



BRINGING CIVIL SOCIETY TOGETHER
TO END THE TUBERCULOSIS EPIDEMIC
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Agenda item 5(f) - Final report on implementation of the Consolidated action plan to prevent and combat multidrug- and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis in the WHO European Region 2011–2015 and consideration of the proposed Tuberculosis action plan for the WHO European Region 2016–2020.

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentleman,

I am very pleased to be able to address your Assembly today at such a critical juncture in the fight against TB and MDR-TB in our region.

I am here speaking on behalf of the TB Europe Coalition, a regional advocacy network gathering civil society organisations, community advocates and activists who are eager to work in closer partnership with all stakeholders in order to redouble our efforts towards stopping the spread of the disease, and recommit ourselves to tackling this scourge that drains the life and saps the potential of so many.

We truly believe that with concerted and coordinated efforts from governments, the European Union, donors, civil society, communities and technical partners, the battle against TB in our region and worldwide, can be won.

Much of the world looks to Europe as an example. Yet, we need to show true leadership and offer a standard of care that doesn't just match international standards, but exceeds them. Today, we need a paradigm shift if we ought to see better results.

In the coming years, far less international support will be available from external sources for our TB programmes, at a time when promising diagnostics and new therapies are becoming available. So we will need to do things differently and think in a more sustainable way.

We think that one of the most cost effective and innovative solutions to make this happen is to use our strengths in the communities and our ability to work with the most affected.



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Sir William Osler's prophetic words – "Tuberculosis is a social disease with a medical aspect" reflect very well one of the shifts that needs to operate in our region.

The post 2015 era, is the era when we bring care closer to the patient, where the response is truly embedded within communities. TB can no longer be seen purely as a health matter. We will never get rid of TB if we think it can solely be treated in hospitals. Patients need a lot more support, of all kinds. As civil society we are the link, we are the bridge between the medical and the social response to TB.

We, civil society organisations and community representatives, former patients, advocates, activists and individuals, are here to help. We know our communities, we know what the realities are on the ground and we are motivated to fight TB. We don't want to stay aside and observe health authorities and TB experts save us from TB. We are allies and only together, in partnership we will succeed. We are ready to work with you in every country of the region. Reach out to us, talk to us, let's work together to understand how we can maximise results and impact and achieve the ambitions of the TB Action Plan.

Despite representing only 13 percent of the world's population, our Region makes up a quarter of the global MDR-TB burden. The European Region has lower cure rates than any other WHO region. Most alarmingly, the European Union's (EU) cure rate is lower than the one of the "wider" WHO European Region, with only 33 percent of M/XDR-TB cases successfully treated. This means that two-thirds of all individuals who get M/XDR-TB in the EU are not cured. Hence, true political commitment to end the disease will be another key to success.

In this regard, we would like to commend the Latvian government for hosting the 1st ever EU-Eastern Partnership Ministerial meeting on TB and MDR TB. We are looking forward to continue those important political discussions on sustainability in Georgia at the end of this month, and also wanted to congratulate the Slovak government for putting these issues on top of their EU presidency health agenda in 2016.

True commitment at the regional, national and local government level will drive us a long way in implementing the ambitions of the TB Action Plan.



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We would therefore like to encourage the European Union as a whole, and as an important regional power, via its Institutions in Brussels, to also take a much greater leadership role in addressing TB as a cross border health threat.

Thank you all very much for your attention.

Fanny Voitzwinkler – Coordinator of TB Europe Coalition