

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

--

MESSAGE ON WORLD TB DAY**24 March 2006**

This year has already seen a milestone in our struggle against tuberculosis, with the launch of "Actions for Life" -- the Global Plan to Stop TB, 2006-2015. If the actions outlined in the plan are fully implemented, 14 million lives can be saved in the next 10 years. Fifty million more TB patients can be treated. New TB drugs -- the first in more than 40 years -- and diagnostics can be developed. And a new vaccine could revolutionize TB control.

These forecasts are ambitious, but they are achievable -- if everybody plays their part in supporting the Global Plan. The plan offers a way to reach the Millennium Development Goal of reducing the burden of TB, and help prevent this disease from targeting the poorest of the poor, and the most vulnerable people on earth.

Around the world, the TB picture is mixed. More than half of those falling ill live in Asia. Fortunately, China, India, the Philippines and Indonesia are investing more in TB control. In Latin America and the Middle East, we are seeing fewer new cases every year. In Eastern Europe, after years of rising figures, the number of cases is stabilizing, and there is hope of containing multidrug-resistant tuberculosis. Yet in all these settings, far more needs to be done to reach the poor and others who are highly vulnerable to disease. Above all, it is in Africa where extraordinary action is needed. This is the only continent where the number of cases continues to increase, together with the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Last year, African ministers declared TB an emergency.

With "Actions for Life", we have a detailed plan. We have a commitment at the highest level -- from the Group of Eight and the 2005 World Summit -- to concerted action against the disease. That means mobilizing all necessary internal and external resources to expand TB control programmes within strengthened health systems, to implement joint measures against TB/HIV, and to invest in research.

On this World TB Day, let us resolve to advance towards a world free of TB. Let us take action for life.