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WHO South-East Asia countries commit to end TB by 2030

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Tracking progress to eliminate tuberculosis, Member countries of WHO South-East Asia Region committed to further intensifying efforts to ensure rapid and concrete progress to End TB by 2030.

In a statement adopted at the Delhi End TB Summit held recently, member countries unanimously agreed to actualizing and intensifying essential actions agreed to in the Delhi Call to Action which was adopted in March last year to accelerate efforts to End TB in the Region, host to one fourth of the global population but a disproportionate 46% of the global TB burden.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization said, “Progress against TB in this Region will have a major impact on the progress globally. Too much is at stake, we cannot afford to fail. We must remember that the war against TB will be won in communities. It will be won by nurses, doctors, community health workers and others at the frontlines. We must give them the resources they need to find every last person with TB, to diagnose them, to treat them, and to cure them.”

Welcoming the statement, Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director for WHO South-East Asia, said, “it gives shape to our momentum and aspirations, and does so by setting out a series of strategic priorities which include establishing strong leadership of TB programmes at the national level; increasing budgetary and human resource allocations to TB programmes from domestic and global sources; enabling each and every TB patient to access the best possible care available; and supplementing medical care for TB with social and financial protection.”

Hosted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, the World Health Organization and the Stop TB Partnership, the Delhi End TB Summit 2018 was inaugurated recently by the Prime Minister of India.

Reviewing efforts being made to end TB since the adoption of the Delhi Call for Action on 16 March 2017, Member countries noted that though efforts have been strengthened with increased attention, investments and initiatives; the stepped-up response was falling short of what was required to reach the critical thresholds for ending TB.

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In the statement, the countries committed to multisectoral and empowered national initiatives, reporting to the highest levels of government, to lead the TB programme.

The Member countries committed to increasing budgetary and human resource allocations by governments as well as by their global, domestic and other partners so as to ensure that national TB plans are fully funded.

They also committed to universal access to comprehensive, integrated TB care and prevention services, to achieve universal health coverage as committed to in the Sustainable Development Goals, by enabling the best possible care to each and every person, including migrants, the aged and other high-risk populations, living with any form of TB including drug-resistant TB and TB-HIV co-infections.

To address the challenge of TB in a holistic manner, the Member countries agreed to supplement medical care for TB with social and financial protection in both high and lower incidence countries.

As member countries committed to ‘working together to end TB’, WHO reiterated that it stands with the Stop TB Partnership and all partners to make that vision a reality.

Dr Lucica Ditiu, The Stop TB Partnership’s Executive Director and Peter Sands, Global Fund’s Executive Director were among the prominent health leaders attending the week-long meeting.

The health ministers of a number of countries including Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Kazakhstan and Peru also participated.

The Summit sets the stage for the September 2018 United Nations High-Level Meeting on TB. For the first time TB will be discussed in the UN General Assembly at the Heads of State level. The UN high-level meeting is expected to endorse an ambitious set of goals to put the world on course to ending TB.