

## World TB Day 2016—advancing global tuberculosis control efforts

Since the WHO declared tuberculosis a global health emergency in 1993,<sup>1</sup> important strides have been made in global tuberculosis control efforts. Tuberculosis associated mortality has halved and 45 million lives have been saved.<sup>2</sup> Despite these advances, an estimated 9.6 million people developed tuberculosis worldwide in 2014, of whom 1.5 million died. Of the estimated 480 000 cases of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis, three quarters remained undetected and untreated.<sup>2</sup> Tuberculosis is now the leading cause of death worldwide surpassing malaria and HIV.

To reduce this continuing unacceptable burden of tuberculosis, the WHO End TB Strategy was adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2014.<sup>3</sup> It has targets linked to the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),<sup>4</sup> which aim to reduce by 2030 the global number of new tuberculosis cases by 80% and tuberculosis deaths by 90%. The Stop TB Partnership's revised *Global Plan to Stop TB, 2016–20*,<sup>5</sup> delineates what the global community must do to achieve these aims. However, funding shortfalls will need to be filled before more effective diagnostic, treatment, and prevention interventions are developed. In 2015, funding gaps amounted to US\$1.4 billion for implementation of existing interventions and US\$1.3 billion for new research and development.<sup>6</sup> Novel efforts into harnessing and sustaining resources are thus required.

In the early 1990s, the resurgence of tuberculosis epidemic occurred in parallel with the HIV epidemic. While the HIV epidemic has been brought under control by major political and financial investments, similar investments for tuberculosis control have lagged behind. The tuberculosis community has repeatedly called for a step-change in political will and donor investments.<sup>7</sup> The challenge now for the tuberculosis community is to find ways to further strengthen existing political will, and to secure the resources and the policy change needed to end the global tuberculosis epidemic.

For the first time in two decades, there is major political support for efforts to tackle the global tuberculosis epidemic. **The Global TB Caucus**, a novel international network of parliamentarians, was

formed in Barcelona, Spain, in 2014 with the express intention of raising tuberculosis up the political agenda. The Caucus launched the Barcelona Declaration, a political call-to-arms, which is open to any political representative in the world to sign as a demonstration of support for the objective of ending the tuberculosis epidemic. As of the end of January, 2016, more than 1000 parliamentarians from over 100 countries had signed the Declaration.

In Cape Town, South Africa, at the end of November, the Caucus met for the 2nd Global TB Summit. 50 parliamentarians from 30 countries attended the meeting, which was the biggest political meeting on the disease in 100 years. At the meeting, delegates agreed to focus on supporting the replenishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the roll-out of the Global Plan, as well as committing to launch national and regional networks.<sup>8,9</sup>

Such national tuberculosis caucus, or **All-Party Parliamentary Groups**, will be crucial if progress is to be made against tuberculosis. In the UK, partly as a result of the efforts of the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global TB, the Conservative Party made a manifesto pledge "to lead a major new programme to accelerate research and development of drugs and vaccines to eliminate the world's deadliest infectious diseases".<sup>10</sup> This commitment was realised in November, 2015, through the announcement of the Ross Fund,<sup>11</sup> which will spend £1 billion over 5 years on infectious disease research and development, including tuberculosis and antimicrobial resistance.

The challenge for those who work in tuberculosis is to find ways to further strengthen that political will and use the support of the Global TB Caucus as effectively as possible to secure the resources and the policy change needed to end the tuberculosis epidemic. We have a window of new opportunity to advance new investments to accelerating progress in global tuberculosis control efforts and to make a major impact, but the tuberculosis community as a whole must engage with the Caucus and work with political leaders to get the job done. There are clearly a great number of parliamentarians worldwide and an increasing number

For more on **Global TB Caucus** see <http://www.globaltbcaucus.org/>

For more on the **All-Party Parliamentary Groups** see <http://webtv.un.org/>

of governments who are recognising the importance of the global tuberculosis epidemic and the threat that multidrug-resistant tuberculosis poses to global health security.

The Global TB Caucus is largely unprecedented in global health, and there are hopes that the Cape Town summit will mark a new era in the fight against tuberculosis. Although, therefore, we might have a long way to go before achieving global tuberculosis control, we at last have the political will to address the structural, financial, and scientific gaps that sustain and encourage this epidemic, and effectively take forward the theme for this year's World TB Day, "Unite to End Tuberculosis".

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All authors play an active role in the UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Global TB. NH is founder member of the Global TB Caucus. We declare no competing interests.

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