

**Message from**  
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**FOR THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**  
**on the occasion of**  
**WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY**

**24 March 2019**

Every 24 March, we commemorate World TB Day to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of tuberculosis (TB) and to galvanize action to end the global TB epidemic. On this date in 1882, Dr Robert Koch announced that he had discovered the bacterium that causes TB, opening the way to diagnosis and cure of the disease.

Worldwide, TB is one of the top 10 causes of death and the leading cause from a single infectious agent. Ten million people globally developed TB in 2017, and an estimated 1.6 million died from it. According to current estimates, around one third of all people with TB have either not been detected or not been notified by national TB programmes. Moreover, drug-resistant TB remains a public health crisis: it is estimated that about 3.5% of people with TB have multidrug-resistant TB. Only a quarter of estimated TB cases received treatment during 2017. About a quarter of the world's population are estimated to have a latent TB infection and are at increased risk of developing active TB during their lifetime.

In the Eastern Mediterranean Region there are over 750 000 people with TB, around 4.3% of whom have drug-resistant TB. The Region recently achieved the highest treatment success rates of any world region, at 92% of drug-sensitive TB patients and 62% of those with drug-resistant TB. This success is all the more impressive given that several countries in the Region face persistent complex emergency situations. It reflects the resilience, dedication and commitment of national TB programmes, health workers, donors, activists and communities.

However, consistent with the overall global situation, around one third of people with TB in the Eastern Mediterranean Region are either undiagnosed or not notified to their national tuberculosis programme, while 80% of cases of drug-resistant TB have not been detected. Another critical challenge in the Region is an overall funding gap of 36% and overreliance on

international funding: 43% of the available TB budget in 2017 came from international sources and only 21% from domestic sources.

At a UN General Assembly (UNGA) high-level meeting on ending TB on 26 September 2018, heads of state and other leaders reaffirmed their commitment to end the global TB epidemic by 2030, as required by the Sustainable Development Goals. We are confident that with strong commitment from heads of state, ministries of health and partners, the adoption of a multisectoral approach and the continuous support of WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, countries of the Region will reach the End TB targets set for 2020 and beyond. The UNGA high-level meeting endorsed a Political Declaration which among other things provides an accountability framework to help ensure effective implementation and reporting at country level and monitor progress towards reaching End TB targets.

The theme of World TB Day 2019 – “It’s time” – emphasizes the urgent need to act on the commitments made by global leaders to scale up access to prevention and treatment, build accountability, ensure sufficient and sustainable financing for research, promote an end to stigma and discrimination, and ensure an equitable, rights-based and people-centred TB response. The high-level commitments made by United Nations Member States in the Political Declaration must be translated into concrete action to address the key challenges of finding missing people with TB, addressing the crisis of multidrug-resistant TB and tuberculosis among children, fostering public–private partnership and establishing enabling environments to reach End TB targets.

On this World TB Day, WHO calls on governments, affected communities, civil society organizations, health-care providers and our national and international partners to join forces under the banner “Find. Treat. All. #EndTB” to ensure that no one is left behind.

**It’s time for action! It’s time to End TB.**

Thank you.