Novartis has a clear purpose: to reimagine medicine to improve and extend people’s lives. We use science and technology in an effort to create transformative treatments that can change the practice of medicine, and then strive to get them to the people who need them.

Society’s trust is essential to accomplishing our goals. Since becoming CEO, I have made building trust with society a top priority. We aim to hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards, take bold steps to increase access to medicines, tackle complex global health challenges, and do our part as a responsible corporate citizen.

We still have plenty of work to do, but I’m proud of what we’ve achieved over the past year – both as a leading medical innovator and as a responsible contributor to society.

Leaders are key to establishing a culture of integrity, and we’ve made it clear to employees that we must never compromise our ethical standards in order to meet business targets. We’ve revised our employee bonus incentives to reinforce this.

In 2018, we took an important new step in our long history of expanding access to medicines. We adopted principles that put access at the heart of our business. We will integrate access strategies in all our new product launches to help ensure that our medical breakthroughs reach as many people as possible. This is the start of a journey, and our progress will be part of the annual performance reviews for me and my fellow Executive Committee members.

Our existing access programs also continue to progress. In 2018, Novartis Social Business reached almost 25 million patients with medicines and 7.9 million people with health education. I was pleased to see that our ongoing efforts to bring our innovations to patients around the world helped Novartis climb to second place on the Access to Medicine Index.

We’ve also made important progress in helping address key global health challenges. With nearly 900 million malaria treatments delivered at no profit since 2001, we renewed our commitment with a USD 100 million investment over five years to research and develop vital next-generation antimalarial drugs. Building on our long-term commitment to end leprosy, we helped found the Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy to finally eliminate this ancient disease. In addition, we have embarked on exciting new efforts targeting killers like Chagas and sickle cell disease.

Finally, we’ve taken steps to be a better corporate citizen. In September, we became the only pharmaceutical company to pledge support for the Equal Pay International Coalition. We endorsed the UN business standards against discrimination of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. And we established a new companywide environmental sustainability strategy, with the aspiration to become carbon neutral by 2025, and plastic and water neutral by 2030.

It has been my honor to lead our company through a challenging and inspiring year. We are proud of our progress and are firm in our resolve to continue earning society’s trust.

Vas Narasimhan
Chief Executive Officer