World TB Day 2017 – Unite efforts to leave no one behind. 22 March 2017 / GENEVA - New tuberculosis (TB) ethics guidance, launched today by the World Health Organization (WHO), aims to help ensure that countries implementing the End TB Strategy adhere to sound ethical standards to protect the rights of all those affected.

TB, the world's top infectious disease killer, claims 5 000 lives each day. The heaviest burden is carried by communities which already face socio-economic challenges: migrants, refugees, prisoners, ethnic minorities, miners and others working and living in risk-prone settings, and marginalized women, children and older people.

"TB strikes some of the world's poorest people hardest," said Dr Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General. "WHO is determined to overcome the stigma, discrimination, and other barriers that prevent so many of these people from obtaining the services they so badly need."

Poverty, malnutrition, poor housing and sanitation, compounded by other risk factors such as HIV, tobacco, alcohol use and diabetes, can put people at heightened risk of TB and make it harder for them to access care. More than a third (4.3 million) of people with TB go undiagnosed or unreported, some receive no care at all and others access care of questionable quality.

The new WHO ethics guidance addresses contentious issues such as, the isolation of contagious patients, the rights of TB patients in prison, discriminatory policies against migrants affected by TB, among others. It emphasizes five key ethical obligations for governments, health workers, care providers, nongovernmental organizations, researchers and other stakeholders to:

·provide patients with the social support they need to fulfil their responsibilities
·refrain from isolating TB patients before exhausting *all* options to enable treatment adherence and only under very specific conditions
·enable "key populations" to access same standard of care offered to other citizens
·ensure all health workers operate in a safe environment
·rapidly share evidence fromÂÂ research to inform national and global TB policy updates.

From guidance to action

Protecting human rights, ethics and equity are principles which underpin WHO's End TB Strategy. But it is not easy to apply these principles on the ground. Patients, communities, health workers, policy makers and other stakeholders frequently face conflicts and ethical dilemmas. The current multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) crisis and the health security threat it poses accentuate the situation even further.

"Only when evidence-based, effective interventions are informed by a sound ethical framework, and respect for human rights, will we be successful in reaching our ambitious goals of ending the TB epidemic and achieving universal health coverage. The SDG aspiration of leaving no one behind is centred on this," said Dr Mario Raviglione, Director, WHO Global TB

Programme.

"The guidance we have released today aims to identify the ethical predicaments faced in TB care delivery, and highlights key actions that can be taken to address them," he added.

World TB Day is an opportunity to mobilize political and social commitment for further progress in efforts to end TB. This year, World TB Day signals new momentum at the highest levels with the announcement of the first ever Global Ministerial Conference on Ending TB, which will be held in Moscow in November 2017.

"The Global Ministerial Conference will highlight the need for an accelerated multisectoral response to TB in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals," said Dr Ren Minghui, Assistant Director-General HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases. "It will emphasize that global action against antimicrobial resistance must include optimized care, surveillance and research to address MDR-TB urgently".

The Conference will inform the UN General Assembly high-level meeting on TB which will be held in 2018.