STOP TB PARTNERS’ FORUM

New Delhi
24 March 2004

There are nine million reasons for being here today. Nine million people developed tuberculosis last year, and two million of them died. We are here to see what has been done and what must be done to control this disease that is causing so much suffering and loss of life.

We have a global partnership to Stop TB. We have a strategy for achieving it, called the DOTS strategy. And we have global targets. During the last ten years, there has been great progress towards reaching those targets, but we have to do much more if we are to reach them.

That is why the theme of this Partners’ Forum is “Keeping the pledge”. The World Health Assembly endorsed the targets for 2005, and those for 2015 were endorsed as part of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. At the first Partners’ Forum, in 2001, we committed ourselves to achieving them. Our task at this second Partners’ Forum is to see how far we have come and decide on the way forward to making good on that commitment.

The target for curing infectious cases is an 85% success rate and we are making good progress towards achieving it: the global treatment success rate is now 82%. But the target for case detection is 70% of all cases and, so far, we are reaching only 37%. Although this reflects a big advance over last decade, it also means that a tremendous effort is needed for the coming twenty-one months.

This effort will need to be innovative. A good example of innovation is the new program of Intensified Support and Action Countries, the first of which is India. These countries will be receiving special technical and financial assistance to help them move up a gear to reach the targets.

The Global Drug Facility is another excellent example of the kind of innovation that will support further progress. Providing high quality, affordable treatment for 2.8 million patients over the last three years is a remarkable achievement for the Facility.

We also have a great deal to learn from the creativity and experience of countries. For example, India, Nepal and the Philippines have been working with private doctors to treat people with TB. The lessons learnt from their experience will be valuable in other countries facing similar diversity of health care providers.

India can be very proud of its recent achievements in TB control on a massive scale, with three-quarters of the population now covered by DOTS. It will reach the targets if it moves from top gear into overdrive and if it moves decisively to stop the spread of HIV infection. HIV fuels the TB epidemic in ways that were unimaginable twenty years ago. Preventing the spread of HIV is crucial for the success of TB control.
As a key element of HIV prevention and control, we have set the goal of getting antiretroviral treatment to three million people in developing countries by the end of 2005. Access to this life-saving treatment is a human right. It also makes a major contribution to reducing TB morbidity and mortality.

Conversely, TB programs make a very important contribution to HIV programs. The DOTS strategy is built on the principles for controlling chronic infections, including HIV. It provides many valuable lessons and methods for HIV/AIDS treatment in particular. The best way for both these initiatives to succeed is to work synergistically.

The Stop TB Partnership has achieved many great successes. Now we must build on those successes for the task ahead. This means keeping the pledge we made three years ago. There are nine million reasons for doing so.

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