10 years after the accident, I discovered that it was impossible to reach a consensus among the associations of people with spinal cord injury at an international level to encourage the appropriate international organisations to ensure that the larger research picture of spinal cord injury / neurological system be examined in context. The same was true of physicians. I then sought the assistance of the Icelandic authorities and requested that they use their political influence in the international arena for the benefit of spinal cord injury / neurological system research. This they have done within the World Health Organisation, the European Council, the Nordic Council and the United Nations and have taken a number of positive steps in the right direction even though the goal has not yet been reached. It is my steadfast belief that once an international initiative has been set in motion towards increasing knowledge of the nervous system, which is so necessary, such initiative will lead to significant neurological discoveries which again will probably lead to a Nobel prize in medicine. It would be wonderful to be around to see that.

Respectfully,

Audur Gudjónsdóttir, RNOR

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Attachment

1. Letter from the former Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Secretary-General of the Nordic Council of Ministers, in Danish and English.
2. Response of the Secretary-General of the Nordic Council of Ministers in Danish and English.
3. Opinion of the Director of NordForsk in Swedish.

The undersigned letter has been sent by registered mail.