



All-Party Parliamentary Group
on Global Tuberculosis

MEDIA RELEASE

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MPs call for accelerated response to global TB epidemic

All-Party Parliamentary Group launches 'Agenda for Action' ahead of World TB Day

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global Tuberculosis (TB) today (Thursday 22 March) calls for an accelerated response to the global TB epidemic. Published ahead of World TB Day on Saturday 24 March, ***Scaling up the UK's response to the global TB epidemic: an Agenda for Action*** outlines steps that the UK Government and wider international community should take to ensure that the fight to stop TB is won.

The Agenda for Action calls on the UK Government, and Department for International Development (DFID) in particular, to set the trend for concerted action against the epidemic in order to realise the aims of the *Global Plan to Stop TB, 2006-2015* which the UK has fully endorsed.

Significant progress has already been made in reducing the burden of TB worldwide as a result of heightened awareness and renewed political commitment to tackle the disease. The global TB epidemic is on the verge of decline, but urgent action is required to ensure that this trend continues. Complacency in the past has seen TB rates escalate and new, more deadly strains of the disease emerge. The Agenda for Action has been developed to ensure that the UK remains at the forefront of efforts to meet the objectives of the *Global Plan*.

The All-Party Group has highlighted three areas on which the UK Government should focus to help reverse the global burden of TB:

- **Work in partnership with other nations to implement existing political commitments on TB** and to ensure that TB and TB/HIV co-infection is given greater priority in future government policy.
- **Play a greater role in ensuring that all those at risk of TB, especially people living with HIV/AIDS, have access to quality TB prevention and care services.** The emergence of extremely drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB) highlights both the urgent need for basic TB control services to be strengthened and the limitations of existing tools. In addition to scaling up access to existing TB control interventions, greater support is needed for the research and development of new and more effective tools to treat, diagnose and prevent TB.
- **Tackle TB as part of broader efforts to improve healthcare around the world.** Well-functioning health systems are vital for successful TB control programmes. The UK should support the integration of TB programmes into wider health systems and with HIV control activities in countries with high co-infection rates.

The Agenda for Action acknowledges that the UK has already demonstrated leadership in the fight against TB control, but there is still much more that can be done and many challenges to be overcome if the world is to be freed from the disease.

Nick Herbert MP, one of three Co-Chairs of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global Tuberculosis, will be travelling to India this weekend as part of a delegation of Parliamentarians concerned about the scale of the TB epidemic. The visit will enable delegates to see first hand progress made by the Indian Government with the support of the UK and other donors and will provide evidence of the potential devastation posed by the dual threats of TB/HIV co-infection and drug-resistant TB.

Nick Herbert, who is MP for Arundel and South Downs, said: "The world is slowly waking up to the need for accelerated action to stop TB. It is appalling that across the globe 1.6 million people died last year from a disease that can generally be treated cheaply and effectively. International action has begun to make a difference. We need to make sure that it is sustained."

The Agenda for Action is being released alongside the World Health Organization's annual Tuberculosis Control Report at an All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global Tuberculosis meeting this afternoon in Westminster. A representative from DFID will also be speaking about the Department's role in fighting TB in the developing world.

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Notes to editors:

The **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global Tuberculosis** was formed in 2006 to demonstrate cross-party concern for the growing scale and impact of the TB epidemic. The purpose of the Group is to raise the profile of the global TB problem and to help accelerate efforts to meet international TB control targets. For more information visit www.appg-tb.org.uk

The **Global Plan to Stop TB, 2006-2015** was published by the Stop TB Partnership in January 2006 and is a blueprint for the action and resources needed to halt and reverse the incidence of TB by 2015. Full implementation of the Global Plan will result in:

- 14 million lives being saved during the period 2006-2015.
- The MDG target to have halted and begun to reverse the incidence of TB by 2015 being achieved.
- The Stop TB Partnership's target to halve TB prevalence and death rates from 1990 levels being met globally.
- The first new TB drug for 40 years and a shorter drug regimen; new, more effective diagnostic tests and a new, safe and affordable vaccine with the potential for a significant impact on TB control in later years.

The Global Plan estimates that a minimum of **US\$56 billion** is required to achieve these targets over the ten-year period. At present, a shortfall of **US\$31 billion** (or US\$3.1 billion per year) exists between resources currently available and/or pledged and the investment required to control the disease.

For more information visit www.stoptb.org/globalplan

World TB Day, held annually on 24 March, commemorates the date in 1882 when Dr Robert Koch presented his discovery of the TB bacillus to a group of doctors in Berlin. This year, the theme of World TB Day is 'TB anywhere is TB everywhere' highlighting the need for a global response to a global epidemic. For more information visit www.stoptb.org/events/world_tb_day/2007/

The World Health Organization's **Global Tuberculosis Control Report 2007** updates the current trends on the disease, with all the very latest data from nearly 200 countries. Copies of the report will be available at the All-Party Group's meeting on Thursday 22 March or at www.who.int/tb/en