Dear Mr Seth,

I am writing to express my support for the mission of the Global Surgery Foundation (GSF) and its goal of ensuring that surgical, obstetrical, and anaesthesia care becomes more accessible, safe, timely and affordable across the world.

Strengthened surgical standards lead to better health in communities and will play an indispensable role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and universal health coverage (UHC), as highlighted in resolution WHA68.15 on “Strengthening emergency and essential surgical care and anaesthesia as a component of universal health coverage”. Nine of the thirteen targets of SDG3 can only be achieved if surgical care capacity is significantly increased, especially in the world’s least developed countries.

Recent data show that approximately 30% of the world’s total burden of disease results from conditions that can be treated by surgery or require the intervention of a surgeon. Furthermore, the global burden of noncommunicable diseases and injury is increasing at an alarming rate, eclipsing communicable diseases, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Appropriate surgical care is, therefore, a vital foundation of the strategy to address this new increasing need.

Global statistics show that approximately five billion people do not have access to appropriate surgical care and if we focus solely on those people living under the poverty line, almost 90% of them do not have access to appropriate surgical services. It has been estimated that close to 17 million people die every year from surgically preventable causes, with the greatest burden of this seen in the most vulnerable countries. Without upscaling safe and affordable surgical care, especially in LMICs, the world will be hard pressed to achieve UHC or many of the SDGs.
In light of this, and as the patterns of disease burdens shift, and surgically treatable conditions place an increasing burden on the world’s poor, there is a clear need for a coordinated, integrated effort to meet the largely unmet surgical needs all over the world. This effort will require world class research to examine sustainable and affordable solutions to meet the need for global surgery, including innovative funding mechanisms that can assist countries in building their surgical capacity in a self-reliant manner.

Therefore, I welcome the creation of the Global Surgery Foundation and would be interested in exploring further potential for collaboration between WHO and the GSF. I am pleased to note that the GSF aims to provide an inclusive platform that will bring together world leaders in surgical care, UN Member States, the private sector and civil society to facilitate worldwide efforts to build greater capacity in global surgery, including through training and increased funding.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General
Dear Dr. Ibbotson,

I am writing to state UNITAR’s commitment towards the proposed Global Surgery Foundation (GSF) and its goal to ensure that surgical, obstetrical, and anaesthesia care is accessible, safe, timely, and affordable.

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank you for the important role you are playing as UNITAR’s Senior Advisor on Health and Development. Your inputs and guidance greatly aid our Institute in pursuing its goal to strengthen national and local capacity to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being at all ages. Particularly, we thank you for the help you are giving us to design our new Programme on Health and Development and its training platforms.

Surgical, obstetrical and anaesthesia care needs to be strengthened in the developing world and must be given priority in global health efforts as they play an indispensable role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Universal Health Coverage (UHC). We believe there is an urgent need to build capacity to improve surgical care systems globally and we welcome GSF’s commitment to increase surgical capacity in those countries which need the most assistance. More specifically, we appreciate that GSF will work alongside national Ministry of Health stakeholders from low and middle-income countries (LMIC) to develop National Surgical, Obstetrical and Anaesthesia Programs (NSOAPs) and to support their implementation.

In addition, we agree with your vision that UHC and other important health related objectives outlined in the SDGs are not achievable without ensuring that surgical, obstetrical and anaesthesia care is accessible, safe, timely and affordable. UNITAR is glad to work with GSF on this important and timely issue and will remain committed to support capacity building in this realm, by developing and publishing learning materials, implementing training activities, facilitating partnerships, and increasing awareness and outreach.

With kind regards,

Mr. Nikhil Seth
United Nations Assistant Secretary-General
UNITAR Executive Director

Dr. Geoff Ibbotson
Executive Director
Global Surgery Foundation
Chemin des Mines 9
1202 Genève, Switzerland