



In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Address by

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REGIONAL DIRECTOR

WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

to the

**SECOND BOARD MEMBERS MEETING OF THE EASTERN
MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP TO STOP TB**

Cairo, Egypt, 1 December 2008

Your Excellency Professor Awad Tag El Din, former Minister of Health, Egypt and Chair of the Coordinating Board; Your Excellency Mr Ejaz Rahim, former Minister of Health, Pakistan and Vice-Chair of the Coordinating Board, Honourable members of the Board, Special Advisers to the Partnership, Dear Colleagues,

I am greatly pleased to welcome you, on behalf of WHO and the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, to this second meeting of the Coordinating Board of the Eastern Mediterranean Partnership to Stop TB in Cairo.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the launch of the Regional Partnership to Stop TB, a platform of collaborative effort has been created to step up the fight against tuberculosis, a preventable and curable disease which has gradually assumed the form of a global and regional threat to human life and development.

The Regional Office has completed 6 months of provisional hosting of the Partnership Secretariat with commitment and pleasure. During these months, the Secretariat has provided technical support to countries to initiate national partnerships and projects on tuberculosis, secured seed financing for Regional Partnership activities, developed advocacy material and maintained coordination among partners. This would not have been possible without your trust and confidence in WHO's commitment and abilities.

I am also greatly pleased to see that partners, too, have been very enthusiastic in taking initiatives and collaborating with WHO on Partnership activities. The Exclusive Task Force established by Rotary International, advocacy activities by the Jordan Anti-tuberculosis Association and the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and committed support to patients in Iraq and Oman have been trend-setting and exemplary. It is indeed a good beginning towards our common goal of ending human suffering from tuberculosis and creating a tuberculosis-free Region.

At the same time, the journey should continue—with better planning, improved coordination and more efforts. Recent WHO reports indicate that because of gaps in tuberculosis control, prevalence of a more resistant form of the disease—multi-drug resistant tuberculosis is increasing. Multi-drug resistant tuberculosis is more expensive and difficult to treat and the challenge could become enormous if we do not step up our efforts to contain tuberculosis and multi-drug resistant tuberculosis now. The only way to make this happen is through partnerships. We need to encourage more institutions and individuals to join the ranks of the Regional Partnership, especially the corporate sector which has made some remarkable contributions in health and education through corporate social responsibility. We need to approach them and obtain their commitment to the fight against tuberculosis. We need to urge governments to prioritize tuberculosis control, seek more funding from donors and ensure that patients and affected communities are also supported socially.

I believe that in today's complex environment, and the difficult circumstances of the global financial crisis, partnerships are the only solution to achieve collective good. Tuberculosis is a regional development challenge that can only be tackled if we work together with the power of the public and private sectors, community, media and corporate sectors. We should continue to emphasize this.

My sincere thanks to all of you for taking time out of your busy schedules to join us here in Cairo, and I wish you a very productive meeting.

Thank you.