

THE UNION EUROPE REGION IN 2016



3,500 delegates from the WHO's 194 Member States attended the World Health Assembly.

Photo: Aditi Sharma

THE UNION CO-HOSTS SIDE EVENT AT 69TH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

For the first time in its history, The Union co-hosted an official side event at the 69th World Health Assembly in Geneva. Entitled *Confronting Resistance: Innovation and Access to End Tuberculosis*, the session focused on how to create platforms for the new thinking and new ideas necessary to end tuberculosis (TB).

The 69th World Health Assembly came just weeks after the World Health Organization (WHO) announced its support for the shortened regimen for multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) patients from 24 to nine months. As such this was a pivotal moment for The Union to highlight the TB public health crisis, and engage the support needed to confront it.

The side event highlighted that the nine-month treatment regimen is essential for confronting existing levels of MDR-TB, but critical measures also need to be taken to strengthen basic TB care and control, to prevent the development of MDR-TB in the first place. It was a vital opportunity to call

on governments and health care providers, NGOs and other interested groups to support new approaches, to develop new drugs, create new programmes, and increase access to diagnosis, treatment and funding.

The side event, held on 24 May, was co-organised by The Union with Medicines Patent Pool (MPP), the Republic of Korea, the USA, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe, the Stop TB Partnership, UNITAID and TB Alliance. The session was co-chaired by José Luis Castro, Executive Director, The Union and Greg Perry, Executive Director, MPP.

FROM EVIDENCE TO PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION

For nearly 100 years The Union has drawn together the best scientific evidence and expertise to address the most pressing public health challenges affecting people living in poverty around the world. Know. Share. Act.

KNOW.

- The Union's Director of Research, Prof Anthony D Harries, co-authored a paper calling for TB treatment that prioritises human rights. Published in the *Health and Human Rights Journal*, the study shows that patients incarcerated or detained in prison often do not complete TB treatment.
- The Union worked closely with Cancer Research UK to develop a course on tobacco control and taxation, based on The Union's successful SORT IT Operational Research courses.

SHARE.

- The 7th Conference of The Union Europe Region, held in Bratislava hosted the European TB Summit, where 15 parliamentarians from 12 European and Central Asian countries met to accelerate political progress against TB, issuing a united call for governments to put TB back on the political agenda.
- The Union supported the Brussels-based NGO Smoke-Free Partnership to deliver a capacity-building workshop on tobacco tax to representatives of governments and civil society from European countries. The workshop aim was to build knowledge and collaboration, and to empower countries to work together on tobacco tax rules.

ACT.

- Under the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use, The Union is supporting governments and civil society in Bulgaria, Georgia and Azerbaijan, with technical assistance and capacity-building to develop and implement effective tobacco control policies.
- Researchers from The Union launched an Index of Tobacco Control Sustainability. The Index identifies 31 factors that national tobacco control programmes need in order to be sustainable. Published in the BMJ's Tobacco Control, the Index can be used by countries to establish their current level of sustainability and to identify priority areas for development. The Index will be developed into a toolkit and made freely available to all governments around the world.