

## **ASEAN Health Cluster 2 Message on World TB Day 2024**

### **TRANSLATING COMMITMENTS INTO ACTION**

**24 March 2024**

As we join hands to mark World TB Day 2024, the unwavering theme "Yes! We can End TB" continues to affirm the importance of our collective commitment to end TB. It serves as a powerful rallying call for multisectoral collaboration between stakeholders such as governments, communities, organisations to work together to end TB.

The United Nations High-Level Meeting (UNHLM) in 2023 reignited global efforts to end TB. Member States, including ASEAN member states (AMS), made decisive commitments, most notably, to ensure that at least 90% of those who develop TB receive quality assured diagnosis and treatment, and 90% of those at risk receive preventive treatment by 2027. Amongst others, Member States also agreed to increase global funding for TB to US\$22 billion by 2027 and improve access to health services using a people-centred approach.

Over the next few years, we will see these commitments translated into tangible action. ASEAN member states (AMS) will need to keep these commitments in mind and work to implement priority actions to achieve the 2027 targets. By riding on commitments made at the UNHLM, we can garner increased political support to establish multisectoral platforms in AMS, improve access to TB services and address social determinants of TB. Above and beyond, we must continue to bolster political engagement and community empowerment to achieve a truly people-centred TB movement.

The End TB Strategy is based upon three pillars: (1) integrated, patient-centred care and prevention; (2) bold policies and supportive systems; and (3) intensified research and innovation. To truly tackle TB, we must move beyond numeric targets, clinical approaches, and implementation of existing TB strategies. Innovative efforts and technological breakthroughs will be crucial to ensure the achievement of ending TB in ASEAN by 2035. The use of digital technologies such as digital X-rays along with computer aided diagnosis can improve access to services while addressing manpower and geographical constraints. Research for a new TB vaccine is ongoing, and we will have to prepare for its introduction and scale up. To this end, WHO has developed a technical document to prepare for the introduction of new TB vaccines, which highlights the need for early multisectoral engagement.

Keeping in mind knowledge, tools and political commitment in the present day, WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, in his remarks at the United Nations High Level Meeting, noted that “We have an opportunity that no generation in the history of humanity has had: the opportunity to write the final chapter in the story of tuberculosis”. Together, let us translate commitments into action and author the final chapter on TB.