Partners call for increased commitment to tackle MDR-TB

23 March 2011 - Geneva - On World TB Day, the World Health Organization (WHO) the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the Stop TB Partnership are calling on world leaders to step up their commitment and contributions to meet the goal of diagnosing and treating one million people with multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) between 2011 and 2015.

Today WHO has released a report, Towards Universal Access to Diagnosis and Treatment of MDR-TB and XDR-TB by 2015, which presents progress in the MDR-TB response in the countries with the highest burden of drug-resistant TB. "Many countries have made progress, but despite the recent scale up in efforts, the world needs to do much more to get care to all MDR-TB patients who need it," says Dr Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General. "We cannot allow MDR-TB to spread unchecked."

Leaving MDR-TB untreated increases the risk of spread of drug resistant strains of TB. WHO estimates there will be more than 2 million new cases of MDR-TB between 2011 and 2015.

Programmes financed by the Global Fund and following WHO treatment standards are expected to diagnose and treat about 200 000 people for MDR-TB by 2015, a fourfold increase from those 50 000 patients who are currently undergoing treatment.

It is anticipated that the Global Fund will provide 84% of all international investments in TB in 2011. However, both domestic and international resources need to be scaled up to cope with MDR-TB and continue to make progress in the fight against TB.

“MDR-TB is a threat to all countries as it is difficult and expensive to treat. Unless we make an extraordinary effort to tackle this problem our ability to finance and secure continued progress against TB in general will be threatened” says Professor Michel Kazatchkine, Executive Director

of the Global Fund."

"It is time for countries with rapidly growing economies and a heavy burden of MDR-TB to step up their commitment and financing for their own MDR-TB programmes. Several have the capacity to show new leadership on south-south cooperation and aid to neighbouring countries that are also affected," says Dr Jorge Sampaio, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Stop TB.

Since 2009, the 23 countries most heavily affected by TB drug resistance have nearly doubled their budgets for MDR-TB. From 2002 through 2010, Global Fund-financed TB programmes around the world have provided treatment to 7.7 million people and saved the lives of 4.1 million.

"The Global Fund's success can be measured in the number of lives that have been saved through care provided by the TB programmes it finances," says Dr Lucica Ditiu, Executive Secretary of the Stop TB Partnership. "Every TB patient should have access to proper care. We advocate on behalf of millions of patients worldwide and our strong partners such as WHO and the Global Fund. To reach a million people with effective care for MDR-TB over the next five years, we will need to work closely with all partners, especially with affected communities."

MDR-TB is a form of TB that fails to respond to standard first-line drugs.

In 2009, WHO reported that 9.4 million people became ill with TB and 1.7 million died, including 380 000 people with HIV-associated TB. There were some 440 000 cases of MDR-TB and 150 000 deaths in 2008, the latest year for which estimates are available.

About the World Health Organization (WHO)

WHO is the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. It is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research

agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support

to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends.

The WHO Stop TB Department together with WHO regional and country offices: develops policies, strategies and standards; supports the efforts of WHO Member States; measures progress towards TB targets and assesses national programme performance, financing and impact; promotes research; and facilitates partnerships, advocacy and communication www.who.int/tb

About The Global Fund

The Global Fund is a unique global public/private partnership dedicated to attracting and disbursing additional resources to prevent and treat HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. This partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and affected communities represents a new approach to international health financing. The Global Fund works in close collaboration with other bilateral and multilateral organizations to supplement existing efforts dealing with the three diseases.

Since its creation in 2002, the Global Fund has become the major financier of programmes to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, with approved funding of US$ 21.7 billion. To date, programs supported by the Global Fund have saved 6.5 million lives through providing AIDS treatment for 3 million people, anti-tuberculosis treatment for 7.7 million people and the distribution of 160 million insecticide-treated nets for the prevention of malaria.

About the Stop TB Partnership

The Stop TB Partnership, which is hosted by the World Health Organization in Geneva , Switzerland , consists of more than 1 600 international organizations, countries, donors from the public and private sectors, and nongovernmental and governmental organizations, all working

together to eliminate TB. The Partnership's Global Plan to Stop TB 2011-2015, a roadmap for reducing the toll of TB worldwide and for TB research and development, aims to halve TB deaths compared to 1990 levels by end 2015.

Additional link: The Report can be found at: http://webitpreview.who.int/entity/tb/en/index.html