

Message from

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on the occasion of
World Tuberculosis Day
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Today is **World TB Day**. Under the slogan "**Each patient counts**", WHO in the Eastern Mediterranean Region is calling this year for legislation on TB notification to be updated so that all cases of TB can be found and treated.

On 24 March 1882, Robert Koch announced his discovery of the bacterium that causes tuberculosis. This discovery was a major event in the history of medicine, and a turning point in our understanding of a deadly disease which had plagued mankind throughout the ages.

More than **130** years later, the world is failing to detect **3 million** new cases of TB every year, around a third of the total estimated cases. In our region we missed an estimated **250 000** new TB cases last year, just over a third of the total. Moreover, almost two thirds of the estimated TB cases among women were not detected in **2012**.

The global theme of **World TB Day 2014** is to reach the three million missing cases, and our message to you in the Region is "Every patient counts".

What are we doing to find the missing cases in our Region?

Countries in the Region have built strong national TB programmes with sound strategic plans of action. The Stop TB strategy has been successfully implemented, and the Region has maintained a high treatment success rate among cases, at around 88% for the past 5 years.

In the past **10** years, countries have detected more than **4.2 million** TB cases, and have successfully treated more than 3 million of these. Deaths from TB have fallen by 50% compared to 1997.

Since **2000**, national TB control programmes have made efforts to involve stakeholders in TB care, in line with national TB guidelines under the public-private mix initiative (PPM), which became an essential component of the Stop TB strategy in **2006**. Further efforts are needed now to fully involve all relevant stakeholders.

Worldwide and in the Region, one of the key actions that we have not yet undertaken is to update public health legislation to ensure that all cases of TB are notified to the national health system as soon as they are diagnosed. Many countries in the Region have not revised the relevant public health laws since early in the 20th century but a supportive legislative environment has a major role to play in ensuring and documenting the contribution of every partner in the health system.

Notification of cases needs to take place under conditions of strict confidentiality, and should not impede the right of patients to decide who will treat them. Care will also need to be taken to ensure that notification does not lead to further stigmatization of TB patients.

Countries need also to improve active case-finding among highly vulnerable groups, such as displaced persons, children and people living with HIV. Updated legislation on notification will help to achieve this.

Let me say again, "Each patient counts". Each one of us can help someone with TB to get access to proper care.

Thank you.

**World TB Day 2014**