

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Message from

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to the

**CONSULTATION FOR THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE PRIVATE
SECTOR IN TUBERCULOSIS CONTROL**

Beirut, Lebanon, 9-11 April 1996

Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this consultation for the involvement of private sector in tuberculosis control, which is a subject of significant importance in our current fight against the resurgence of this disease. This consultation was recommended by the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean in its Forty-first Session in 1994, and comes at a time when concentrated efforts and activities are being directed towards the control of tuberculosis all over the world.

As you are all aware, tuberculosis is now considered the most dangerous resurging infectious disease and the leading infectious killer of adults worldwide. The discovery of highly effective anti-TB drugs should have brought an end to TB in the world, but unfortunately TB control is not receiving the proper attention it deserves. In many countries the picture shows that either the community and health services have accepted that they must live with the disease or have forgotten about it. Nowadays, more people are likely to be dying from TB than at any other time in human history. Never has such a pervasive killer gone unnoticed by the public or been treated with such massive neglect.

A recent appraisal of the tuberculosis situation in our Region shows that the estimated incidence of TB cases in 1995 could be as high as three quarters of a million, out of which 75% will be in the productive age group of between 15 and 59 years of age. The number of deaths from TB may reach 300 000, the majority of which can be prevented. In the majority of Member States of the Region, tuberculosis is still a major and complex public health problem, and hence sound and timely action is needed to face it. I hope this consultation will help in supporting such action.

Dear Colleagues,

In view of this rather alarming situation WHO has been very active in awakening the international community to the real global threat posed by tuberculosis. Tuberculosis was declared by WHO as a global emergency, and a new cost-effective tuberculosis control strategy was developed to achieve well defined targets by the year 2000. The targets, as you know, are to achieve an 85% cure rate among smear-positive patients under treatment and to detect 70% of smear-positive cases. The strategy adopted to achieve this target is to use the directly observed treatment short course, or "DOTS", which has proved its effectiveness in curing patients and hence in controlling the tuberculosis epidemic. Governments have been urged to establish policies and devote resources to fight the disease through revised and effective national tuberculosis control programmes.

The Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has advocated many aspects of the new WHO policy package since 1989. This stand was endorsed by the Regional Committee at its meeting in 1994, at which a resolution was adopted urging Member States, particularly those with intermediate or high tuberculosis prevalence, to develop "national tuberculosis control programmes along the strategies adopted by WHO as an integral part of primary health care".

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are many factors behind the global resurgence of tuberculosis which are shared by our Region, and I am sure that you already have a fair knowledge of them. But I want to stress here one factor, with its main tributary, that is of prime importance to this consultation. The factor is the weakness of the national TB control programme in many countries and the tributary is the lack of cooperation and coordination between the national programme and the private health sector. Two simple observations should be stated for your consideration: the private sector provides a substantial share of the health services in several of the countries in the Region that have large populations, which in general is a positive sign; but on the other hand, the private sector in most cases is not properly involved in the activities of national health programmes, which is definitely a negative sign.

In the conditions prevailing in most countries of this Region, with their diverse problems and relatively limited resources, efforts should be consolidated whenever dealing with a health problem. All health providers, whether governmental or private, aim to restore and maintain health. Unless all these providers work together as a team in a spirit of cooperation, our efforts will lose most of their momentum, and we will be squandering our resources. The full cooperation of all health providers in TB control is a must for its success. If we do not succeed, the TB problem will expand to dimensions beyond our abilities to contain it.

The WHO TB control strategy was developed with the help of the scientific community and has been put very effectively into practice in several parts of the world. Its implementation necessitates the solid commitment of all those involved in delivering the needed services as well as full coordination of their efforts.

Dear Colleagues,

The purpose of this consultation is to discuss the expected role of the private sector in TB control and develop a protocol to strengthen liaison between this sector and the national tuberculosis programmes.

As I look at your provisional programme of work, I noticed how busy you will be for the coming three days and how promising is the expected outcome. I am sure that you will use your collective experience to come up with realistic applicable recommendations concerning the proper involvement of the private sector in TB control. I might encourage you further by informing you that your expected cooperation model will be useful as a prototype for cooperation in other health programmes.

I wish you a successful discussion and a pleasant stay in Beirut.