



March 24, The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease commemorates “World TB Day”

Paris, March 24, 2008 – Within the **Stop TB Partnership**, **The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease**, known as **The Union**, an international organisation established in 1920 to fight TB and promote lung health worldwide, commemorates **World TB Day**, an annual occasion to invite people to actively participate in the fight against Tuberculosis.

The **Stop TB Partnership** is a global campaign to fight Tuberculosis (TB) launched in 2000 with the collaboration of over 500 organisations and the **World Health Organization (WHO)**. This global action was initiated because, despite a deep commitment, numerous actions and strong ongoing medical progress surrounding TB, the disease is still an alarming global public health problem.

Within this framework, **March 24** officially commemorates **World TB Day**, empowering a strong global two-year campaign initiative called **I am stopping TB**. This year the campaign is dedicated not only to the men and women who have contributed in the fight against TB; but also celebrates those who have been successfully treated for the disease. It is all about their stories and their testimonials.

For centuries, TB has been a major health issue with over a third of the world’s population exposed to or suffering from the consequences of this disease. As a reminder, **TB** or **Tuberculosis** is still a common, communicable but potentially deadly infectious illness, caused by the **tubercle bacillus** discovered by Dr. Robert Koch on **March 24, 1882**, the precise date we commemorate. Medicine has come a long way and cures have been found since then, but, unfortunately, Tuberculosis is still responsible for over a million and a half deaths and nine million new cases are declared each year worldwide.

Among The Union’s activities around the world, the organisation manages the **FIDELIS** initiative which specially addresses populations with limited access to modern TB treatment. Its objective is to support innovative TB control activities for increasing case detection while sustaining high cure rates, thanks to the **DOTS** (Directly Observed Treatment Short Course) strategy.

Dr. I. D. Rusen, Director of the Tuberculosis Control and Prevention Department of The Union, declared, *“Within the framework of The Union, the FIDELIS program is an initiative that specifically targets populations with limited access to health services. Many of our projects involve people and communities leading the fights against TB, for example, in Bangladesh, one project provided additional education and training to cured TB patients so they would be better equipped to detect new TB cases within the community. Another*



project in Pakistan hosted radio calls in a talk-show with cured TB patients answering calls from the community to explain how they were diagnosed and then treated”.

Dr. Nils E. Billo, Executive Director of The Union added, *“World TB Day is an important occasion for everyone to remember that the fight against tuberculosis is constantly ongoing. Furthermore, The Union’s aim is to urge everyone to take charge globally through actions and successful programs to prevent and treat the disease. ”*

Today, The Union’s endeavors are to provide not only permanent on-site assistance, to invest in research, to offer international training courses and conferences worldwide, but also to conduct extensive field work and to provide strong management tools to support programs and policies.

To join The Union’s fight, please visit our web site: www.iatld.org

About the Union

The *International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease*, known as *The Union*, is the only international voluntary scientific organisation with partners in all regions providing a neutral platform to fight TB, TB-HIV, Asthma, tobacco control and Lung Disease. The Union was established in 1920 as a federation of national associations and today provides direct field assistance to over 75 countries, conducts clinical trials and organises international conferences and training courses. It also publishes *The International Journal of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease* (IJTLD) which is the reference for clinical research and epidemiological studies on tuberculosis. Among its international initiatives, it manages the grants program for the Bloomberg Initiative to reduce tobacco use, as well as the *FIDELIS* Fund for Innovative *DOTS* Expansion through local initiatives to Stop TB, and many others.

For further information, please visit our Web site at: www.iatld.org

About the FIDELIS initiative

FIDELIS is a global fund, administered by the *International Union Against Tuberculosis & Lung Disease* ([The Union](http://www.iatld.org)), with initial funding from the *Canadian International Development Agency* ([CIDA](http://www.cida.ca)). The *FIDELIS* project arose from the **Stop TB Partnership** initiative, to support innovative TB control activities for increasing case detection of new smear positive cases, while applying the *DOTS* (Directly Observed Treatment Short Course) strategy.

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