

**Call to Action for Commitment on Ending Tuberculosis:  
South Africa's Participation and Commitments at the UN High-Level Meeting on TB and Beyond**

We, people affected by tuberculosis (TB), civil society organizations, healthcare workers, and TB activists attending the 5<sup>th</sup> SA TB Conference, recognize the unique opportunity presented by the United Nations High Level Meeting (UN HLM) on Tuberculosis, which will take place in September 2018. We are here to issue a call to action to the South African government and President Cyril Ramaphosa in particular.

We note with serious concern, that for a curable disease, TB kills more people globally and in South Africa than any other infectious disease.<sup>1</sup> To eliminate TB once and for all, we all need to push for a dramatic change in our response to the epidemic.

South Africa has been a global leader on TB, and realized a number of notable achievements in recent years—TB treatment success rates have risen<sup>2</sup> and nationwide roll out of diagnostic technology and new treatment for drug-resistant TB has been accelerated.<sup>3</sup> The country joined global TB research and development initiatives, including the BRICS network. Civil society acknowledges and appreciates the role that our Minister of Health Dr. Aaron Motsoaledi has played as the Chair of the Stop TB Partnership, in calling for the First United Nations High Level Meeting on TB, the creation of the Global TB Caucus that he co-chairs, and initiating the internationally adopted 90-90-90 targets for TB.

Despite South Africa's accomplishments, notable gaps in TB care remain. An estimated 30% of TB cases (over 160,000 people each year) are missed by TB diagnostic and treatment programmes.<sup>4</sup> Financial and human resources required to prevent transmission, diagnose, initiate on treatment and provide support services to hundreds of thousands of people are inadequate. These challenges, are common globally and require resolute leadership and action both globally and in South Africa.

As we were reminded during the conference's opening ceremony, this is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the birth of Madiba. He was a TB survivor who fought to overcome the disease. TB can affect anyone and we need everyone, especially the highest political leadership in the land, to respond decisively in order to end the epidemic.

We therefore call on South Africa's government to confirm prior to the United Nations High Level Meeting its commitment to the following:

- Attendance at minimum, by President Cyril Ramaphosa, Deputy President David Mabuza and Minister of Health Aaron Motsoaledi
- Mobilise Heads of State, at least from BRICS, SADC, and the African Union to attend the UN HLM;

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page\\_id=1856&PPN=P0309.3&SCH=7308](http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=1856&PPN=P0309.3&SCH=7308)

<sup>2</sup> *Let Our Actions Count: South Africa's National Strategic Plan for HIV, TB and STIs 2017-2022*

<sup>3</sup> DR-TB STAT. <http://drtb-stat.org/country-updates/>

<sup>4</sup> Mvusi, L., Hippner, P., Charalambous, S., Nanoo, A., Nyathi, S. Naidoo, P., & Ismail, N. Finding the Missing TB Infected Persons and Patients: Estimation of Targets on the TB Cascade.

- Support a process to assemble a diverse and representative South African delegation to the UN HLM that includes, among others, civil society representatives, people affected by TB and Members of Parliament;
- Represent the interest of people in South Africa affected by TB, through supporting and promoting the content of the 5 Key Asks to be made at the UNHLM, namely:
  - **1. Close the gaps of diagnosis, treatment, and prevention**
  - **2. Equitable, rights-based and people-centered response**
  - **3. Accelerate development of essential new tools**
  - **4. Commit to Invest Funds**
  - **5. Commit to accountable leadership, reporting and review**
- Convene a South African high level meeting to be attended by all relevant stakeholders to reflect on the decisions of the UNHLM and define a pathway for their implementation;

We as civil society look at you as our country's leaders to utilise this unique opportunity to end TB in South Africa!