



In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Message from

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WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

on the occasion of

WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY

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World Tuberculosis Day, 24th March, gives us opportunity to revitalize our commitment in the fight against the ancient disease of tuberculosis which continues to cause millions of deaths worldwide. It also helps direct attention to ongoing efforts to save lives and prevent spread of this infectious disease which can be easily treated and prevented.

The global health community has come a long way in its struggle against tuberculosis. Recent years have seen appreciable progress in meeting global targets to prevent and control tuberculosis. Since 1990, we have seen a fall in the incidence of tuberculosis and an impressive 40% decline in tuberculosis-related mortality. However, still in 2011, there were more than 8.7 million new cases of tuberculosis and 1.4 million people died because of it. This shows that the global fight against tuberculosis is not over yet.

In the past decade, the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region has made some progress in expansion of tuberculosis control and care services. The case detection rate increased from 50% to 62% during the period 1990–2011. The treatment success rate has reached an impressive 88%. Countries have secured adequate financing from domestic, bilateral and multilateral donors like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. However, there are still numerous challenges in the regional response to tuberculosis.

The regional case detection rate is lower than the global average of 67%, which means that countries are still unable to detect all cases. Only 4.6% of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) cases were provided with treatment and care services in previous years which is

far less than required by the targets. The Region is particularly vulnerable to complex emergency situations. Several countries are experiencing conflict, natural disasters and unstable security conditions, making tuberculosis care more complex and challenging. Many countries in this Region have remarkable potential to achieve tuberculosis elimination and become role models for the rest of the world. However, the progress towards this goal is slow.

WHO is at the forefront of the regional struggle against tuberculosis. WHO teams in regional and country offices play an instrumental role in building the capacities of the national tuberculosis control programmes, developing strategic interventions, helping secure funds and creating partnerships to make tuberculosis care everyone's agenda. In 2012, WHO efforts focused on strengthening of diagnosis, enhancing the contribution of private health sector in tuberculosis case detection, scaling up national expertise and services on MDR-TB and developing guidance on tuberculosis elimination and delivery of tuberculosis care in complex emergencies.

World Tuberculosis Day on 24th of March calls for a review of what we are doing to stop tuberculosis and to end the suffering of the 1 million tuberculosis patients in this Region. We know our problems and we have the solutions. The only difference is in our actions. We need to act, and act now, to detect more and more tuberculosis patients, extend care to the rising number of MDR-TB patients, develop mechanisms to sustain tuberculosis care in complex emergency environments and make the possibility of tuberculosis elimination in some parts of the Region like member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council a reality. Recent global advances in a new diagnostic tools, the commitment of donors like the Global Fund in the form of a new funding model to improve investment in tuberculosis control, and expanding international and regional partnerships are all complementary to our actions in this fight.

Let us all mark World Tuberculosis Day 2013 with a new resolve. We know what to do, we know we can defeat tuberculosis, we know we can save unnecessary suffering caused by tuberculosis in our countries. With this conviction, let us commit ourselves to do better, and more, in our fight against tuberculosis. Stop TB in my life time, the slogan of this year's tuberculosis Day should be everyone's ambition. Let us together Stop TB and see a world free of tuberculosis in our life time.