



TB-MOR

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

Message from

**DR HUSSEIN A. GEZAIRY**

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR**

**WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

to the

**SECOND INTERREGIONAL MEETING ON  
THE MAGHREB TUBERCULOSIS CONTROL INITIATIVE**

Rabat, Morocco, 4–6 May 2000

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Second Interregional Meeting on the Tuberculosis Control Initiative for the Countries of the Maghreb. I wish to extend my sincere thanks to the Government of Morocco for their kind offer to host this meeting. I am very glad to welcome participants and colleagues from countries of the Eastern Mediterranean and African Regions.

Dear Colleagues,

I am sure you are aware of the considerable progress made in the promotion of tuberculosis control in the Region. The directly observed treatment, short-course (DOTS) strategy has been rapidly expanding in the Region. In 1995, only four countries had adopted

DOTS. This had increased to 21 countries by the end of 1999. Similarly, population coverage of DOTS has also rapidly increased, from 33 million people in 1995 to 195 million in 1999.

Ten countries in the Eastern Mediterranean had achieved DOTS ALL OVER by the end of 1999. These are Bahrain, Cyprus, Djibouti, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar and Tunisia. And, I am pleased to say that two of these countries, namely Morocco and Tunisia belong to the Maghreb TB Control Initiative. Six countries, namely Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic and Republic of Yemen have covered 50% or more of their total populations with DOTS. Saudi Arabia and Lebanon have achieved 47% and 38% DOTS coverage respectively. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Pakistan and United Arab Emirates are planning to start the implementation of initial DOTS sites.

However, we must remember that DOTS ALL OVER is still an enormous challenge. It needs more concerted efforts from all the concerned authorities and organizations at different levels. Moreover, there must be a mechanism through which we can maximize our efforts in dealing with the problem of tuberculosis and promoting the DOTS ALL OVER strategy.

I am sure you will agree with me that one of the most effective ways to face this challenge is to promote collaboration at subregional and interregional levels. At present, we have four tuberculosis control initiatives in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. These are the Tuberculosis Elimination Initiative in the Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Horn of Africa Tuberculosis Control Initiative, the Near-East Tuberculosis Control Initiative and the Maghreb Tuberculosis Control Initiative. Two of these initiatives also involve close partnership and collaboration with the African Region.

The five countries in the Maghreb, namely Algeria, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, have common social and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, all these countries are strongly committed to the implementation and expansion of the DOTS strategy to achieve DOTS ALL OVER by 2000. The forum of the Maghreb TB Control Initiative provides for joint tuberculosis control activities among the Member States, to boost their efforts in a constructive, competitive and complementary manner.

I hope this meeting will provide an opportunity to review and discuss the implementation of the plans of action and recommendations made in the previous MATCI meeting and prepare plans of action for the coming year. This meeting will also provide a forum to discuss issues related to how to update knowledge and skills on information management in TB control.

Your active participation in the meeting and exchange of experiences gained through the implementation and expansion of the DOTS strategy, particularly in relation to ways of confronting constraints in DOTS implementation, will be instrumental in developing effective mechanisms to promote successes and overcome possible constraints.

I am aware that you have a full programme ahead of you. Therefore, without taking any more time, I wish you a successful meeting and a pleasant stay in Morocco.