



MESSAGE FROM

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**WHO REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
ON THE OCCASION OF**

WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY

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Today, on World Tuberculosis Day, we commemorate the ongoing efforts to combat this infectious disease, which tragically claims over 1 million lives annually – 7% of which occur in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. Each year, this day serves as a reminder that ending TB is within our reach.

Prevention is indeed better than cure; therefore, preventive treatment is one of the crucial interventions against TB. This intervention, part of primary health care, aims to halt the progression from latent TB infection to active TB disease. A cornerstone of preventive interventions involves screening high-risk groups and providing preventive treatment to individuals, according to WHO guidelines, to reduce the incidence of TB and its associated consequences.

Unfortunately, access to TB preventive treatment remains limited in our Region. In 2022, only 5% of eligible contacts of TB patients and 8% of people living with HIV received this treatment. Factors such as lack of awareness, insufficient funding, conflicts, and the stigma associated with TB have hindered progress, putting many at unnecessary risk of developing the disease.

Our regional TB action plan commits to increasing TB preventive treatment coverage to at least 60% of eligible individuals, reaching 2 million people annually by 2030. While ambitious, this goal is achievable.

I urge governments to prioritize national ownership of and commitment to TB prevention. Health care providers must effectively communicate the benefits of TB preventive treatment to eligible individuals. Community organizations can engage local communities to actively participate in TB prevention efforts. Further, donors, partners, the private sector and manufacturers must work together to ensure equitable and sustainable access to TB treatment, leaving no one behind.

Through strong partnerships and collective action, we can expand TB preventive treatment coverage and, ultimately, end TB. Together, we can make this vision a reality.