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G8 SUMMIT MUST PRIORITIZE TB

Leaders warned half-measured responses to fight tuberculosis will fail those at most risk

Geneva, Switzerland - 13 July 2006 -- On the eve of the G8 Summit in St. Petersburg, G8 leaders have been called to fund their fair share of the Global Plan to Stop TB 2006-2015, and also honour previous Summit declarations to fight tuberculosis. The demands were made by the Stop TB Partnership, which represents 500 organizations working to eliminate TB worldwide. Among those leading the Stop TB Partnership call was Dr Mario Raviglione, Director of WHO's Stop TB Department.

"TB must not be sidelined at this summit. It must be addressed with the priority it deserves," said Dr Raviglione. "G8 leaders will be considering their response to the Global Plan to Stop TB. Half-measures will result in full failure for the poorest people in the world, the very people whose lives are at most risk from TB."

TB is the world's leading infectious killer after HIV, and kills around 1.7 million people a year, with virtually all deaths occurring in developing countries. Low-cost TB treatments are available and have successfully treated more than 20 million patients in the last decade, yet the TB pandemic continues, fuelled by HIV/TB co-infection, multi-drug resistance and poorly-funded control programmes.

The Global Plan to Stop TB outlines actions over the next ten years that will more than double the total number treated - to 50 million patients - and save an additional 14 million lives. By scaling up detection and treatment and developing new vaccines, drugs and diagnostics, the Global Plan also seeks to reverse incidence rates and halve death rates by 2015, and set the stage for TB elimination by 2050.

Recognizing the urgency, the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan two months ago announced that the former President of Portugal, Dr Jorge Sampaio, was to become his first ever Special Envoy to Stop TB. His immediate task will be to encourage world leaders to strengthen TB commitments and back the Global Plan to Stop TB.

"This Summit represents a most unique opportunity to call on all G8 countries to fund and implement the Global Plan to Stop TB," said Dr Sampaio. "Moved by strong political will, the G8 can lead and smooth over every funding obstacle that stands in the way to achieving universal access to high-quality diagnosis and treatment for TB patients, wherever they live. Actions should follow commitments to prevent millions of avoidable deaths caused, after all, by global negligence."

The Global Plan to Stop TB requires a three-fold increase in investment with a ten year budget of US\$ 56 billion and a current funding gap of US\$ 31 billion.

At last year's G8 Summit in Scotland, leaders made TB a priority by pledging to help meet the financial needs for strengthening control in Africa. The 2000 G8 Summit led to the creation of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and malaria. The Stop TB Partnership will be reminding the G8 of their pledges to advance the world's fight against TB and urge them to deliver on important promises already made on TB.

The 2006 G8 World Summit will be held in St Petersburg, Russia, 15-17 July 2006.

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Note To Editors:

- Fact sheet on global TB:
http://www.stoptb.org/resource_center/assets/factsheets/TB_FACTS_SHEET_2006_ENGLISH.pdf
- Information on the Global Plan to Stop TB:
<http://www.stoptb.org/globalplan/>
- For interviews and to access broadcast-quality recorded interviews of the UN Secretary-General with the Special Envoy to Stop TB, and information about TB on the G8 agenda please contact Stop TB Partnership representative:

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