NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Introductory Meeting of the WHO Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Tuberculosis (STAG-TB)

Virtual Meeting (Webex), 24 and 25 June 2020
Introduction

An introductory meeting of the World Health Organization (WHO) Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for tuberculosis (STAG-TB) was held on 24-25 June 2020. The purpose of this meeting was to orient new STAG-TB members on their roles, the work of WHO and its Global TB Programme and to overview the draft 2020 progress report of the UN Secretary General on TB. In addition, a spotlight was placed on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the TB response. The meeting was led by Dr Ariel Pablos-Méndez, STAG-TB Chair. All 15 STAG-TB members participated actively in the meeting. The second day included a special session with WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and key partners – Stop TB Partnership, Global Fund and UNITAID. The meeting was organized by the WHO Global TB Programme secretariat. A brief overview of the introductory meeting is presented below.

24 June - Day 1

The meeting was opened by Dr Ariel Pablos-Méndez, STAG-TB Chair and Dr Tereza Kasaeva, Director of WHO’s Global TB Programme.

Welcome

Dr Ren Minghui, WHO Assistant Director-General, Universal Health Coverage, Communicable and Noncommunicable Diseases Division, delivered key remarks welcoming STAG-TB members, congratulating the STAG-TB Chair and highlighting the role of STAG-TB as an independent advisory body to evaluate the strategic, scientific and technical aspects of WHO’s TB work. He emphasized the rich history of STAG-TB over the past two decades and the need for urgent accelerated action to end the TB epidemic at one of the most challenging junctures for the world in the last 100 years, as we face the COVID-19 pandemic together.

Introduction of Members and welcome from new Chair

Dr Ariel Pablos-Méndez, STAG-TB Chair welcomed members and highlighted the group’s commitment to guiding WHO’s TB response. He commended WHO’s Global TB Programme secretariat for hosting the meeting virtually despite the challenges imposed by the pandemic. He emphasized the existing synergies between TB and Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the urgency in tackling the TB epidemic to save lives. This was followed by a round of introductions of the 2020 STAG Members, formed by three incumbents and 12 new members.
STAG-TB terms of reference and Modus Operandi
A brief overview of the mission of STAG-TB, its functions and operations were presented by Ms Marzia Calvi from the WHO Global TB Programme.

Global Overview: The road to end TB
Dr Tereza Kasaeva, Director of WHO’s Global TB Programme presented an overview of the progress made over the past four decades starting from 1993 when WHO declared TB a global public health emergency. High level commitments and recent achievements towards reaching targets, as well as critical gaps were highlighted. A special spotlight was placed on WHO’s work in the development of guidelines, their rapid roll out, country support, research and innovation, monitoring and surveillance, civil society engagement, multisectoral accountability and implementation of the WHO DG Flagship Initiative Find.Treat.All.EndTB with partners. The establishment of a task force on translating research to policy was also presented. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on progress towards targets was emphasized.

Overview of the draft UN Secretary-General 2020 Progress Report on TB prepared by WHO
The political declaration of the UN high-level meeting requested the development of a 2020 progress report by the UN Secretary-General to the General Assembly with the support of the WHO Director-General. The WHO Global TB Programme secretariat is in the process of developing the progress report with inputs from partners and civil society. The structure and outline of content was presented to STAG-TB by Dr Katherine Floyd, Unit Head, TB Monitoring and Evaluation at the WHO Global TB Programme. The draft report will be confidentially shared with STAG-TB members for their inputs following the introductory meeting.

Impact of COVID-19 on the TB epidemic
An overview of the work undertaken by WHO along with partners in ensuring continuity of TB services during the COVID-19 pandemic was presented by Dr Dennis Falzon, Team Lead, TB Prevention, Innovation & Research at the WHO Global TB Programme. This included a review of results from a survey undertaken by WHO across 200 countries on the impact of the pandemic and positive developments and innovations by countries to ensure access to TB care, as well as an outline of next steps for strategic preparedness.

Planning for the STAG-TB meeting
The next STAG-TB meeting has been planned for early November 2020 by members.
The second day session was focussed on a dialogue of STAG-TB members with WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Key partners also joined this session.

Keynote address
WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in his key note address, emphasized the important strategic role of STAG-TB in efforts to end TB especially in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic. He requested contribution from STAG-TB to the 2020 progress report on TB by the UN Secretary-General, that is being developed by the WHO secretariat. He stressed that the Report not only provides an opportunity to reflect progress in the fight against TB, but to highlight the risks that threaten to erode gains. The report is expected to inform a comprehensive review for a further high-level meeting in 2023. The role of civil society in efforts to end TB was strongly highlighted, especially the role of the WHO civil society taskforce.

In closing, WHO Director-General thanked the STAG-TB Chair Dr Ariel Pablos-Méndez for his leadership, and STAG-TB members for their contributions.

Civil society perspectives
Two STAG-TB members who also represent civil society: Ms Ingrid Schoeman and Ms Jamilya Ismoilova, presented their perspectives. They commended WHO DG and the Global TB Programme for the intensified engagement with civil society in recent years towards ending TB, including through the WHO Civil Society Taskforce. The importance of addressing the impact of TB and COVID-19 especially among health workers was highlighted. They urged WHO DG to help maintain the political momentum to end TB despite the COVID-19 pandemic for the millions who struggle with TB each year.

