



**SIERRA LEONE GOVERNMENT
MINISTRY OF HEALTH
NATIONAL LEPROSY AND TUBERCULOSIS CONTROL PROGRAMME (NLTCP)
PROGRAMME MANAGER – Mob: +232-76244003. Email: manager-nltcp@mohs.gov.sl**

To:

Mr. Rainer M. Blair
President and Chief Executive Officer of Danaher
2200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 800W
Washington, DC 20037

Copy:

Mr. Vitor Rocha
President of Cepheid
904 Caribbean Drive
Sunnyvale, CA 94089

Dear Mr. Blair,

I am writing on behalf of the National Tuberculosis Programme (NTP) of Sierra Leone, which is listed by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a high-burden country for tuberculosis.

My country faces a high burden of tuberculosis (TB) with an estimated 24,000 people annually reported to have TB, of whom 660 are estimated to have drug-resistant TB. We have purchased and installed 27 GeneXpert systems across the country, of which three are 10-color systems that can run Cepheid's MTB/XDR cartridges.

We thank you for your decision on September 19, 2023, to reduce the price of the Xpert MTB/RIF Ultra cartridge from \$9.98 to \$7.97. After more than 10 years of a static price, this reduction was long overdue and will allow our NTP to significantly scale up TB testing services.

However, we also need better access to the Xpert MTB/XDR cartridge which remains unaffordable at \$14.90 and is double the price of the Xpert MTB/RIF Ultra cartridge. Many of our TB service facilities send samples to far-away, centralized laboratories for culture-based drug susceptibility testing or advanced molecular methods, a process that generally takes more than 3 months. With the Xpert MTB/XDR cartridge, we can at least assess resistance to isoniazid and the fluoroquinolones on-site and within the same day. Being able to detect DR-TB close to the hospital is critical for our care providers to select the right DR-TB regimen as swiftly as possible.

Given these critical considerations, we ask you to reduce the price of the Xpert MTB/XDR test to no more than \$7.97, the same price as the Xpert MTB/RIF test. We do not accept that we must pay double that price for a test that can help us better diagnose people with drug-resistant TB, which is the most severe and deadly form of tuberculosis. In addition, publicly available evidence from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has shown that there is no significant difference in the cost of

production between disease cartridges, and in fact, many of the production costs are fixed across cartridges.

We look forward to an immediate price reduction of the Xpert MTB/XDR cartridge so that our NTP can scale up decentralized DR-TB testing and our TB care providers can provide the appropriate treatment regimen to people with DR-TB in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

A square image containing a handwritten signature in blue ink. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'Mariama Mahmoud'.

Dr Mariama Mahmoud

Programme Manager

National Leprosy and Tuberculosis Control Programme of Sierra Leone

18th March 2024