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Development of a global strategy for tuberculosis research and innovation

At the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on tuberculosis, held in 2018, and the WHO global ministerial conference on ending tuberculosis, held in 2017, Member States renewed their commitments to strengthening national and global efforts in the fight against tuberculosis. The present document describes the development of a global strategy for tuberculosis research and innovation, which was initiated by the WHO Secretariat in line with these commitments and in response to resolution WHA71.3 (2018). The WHO Regional Committee for Europe is invited to comment and provide input on the draft global strategy. The final draft strategy will subsequently be presented for consideration by the Executive Board at its 146th session and the Seventy-third World Health Assembly in 2020. The WHO Regional Office for Europe is committed to supporting its Member States in the implementation of the global strategy through its European tuberculosis research initiative.

Development of a global strategy for tuberculosis research and innovation

INTRODUCTION

1. Tuberculosis is the leading cause of death from a single infectious agent globally, and is one of the leading causes of death from antimicrobial resistance. The Sustainable Development Goals include a target for tuberculosis that builds on historic gains made under the Millennium Development Goals, to “end the epidemic” by 2030. More specific targets for 2030, set in WHO’s End TB Strategy, include ensuring that no family is burdened with catastrophic expenses due to tuberculosis, and achieving a 90% reduction in tuberculosis deaths and an 80% reduction in tuberculosis incidence compared with 2015 levels, with targets for further reductions (95% and 90%, respectively) by 2035.¹ However, there is still an enormous gap between current reality and the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. Robust efforts are needed to sustain and improve on the gains made to date, and to address persistent challenges that have led to uneven progress in the fight against tuberculosis. The End TB Strategy stipulates that major technological breakthroughs are needed by 2025, so that the rate at which tuberculosis incidence falls can be accelerated dramatically compared with historic levels. Delivering on these targets requires a multisectoral approach to developing and equitably diffusing the right medical innovations and strategies as a top priority. However, there are multiple challenges and gaps to be addressed in research, innovation and access to tuberculosis vaccines, medicines, technologies and services.
3. At the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on tuberculosis,² held in September 2018, and the WHO global ministerial conference on ending tuberculosis, held in Moscow³ in 2017, Member States renewed their commitment to strengthen national and global efforts in the fight against tuberculosis.

¹ End TB Strategy: global strategy and targets for tuberculosis prevention, care and control after 2015. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2014 (http://www.who.int/tb/strategy/End_TB_Strategy.pdf?ua=1, accessed 7 June 2019).

² Political declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the fight against tuberculosis [73/3]. New York: United Nations General Assembly; 2018 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/3, accessed 7 June 2019).

³ Moscow declaration to end TB. First WHO global ministerial conference on ending TB in the sustainable development era: a multisectoral response. Moscow: WHO and the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation; 2017 (http://www.who.int/tb/features_archive/Moscow_Declaration_to_End_TB_final_ENGLISH.pdf?ua=1, accessed 7 June 2019).

4. In line with these political commitments, and in response to resolution WHA71.3 (2018), the Secretariat has initiated the development of a global strategy for tuberculosis research and innovation.¹ The global strategy aims to provide countries with a framework to facilitate the implementation of their commitments.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE GLOBAL STRATEGY

5. A road map for the development of the strategy was prepared, consultations were held with the WHO Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Tuberculosis, the WHO Global TB Research Task Force, national tuberculosis programme managers and other officials from within and beyond ministries of health, including ministries of science and technology, and representatives of civil society and affected communities, research funding institutions and other tuberculosis research and innovation stakeholders. A draft document was made available online for public review in the second quarter of 2019,² and based on feedback received, a revised draft strategy has been made available online for consideration by WHO regional committees in 2019.³ The final draft strategy will be presented for consideration by the Executive Board at its 146th session and the Seventy-third World Health Assembly.

6. The global strategy for tuberculosis research and innovation will support efforts by governments and other partners to accelerate tuberculosis research and innovation, and to improve equitable access to the benefits of research, by setting clear objectives and recommendations, as highlighted below.

(a) Create an enabling environment for tuberculosis research and innovation to increase the capacity for conducting and using research outcomes equitably in a sustained and effective manner, by strengthening public–private partnerships; streamlining and harmonizing regulatory processes for the review of research protocols and products; and integrating civil society’s expectations, needs, interests and values into the research and development process.

(b) Increase financial investments in tuberculosis research and innovation, by setting a target contribution for tuberculosis research funding; developing innovative and collaborative financing mechanisms to facilitate the timely development and diffusion of appropriate and affordable biomedical tools and technologies; and setting a target funding contribution for the social, health system and operational/implementation research that is needed to support effective scale-up of innovative strategies and tools.

(c) Promote and improve approaches to data sharing to advance scientific discovery; reduce duplication of effort; and facilitate the translation of evidence to national and global policies on tuberculosis prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care.

¹ Resolution WHA71.3 (2018) (http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA71/A71_R3-en.pdf, accessed 7 June 2019).

² Process overview: development of a global strategy for TB research and innovation. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2019 (https://www.who.int/tb/features_archive/Process-Global-strategy-for-TB-research-innovation/en/, accessed 7 June 2019).

³ A draft global strategy for TB research and innovation. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2019 (https://www.who.int/tb/features_archive/Revised_draft_Researchstrategy_based_on_public_comments.pdf?ua=1, accessed 7 June 2019).

(d) Promote equitable access to the benefits of research and innovation by strengthening global and national access initiatives for tuberculosis vaccines, medicines and diagnostics, and by providing appropriate governance structures that foster research and innovation as a shared responsibility that is needs-driven, evidence-based and guided by the core principles of affordability, effectiveness, efficiency and equity, with a view to enabling everyone to access essential quality tuberculosis health products and services without facing financial hardship.

7. The global strategy is aimed primarily at Member States, particularly ministries of health, science and technology, finance and education. By aligning their national health research and innovation strategies and actions (and related investments) to the framework presented in the strategy, all countries can accelerate progress towards the milestones and targets of the End TB Strategy. Member States may also consider developing a comprehensive national strategy or road map for tuberculosis research and innovation, to coordinate the implementation of the global strategy at national level.

8. A prerequisite for successfully accelerating efforts to end tuberculosis is that all stakeholders make concerted efforts and collaborate. Hence, the global strategy also makes the case for a unified and aligned response in which key relevant national and international partners and affected communities support Member States by undertaking the investments or partnerships (or both) necessary for accelerating innovation.

ACTION BY THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

9. The Regional Committee is invited to comment and provide input on the draft global strategy for tuberculosis innovation and research.¹

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¹ Available at https://www.who.int/tb/features_archive/Revised_draft_Researchstrategy_based_on_public_comments.pdf?ua=1 (accessed 7 June 2019).