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YES, WE CAN ELIMINATE POOR VISION BY 2050

By Hubert Sagnières, Executive Vice-Chairman EssilorLuxottica

Did you know that poor vision is the world's most widespread disability? Nearly 3 billion people don't see the world clearly. Myopia has become a real pandemic – the term is already being used by the Chinese government – in a matter of years. It will affect 50% of the world's population by 2050 as a combined result of accelerated urbanization and over-solicitation of the eyes due to increased screen use.

Poor vision doesn't hurt. And poor vision isn't visible. "What the eyes don't see, the heart doesn't worry about," as the Chinese proverb goes. This year on the 10th of October, we celebrate the 19th edition of World Sight Day, an event created by the World Health Organization (WHO) to raise awareness about the importance of good vision and to defend the right to see, for everyone, everywhere in the world. We at EssilorLuxottica support this great global cause which we believe every government should take up.

Poor vision costs the global economy \$272 billion in lost productivity each year. It impacts people's ability to learn and develop. It hinders people's chances of getting a job. It creates further exclusion. It threatens physical safety, especially on the road. As such, poor vision is a daily hardship for so many people all over the world.



However, we have a unique opportunity: we know how to fight this global humanitarian crisis! Poor vision can be eliminated from the world within one generation! And, on the sidelines of the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, we released a report that proves this ([“Eliminating poor vision in a generation: What will it take to eliminate uncorrected refractive errors by 2050?”](#)).

What is needed is an investment of \$500 million per year over the next 30 years. Yes, only \$500 million per year would enable us to eliminate uncorrected poor vision within 30 years. This report proves that we are right to fight and it is going to help us rally more support.

Essilor has been fighting this battle for more than 10 years already, through our unique business model which combines traditional business development, philanthropy and inclusive business. Thanks to this, we know which processes, products, and services allow people around the world to get access to affordable glasses. Because the value of a pair of glasses is the same for a man or a woman in a developing country as it is in a country like ours: that is the equivalent of 3 to 5 days' salary.

During a round table in New York, organized in partnership with Devex, a social development platform, I pleaded strongly for the need to accelerate efforts. As I have been doing since taking the helm at Essilor.

Our ambition has been strengthened and our capacity for action has increased tenfold through our combination with the major group that is Luxottica. Together, and with the support of our 150,000 employees, we are committed to the common good of visual health by facilitating access to quality products that are both adapted to the needs and attractive to the global population. This mission is the underlying purpose of this merger, beyond its industrial and financial rationale.

But we cannot do it alone.

We call for a global alliance, bringing together governments, industry players, NGOs, associations... A coalition that will go beyond short-term deadlines and borders to win the battle against poor vision in the world. We have already been joined by actors as diverse as the Australian government, the Royal Government of Bhutan, the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), Renault, Total and the A. de Rothschild Foundation.

For 3 billion people to see the world clearly tomorrow, we do not need funding of new research projects or of new innovations. It is simply a question of motivation, commitment and long-term collaboration. And it is within reach. We will have a direct and powerful impact on the world, transforming people's lives. Let's seize this opportunity!

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