24 March 2024

Thank you for gathering here today on World Tuberculosis Day. As one of the most deadly infectious diseases in the world, TB remains a pressing challenge to all WHO regions. In September 2023, the United Nations General Assembly convened its second high-level meeting on tuberculosis, at which Member States renewed their commitments to advance global, regional and national efforts towards ending the TB epidemic by endorsing a political declaration on TB with ambitious targets for the next five years.

Despite the setbacks of the COVID-19 emergency, countries and territories of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region have fully recovered in terms of the pandemic's impacts on TB prevention and care. The number of notified people in the Region diagnosed with TB is 579 thousand cases. This exceeds the 2019 level. The treatment success rates in the Region are among the highest of all six WHO regions. We are finding more people with TB, and we are treating most of them successfully. WHO support to its Member States has led to improvements in the quality of services, treatment outcomes and heightened quality of life for affected people. But our Region remains particularly slow in one important area: tuberculosis preventive treatment.

Currently only 5% of eligible contacts of TB patients and 8% of people living with HIV in the Region receive the preventive treatment.

The Region's performance in this area is a cause for concern, as the low levels of access to preventive treatment put many people at unnecessary risk of developing TB disease. Our regional TB action plan pledges to increase coverage of TB preventive treatment to at least 2 million people per year by 2030 – that is 60% of those who need it. This is an ambitious but attainable target, and this is very much linked to my flagship initiative on improving access to affordable medical commodities and securing equitable supply chains.

I would like to call for increased investments to end TB, and I urge governments to take ownership of the fight against this disease. Health providers can raise awareness and educate the public about the importance of TB preventive treatment. Community organizations can mobilize community members to participate in the planning and implementation of TB prevention programmes. In collaboration with our partner organizations, WHO will continue to

support governments to implement effective strategies to end TB. These collaborative efforts also include the private sector and manufacturers, who can allocate greater resources to facilitate equitable and sustainable access to TB treatment for everyone in need, everywhere, leaving no one behind.

Sunday 7th of July 2024 05:16:17 AM