

**WHO patron, the First Lady of Iraq, Mrs. Hero Ibrahim Ahmed, launches Iraq National Stop TB Partnership**

**Sulaimaniyah, 27 June 2012**  “Tuberculosis causes loss of human life and poses a threat to the development process in Iraq. It is a curable disease. No one in Iraq should die of Tuberculosis. To achieve this, diverse partners from the public and the private sector, from the civil society and the media, have come together to jointly mobilize their capacities, driven by their determination to stop the spread of TB” stated H.E. Mrs. Hero Ibrahim Ahmed, the First Lady of Iraq and the World Health Organization Patron for TB, in her welcoming remark during the launch of the Iraq National Stop TB Partnership celebrated today at the Palace Hotel in Sulaimaniyah.

The event was attended by prominent delegates from the government, civil society leaders, representatives from public and private health sectors, and representatives of UN Agencies including WHO and UNDP.

H.E. Mrs. Hero Ibrahim Ahmed officially launched the establishment of the National Stop TB Partnership that is based on the notion of close collaboration of a plurality of partners who together work on implementing innovative, unconventional ways to fight TB at the national level. Her Excellency praised the efforts of the Ministries of Heath and the World Health Organization in implementing the Stop TB Strategy, ensuring universal access to treatment and care services for all TB patients.

In his speech, H.E. the Iraq Minister of Health, Dr. Majeed Hamad Amin, said “the Iraq National Stop TB Partnership will provide a platform for the launch of creative activities to reach as many persons affected by TB as possible, aiming at effectively stopping the spread of TB in Iraq and achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.”

 His Excellency the Minister of Health of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Dr. Rekawt Hama Rasheed, emphasized that – in line with the Partnership’s action focus during 2012, to intensify efforts to ensure treatment and care for Multi-Drug Resistant TB patients – “the Ministry in the KRG will direct its attention towards making the newly rehabilitated National MDR-TB Hospital in Sulaimaniyah fully functional as soon as possible to receive its first patients". H.E. added that “The new hospital will have the capacity of 30 beds and will provide specialized treatment and medical services to multi-drug resistant TB patients”.

Last year the National TB Control Program of the Iraq Ministry of Health continued on its successful path in implementing TB control activities, increasing the case detection rate of TB while maintaining high treatment success and cure rates. “This fight against TB cannot be the sole responsibility of only one entity” said Dr. Syed Jaffar Hussain, Representative of World Health Organization Iraq Office, but “is the collective responsibility of the nation”. He added that "poverty, nutrition, housing, education, labor conditions, and environment are main factors contributing to the spread of this disease." By keeping the National STOP TB Partnership dynamic, creative and interactive, it will unify the actions of all those people who believe that TB can be eliminated in our lifetime.

Worth mentioning is that, the Partnership is initiated by the National TB Control Program of the Iraqi Ministry of Health, with the support of the World Health Organization–Iraq Office, and with financial support from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. At the day of its launch, the National Stop TB Partnership already counts more than 20 members including government institutions, private health sector, non-governmental organizations, media, and persons living with the disease.

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**Brief about the National Stop TB Partnership**

Global efforts are joined around the world to fight tuberculosis which still constitutes a major public health threat in many countries. The most prominent of these joint efforts is the **Global Stop TB Partnership** whichis a uniqueinternational body with the power to align actors all over the world in the fight against TB. It comprises around 1000 partners worldwide who act as a collective force that transforms the fight against TB in more than 100 countries. These partners include international and technical organizations, government programmes, research and funding agencies, foundations, NGOs, civil society and community groups and the private sector. It follows the vision of a TB-free world in which the children of today will see TB eliminated in their lifetime. It aims at ensuring that every TB patient has access to effective diagnosis, treatment and cure; stopping transmission of TB; reducing the inequitable social and economic toll of TB; and developing and implementing new preventive, diagnostic and therapeutic tools and strategies to stop TB.

The Global Stop TB Partnership is translated into national initiatives which proceed to carry the official name of the Partnership later on. In Iraq, the National TB Control Program – Ministry of Health initiated the establishment of the Iraq National Stop TB Partnership in cooperation with around 27 partners so far, representing the Iraqi civil society, private sector, and persons living with TB.

A national Stop TB Partnership is an innovative, voluntary alliance between its members, who commit to working collaboratively towards TB prevention, care and control, in which all partners contribute from their core competencies, share risks and responsibilities and benefit by achieving their own, each others and the overall goal. A national stop TB partnership aims at strengthening TB prevention, treatment and care in a given country in close collaboration with the national TB control programme (NTP) towards the targets of the Global Plan to Stop TB.

Further information National Stop TB Partnerships can be found on the Global Stop TB Partnership official website: http://www.stoptb.org/