

## Press Release

For immediate release

# MOMENTUM GROWS AMONG ADVOCATES TO END TUBERCULOSIS

2017 efforts focused on G20 leaders and global parliamentarians

**Washington, D.C. (March 24)** – World Tuberculosis (TB) Day, observed March 24<sup>th</sup> each year, comes with growing momentum among advocates to eradicate an ancient disease that continues to impact millions of people throughout the world. Alarmed by a steady rise in cases of drug-resistant TB (DR-TB; including multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB)), advocates have become more targeted in their calls for greater investment in research that will lead to less toxic drugs, modern diagnostic tools, and shorter treatment regimens for people who contract the disease. These efforts are beginning to draw responses.

At the Ministerial Meeting Towards Ending TB in the South-East Asia Region, New Delhi, on March 16, 2017, an [urgent call to action was signed](#) by 11 health ministers, committing to scale-up efforts targeted at ending TB. The strongly worded document noted that TB remains the leading cause of death among all infectious diseases in the World Health Organization's (WHO) South-East Asia Region, having claimed nearly 800,000 lives in 2015 alone.

“[N]early 200,000 MDR-TB cases as well as other forms of drug-resistant TB emerging each year in the Region is ... a matter of huge concern, that if not addressed as a matter of utmost urgency, could add to the growing problem of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and pose a serious health security threat in the Region,” the resolution states. Further, it notes “the incalculable human, financial and developmental costs of this massive burden of sickness, suffering, and premature mortality, because TB disproportionately affects adults in their most productive ... years.”

“[W]e are now at a ... turning point, wherein, by making an exceptional effort in every country in our Region — particularly in those with the highest rates of tuberculosis — we can end TB by 2030,” the resolution asserts.

Meanwhile, the Global TB Caucus, a network of more than 2,300 parliamentarians (MPs) from 130 countries, following a meeting of MPs from G20 countries in Berlin, March 20–22, [called on global leaders](#) to do more to avert the “unacceptable risk” of drug-resistant tuberculosis.

“Progress against TB at a global level has been inadequate, and the development of drug-resistant TB represents an unacceptable risk to the health of people across the world. Global leaders must act and ensure that we have the drugs, diagnostics, and vaccines that we need to fight the disease,” said Nick Herbert MP, co-chairman of the Caucus.

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, [ACTION joined 84 organizations and 112 individuals](#) calling on G20 leaders to prioritize TB at the upcoming Summit in July where they are expected to discuss steps to address the global threat of AMR. Particular focus is being devoted to the G20 countries, which account for 92 percent of global R&D expenditure and 54 percent of all TB cases every year.

The movement to end TB is expected grow even more this year and next. A November meeting of health and finance ministers from 40 high burden countries in Moscow will focus on accelerating efforts to end TB. In 2018, the UN General Assembly will convene a special meeting on TB in New York. Both meetings are first-of-their-kind, important platforms to gain traction in the global effort to end TB.

At present, TB is the world's leading cause of death from an infectious disease. In 2015, the WHO estimated that 10.4 million people fell ill with TB, and 1.8 million people died from the disease. There were 500,000 cases of MDR-TB last year.

TB is treated with antibiotics, and as with other infections, strains of the disease have become resistant to standard drugs. TB poses a unique threat, however, because, unlike most other drug-resistant infections, it is airborne. Underinvestment in research, lack of political will, and overall lack of attention to the disease have resulted in continued reliance on ineffective vaccines, outmoded diagnostic tools, and impractical treatment regimens for those suffering from the disease.

ACTION is a partnership of 12 locally rooted organizations around the world that advocate together to build political will and increase investments for global health. Our partners: Æquitas (India), CITAM (Zambia), Global Health Advocates France, Global Health Advocates India, Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium, Princess of Africa Foundation (South Africa), RESULTS International Australia, RESULTS Canada, RESULTS Japan, RESULTS Educational Fund (US), RESULTS UK, and WACI Health (Kenya).

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