

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Date: 15 March 2024

Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

MEDIA ADVISORY

The African Union Commission Commemorates the 2024 World Tuberculosis Day under the theme: “Yes, We Can End TB”

INVITATION TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEDIA

What: The 2024 World Tuberculosis Day Commemoration Event under the theme: “Yes, We Can End TB”

When: Friday, March 22, 2024, from 09.00 am to 12.00 pm (Addis time)

Where: African Union (AU) Commission Headquarters, Addis Abeba, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Who: Hosted by the AU Commission’s Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development in partnership with Africa CDC, Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF), and the Stop TB Partnership

Background:

Tuberculosis (TB) remains a significant public health challenge globally resulting in an estimated 1.30 million deaths with about 11% of those deaths occurring among children. Africa accounts for 23% of the estimated global TB burden and over 33% of global TB deaths. It is thus paramount for African Union (AU) Member States to commemorate World Tuberculosis Day (WTBD) to raise awareness on TB prevention and control, but also to reaffirm our commitment as a continent to the fight against TB - a disease that continues to impact millions of lives for decades across our continent. In 2024, WTBD will be commemorated under the theme, “Yes! We can end TB.”

There is significant hope for eliminating TB. Over the years, advancements in medical science, improved diagnostics, better treatment regimens, and increased awareness have contributed to significant progress in combating TB globally. Substantial progress to eliminate TB as a global health threat was being made until the COVID-19 pandemic era which set back TB control programmes worldwide. In Africa, several factors continue to contribute to TB prevalence on the continent, including poverty, malnutrition, overcrowding, HIV/AIDS, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, and limited access to healthcare services and medication.

Additionally, the funding available for TB diagnostic, treatment, and prevention services in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) was estimated at US\$ 5.8 billion in 2022. This amount was only 44% of the global target of US\$ 13 billion annually by 2022. Intensified efforts to obtain funding are urgently required to mitigate and reverse the negative impacts of declining TB financing, and this has become even more pressing in the context of ongoing conflicts in Africa and other parts of the world, exacerbating broader determinants of TB such as undernutrition.

Research into new vaccines, drugs, and diagnostics continues to progress, offering promising avenues for more effective TB control. Additionally, some bold policies and strategies emphasize integrated, patient-centered care and prevention such as the AU Catalytic Framework to end AIDS, TB, and Malaria by 2030. The Africa Health Strategy (2016-2030) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also have strategic objectives for disease elimination which include ending TB by 2030 in Africa. Ending TB is possible and achievable

in our lifetimes given the availability of vaccines, access to diagnostics and better treatment. The Political Declaration of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) High-level Meeting on the Fight Against Tuberculosis contains the most ambitious targets to date in the fight against TB. It is envisioned that if countries follow through on their commitments, the world will be on track to ending TB by 2030 and providing life-saving treatment for 45 million people between 2023 and 2027.

There is a need for political action to move us towards the commitments made, global sensitization on the gaps and actions and sufficient resources to end TB. Investment in TB programs means ensuring access to quality healthcare for all, regardless of socioeconomic status or geographical location. The commemoration of WTBD goes a long way in advancing the goal of TB elimination. Moreover, establishing strong partnerships with various stakeholders to strengthen resource mobilisation, innovation, research, and advocacy is necessary to enhance TB response. TB programmes in Africa need to support operational research while protecting vulnerable people.

In this context, the AU Commission, under the leadership of the Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development will hold a commemoration event at the AUC HQ under the theme “*Yes! We can end TB*” to commemorate the 2024 WTBD in partnership with the Africa CDC, Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF), and the Stop TB Partnership.

The event will bring together Ambassadors and/or Permanent Representatives to the African Union, Special Missions to the AU, Specialized Organs, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), UN Agencies, Development Partners, Civil Society Organizations, and other stakeholders involved in the TB response and strengthening of health systems across the continent.

Objectives of the meeting are to:

The main objective of the event is to commemorate the 2024 World Tuberculosis Day under the theme: “*Yes! We can end TB*”. **The specific objectives are to:**

- i. Provide AU Member States with a platform to strengthen awareness of AU policy documents on TB while fostering greater coordinated collaborative advocacy efforts towards ending TB;
- ii. Raise awareness on targets and commitments in the UN HLM Political Declaration to foster accountability and country ownership;
- iii. Accelerate response to childhood TB with a focus on the 2022 Call to Action on Childhood TB and Nutrition; Communiqué on Improved Political Commitment and Financing for TB for High Burden Countries and the Childhood and Adolescent TB Roadmap

Expected outcomes of the meeting:

- i. Fostered a greater understanding of AU policy documents and respective TB commitments by AU Member States
- ii. A set of experiences and perspectives for strengthening TB response in Africa will be disseminated to all AU Member States after the session.

Participation at the event:

Members of the Press who would like to attend for interviews **should contact:**

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