Partner perspectives
Three key partners joined the session and shared their perspectives for action. This included Dr Lucica Ditiu, Executive Director, Stop TB Partnership; Dr Eliud Wandwalo, Global TB Lead, Global Fund; and Dr Draurio Barreira, Technical Manager, UNITAID. The importance of
STAG-TB’s advisory role was appreciated by all partners. An overview of work being undertaken by the partners was highlighted and synergies for collaboration with WHO were emphasized to reach the targets of the UN High Level Meeting on TB especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dialogue
The WHO Director-General addressed all the issues raised by civil society and partners. He stressed that as we “Build back Stronger” it is important to continue strengthening action and sustaining progress in fight against TB and other diseases while moving towards UHC, building sustainable health systems, and leveraging synergies across programmes and different SDGs.

Closing
Dr Ren Minghui closed the meeting, thanking STAG-TB members for their commitment and continued collaboration.

Presentations: Dropbox link
### List of Participants

#### STAG-TB Members

1. **Dr Ariel Pablos-Méndez (STAG-TB Chair)**  
   Professor of Medicine  
   Columbia University Medical Center  
   New York, NY  
   United States of America

2. **Dr Denise Arakaki-Sanchez**  
   Deputy Director  
   Department of Chronic Communicable Diseases and Sexually-Transmitted Infections, Secretariat of Health Surveillance, Ministry of Health  
   Brasilia  
   Brazil

3. **Dr Nimalan Arinaminpathy**  
   Reader (Associate Professor) in Mathematical Epidemiology  
   Imperial College  
   London  
   United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

4. **Ms Grania Brigden**  
   Director  
   Department of TB at the International Union Against TB and Lung disease (The Union)  
   Geneva  
   Switzerland

5. **Dr Glenda Gray**  
   President and CEO  
   South African Medical Research Council  
   Johannesburg  
   South Africa

6. **Dr Chikwe Ihekweazu**  
   Director General  
   Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)  
   Abuja  
   Nigeria

7. **Dr Jamilya Ismoilova**  
   Independent Consultant  
   Dushanbe  
   Tajikistan

8. **Dr Seiya Kato**  
   Director  
   Research Institute of Tuberculosis  
   Tokyo  
   Japan

9. **Dr Knut Lönngroth**  
   Professor of Social Medicine  
   Department of Global Public Health, Karolinska Institutet  
   Stockholm  
   Sweden

10. **Dr Ya Diul Mukadi**  
    Senior Technical Advisor  
    Global Health Bureau, US Agency for International Development (USAID)  
    Washington, DC  
    United States of America

11. **Dr Anastasia Samoilova**  
    First Deputy Director  
    National Medical Research Center of Phthisiopulmonology and Infectious Diseases of the Russian Ministry of Health  
    Moscow  
    Russian Federation

12. **Ms Ingrid Schoeman**  
    TB Advocate, XDR-TB Survivor  
    TB Proof  
    Cape Town  
    South Africa

13. **Dr Moorine Sekadde**  
    Coordinator for Paediatric TB  
    National TB & Leprosy Program, Ministry of Health  
    Kampala  
    Uganda

14. **Dr Syed Karam Shah**  
    Adviser for Communicable Diseases Control  
    Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination  
    Karachi  
    Pakistan

15. **Dr Chen Wang**  
    President  
    Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences and the Peking Union Medical College  
    Beijing  
    China (People’s Republic of)
Observers (25 June only)

16. Dr Lucica Ditiu  
Executive Director  
StopTB Partnership  
Geneva  
Switzerland

17. Dr Eliud Wandwalo  
Senior Disease Coordinator, TB  
The Global Fund  
Geneva  
Switzerland

WHO Headquarters Staff

19. Dr Tedros Adhanom Gebreyesus  
Director-General  
WHO  
Geneva  
Switzerland

20. Dr Minghui Ren  
Assistant Director-General, Universal Health Coverage, Communicable and Non-communicable Diseases  
WHO HQ  
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WHO Global Tuberculosis Programme

21. Dr Tereza Kasaeva  
Director  
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22. Mrs Janet Coutin  
Programme Assistant  
Global Tuberculosis Programme, WHO HQ  
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23. Mr Ivan Babovic  
Team Assistant  
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25. Mrs Hannah Monica Dias  
Cross-cutting Specialist, WHO Flagship Initiative, PPM & TB Elimination  
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26. Dr Matteo Zignol  
Unit Head a.i., TB Prevention, Diagnosis, Treatment, Care & Innovation  
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27. Ms Marzia Calvi  
Technical Officer  
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28. Mr Michael McCullough  
Unit Head, Planning, Analysis & Risk Management  
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29. Dr Dennis Falzon  
Team Lead, TB Prevention, Research & Innovations  
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30. Dr Fuad Mirzayev
Team Lead, TB Treatment
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31. Dr Katherine Floyd
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32. Dr Philippe Glaziou
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33. Dr Charalampos Sismanidis
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34. Dr Ernesto Jaramillo
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35. Dr Giuliano Gargioni
Team Lead, People Centred Care & Community Engagement
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WHO Regional and Country Staff

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37. Dr Wilfred Nkhoma
Medical Officer AF/HTH HIV, Tuberculosis and Hepatitis
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39. Dr Rafael Lopez
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42. Dr Askar Yedilbayev
TB Team Leader, Joint Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS & Hepatitis Programme (J TH)
EURO, WHO
Copenhagen
Denmark

WHO / SEARO

43. Dr Mukta Sharma
Regional Advisor for TB/HIV/STI/Hepatitis
SEARO, WHO
New Delhi
India

44. Dr Partha Mandal
Medical Officer (Tub)
SEARO, WHO
New Delhi
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45. Dr Tauhid Islam
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