THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

OPENING REMARKS AT WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION GLOBAL MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON ENDING TUBERCULOSIS

Moscow, 16 November 2017
Honourable Minister of Health, Dr. Skvortsova,

WHO Director-General, Dr. Tedros,

Honourable Ministers, ambassadors, leaders and partners,

I am pleased to be with you today for this important meeting.


We are here because we recognize the urgency of acting to end suffering and deaths due to tuberculosis, which has become the world’s greatest infectious killer.

It killed 1.6 million people last year and affects 10.4 million people today.

I am personally committed to see the end of TB, as my father was taken by this terrible disease.

To adequately tackle TB, we must face head-on the social drivers of the disease.

In particular, we must address antimicrobial resistance that has brought multidrug-resistant TB into existence.

TB hampers development, while poverty and social distress fuels TB.

It is a vicious circle.

The WHO Global Strategy to End TB by 2030 provides a framework for progress, and your presence signifies the leadership and commitment we require.

But with just 13 years to meet our targets, we must now translate rhetoric and strategy into concrete action at the community-level.
As WHO has said, no action today, no cure tomorrow.

Health is at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It is a pre-condition, an outcome and an indicator of progress.

In a new development era, with complex challenges, our success will be dependent on our ability to work boldly across sectors, just as the theme of this conference suggests.

More than ever, we must consider carefully – and quickly – how our efforts can expand beyond the traditional TB silo, ensuring links to the broader global health agenda.

Tuberculosis provides a critical opportunity for us to implement system-wide approaches that build a health infrastructure capable of not only preventing, diagnosing and treating TB, but of promoting and protecting the broader health and well-being of entire communities.

Tuberculosis demands a response that expands access to medicines and advances the Universal Health Coverage agenda.

And, with some 600,000 drug-resistant cases of TB each year, the ever-evolving bacteria that we are up against challenge us to think creatively and cross-sectorally about our broader efforts to tackle antimicrobial resistance.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reminds us that none of these themes exists in a vacuum and it calls on us to act ambitiously to leave no one behind.
With more than half of all new TB cases occurring in just five countries, we have much work to do to deliver on this promise for the poorest and most marginalized who disproportionately suffer from the disease.

Continued political leadership, sustainable financing and research and innovation will be critical to our efforts.

I am excited to see so many of these inter-locking themes on the agenda of this meeting and the resulting Ministerial Declaration.

Each theme depends, too, on your core principles of promoting equity, ethics and human rights.

These must also be addressed through a multi-sectoral strategy, which will demand inclusive and ambitious partnerships across ministries, agencies, civil society and stakeholders from both the public and private sectors.

Our response to TB must be country-driven and informed by the lived experiences of those affected by the disease.

Over the next few days, we will have the chance to learn from country programmes and hear from those who know all too well what tuberculosis means personally and for their communities.

If we do not seize the opportunities offered by this Conference, its Declaration and the forthcoming UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on TB next year, we will have failed the people, communities and nations we represent and serve.

Friends, the time for action is now.

We all have a role to play.
As Ministers of Health, so many of you here can help capture the attention of your Heads of State to generate the leadership we so desperately require.

And you are well-positioned to forge strategic partnerships across ministries to help us move toward Universal Health Coverage -- a critical step toward ending TB and driving progress across the SDGs.

And civil society – from faith-based and non-governmental organizations, to research institutions and the private sector – has an enormous role to play.

You are essential to advocacy and accountability efforts, you help to expand the reach of essential services, and many of you are at the forefront of the cutting-edge research required to take us over the finish line.

The United Nations stands firmly behind you and is committed to working with you.

As we move this important agenda forward, political leadership will be imperative to help us fast-track our efforts in an integrated and sustainable way.

I thank President Putin for Russia’s continued commitment to ending the TB epidemic and for hosting this important gathering.

The End TB targets and the SDGs are enormously ambitious. But they are achievable.

By working together, we can achieve our common vision: an end to TB by 2030.

Thank you.

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