

STATEMENT

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International Union Against
Tuberculosis and Lung Disease
Health solutions for the poor

For immediate release

Hitting tuberculosis (TB) for six: Top Indian parliamentarians to participate in cricket tournament and summit to pledge support for a TB free India by 2025.

TB burden in India the highest in the world.

TB-Free India Summit hosted by the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) and Global Fund Champion Anurag Thakur, (chief whip – BJP and Member of Parliament) and supported by the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund).

Saturday 2 February 2018 (New Delhi, India) – Some 65 Indian Policymakers will participate in a round-robin cricket tournament at the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium this weekend to highlight their commitment to eliminating tuberculosis in India. The tournament will also feature the adjunct TB-Free India Summit with speakers including, JP Nadda, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Satyendra Kumar Jain, Health Minister for Delhi, Chief Whip and Member of Parliament and Global Fund Champion, Anurag Singh Thakur, a number of Chief Ministers from various Indian states and representatives of the Global Fund, The Union, the World Health Organization, USAID and the community affected by TB.

In 2017 10 million people fell ill with TB and 1.6 million died from the disease. TB, a preventable and curable disease, now kills more people than HIV/AIDS and is the world's largest infectious disease killer. India has the highest TB burden in the world with one in four people ill with TB globally residing in the country.

The scale of the TB global health emergency was acknowledged by the United Nations (UN), which held the inaugural High-Level Meeting on TB in New York last September, culminating in a Political Declaration signed by world leaders committed to ending TB by 2030. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has committed to eliminating TB in India by 2025, five years before that global target.

“India has shown leadership and firm commitment under Prime Minister Narendra Modi by pledging to end Tuberculosis by 2025; five years ahead of the global target,” said Anurag Singh Thakur, Hamirpur MP and Global Fund Champion at the official Summit press conference. “This weekend’s participation by the Indian Parliament Speaker, Union Ministers, Chief Ministers, Parliamentarians from across party lines in the cricket tournament and the TB-Free India Summit demonstrates the spread of political commitment across the country to ending the disease in India.”

TB incidence in India has been declining at an annual rate of 1.7 per cent since 2016 but it is estimated that it needs to fall by some 10 per cent annually if the 2025 elimination target is to be achieved. In 2017 410,000 people died from TB in India which was only a three per cent drop on 2016 figures. Currently only 65 per cent of TB patients in India are treated, which makes reducing the burden of the disease even more difficult, as people living with TB can also unwillingly transmit the disease further.

“Ending a preventable and curable disease like TB in India and globally is achievable;” said Marijke Wijnroks, Chief of Staff at the Global Fund. “But it will require sustained funding and the kind of political commitment being shown by the Indian government to get us there.”

The Global Fund recently announced that it is aiming for donors to pledge at least US\$14 billion in funding at its replenishment meeting to be held in Lyon, France, in October this year which it says will help save 16 million lives from the combined diseases of AIDS, TB and malaria. Ahead of the Lyon replenishment, the Global Fund will hold a preparatory meeting in Delhi on February 7th and 8th hosted by the government of India.

To date the Global Fund has disbursed approximately US\$713 million towards fighting TB in India. One of its most successful projects is Project Axshya, launched in April 2010 and administered by The Union. The project engages all sectors to strengthen TB care and control in 128 districts across 14 states. Partnering with local organisations across India, since October 2015, Axshya has to date reached over 48 million people, identified and tested 643,000 people and placed 70,000 TB patients on treatment and prevented many cases of infection.

“Project Axshya has been a lifesaver for so many people and shows what is possible in such a hugely challenging environment,” said Dr Jamhoih Tonsing,

Regional Director, The Union South-East Asia Office. “The political commitment being demonstrated today by India’s political leaders is another sign that an India free of TB death and suffering can become a reality.”

The Union will also convene the 50th Union World Conference on Lung Health (Union World Conference) in Hyderabad, India, 30 October to 2 November 2019, at a critical juncture in the global fight against TB.

The conference theme *Ending the Emergency: Science, Leadership, Action* focuses on what is needed to ensure commitments becomes action, and that life saving targets are met. The 50th Union World Conference is expected to attract some 6000 researchers, policy makers, health practitioners, political leaders, UN spokespeople, and community representatives. The latest research into prevention, cure and vaccines will be presented at the conference.

“It’s time to end the global TB emergency and that will mean holding governments accountable to the Political Declaration they signed at the UN General Assembly,” said José Luis Castro, Executive Director of The Union. “In Hyderabad we need to be witnessing real leadership that is translating into both investment in diagnostic tools, new drugs and a vaccine and action on the ground.”

“People still die needlessly from TB despite it being preventable, treatable and curable,” said Nandita Venkatesan, a TB survivor from Mumbai. “It is so important that TB survivors get to tell their stories and the impact the disease has had on their lives, so it is exciting that we are being heard and seen on the stages of the TB-Free India Summit this weekend and the Union World Conference in Hyderabad later in the year.”

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[About the Global Fund](#)

The Global Fund is a 21st-century partnership organization designed to accelerate the end of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria as epidemics.

Founded in 2002, the Global Fund is a partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and people affected by the diseases. The Global Fund raises and invests nearly US\$4 billion a year to support programs run by local experts in countries and communities most in need.

"Working together, we have saved millions of lives and provided prevention, treatment and care services to hundreds of millions of people, helping to revitalize entire communities, strengthen local health systems and improve economies."

Twitter: @GlobalFund

About the [International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease \(The Union\)](#)

The Union was founded in 1920 and is the world's first global health organisation. We are a global leader in ending TB, we fight the tobacco industry, and we solve key problems in treating major diseases. We use science to design the best treatments and policies for the most pressing public health challenges affecting people living in poverty around the world. The Unions members, staff and consultants operate in more than 150 countries and embody our core values of accountability, independence, quality and solidarity.

Twitter: @TheUnion_TBLH

About the [Union South-East Asia \(USEA\)](#)

The Union has a strong presence in India with its South-East Asia Office (USEA) based in Delhi employing some 136 staff working on projects on tuberculosis and tobacco control. The Call to Action for a TB-Free India, implemented by The Union with support from USAID's Challenge TB project, brought together a wide range of stakeholders committing to end TB in India. Amongst others this included noted celebrity Mr Amitabh Bachchan, industrialist Mr Ratan Tata, former US Ambassador to India Mr Richard Verma, parliamentarians, academicians, and corporate leaders. USEA provides public health expertise to the region's governments, civil society, corporations and international agencies on tuberculosis (TB) control and tobacco control; it also conducts operational research, capacity-building programmes and grant-monitoring services.

About the [50th Union World Conference on Lung Health](#)

The Union World Conference on Lung Health, convened by the [International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases \(The Union\)](#), is the world's largest gathering of clinicians and public health workers, health programme managers, policymakers, researchers and advocates working to end the suffering caused by lung disease, with a focus specifically on the challenges faced by low-and lower-middle income populations. Of the 10 million people who die each year from lung diseases, some 80 percent live in these resource-limited settings.

Organising international conferences on TB and related subjects has been a core activity of The Union since its founding in 1920.

Twitter: @UnionConference