

Central Asian Governments and Other Stakeholders Work to End Tuberculosis at Fourth International Conference in Nur-Sultan

19 June 2019 Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan- The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), National Scientific Center of Phthiopulmonology, the Republic of Kazakhstan Ministry of Health, and Project HOPE, with support from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria today opened the Fourth International Conference on Integrated Tuberculosis (TB) Control in Central Asia.



Over 160 representatives from the ministries of health and other government entities and stakeholders from the Central Asian countries, the World Health Organization (WHO), the STOP TB Partnership, and national and international partner organizations, as well as leading TB experts from around the world, and public health policymakers and healthcare providers from across Kazakhstan were at the conference to share best practices and expertise in implementing the WHO's *End-TB Strategy* and the *Declaration of the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Ending TB in Central Asia*.

Comprehensive TB care centered on the needs of patients and their families is one of the key requirements of the *End TB Strategy*, which aims to reduce TB deaths by 95% and reduce TB cases by 90% between 2015 and 2035. The Central Asian countries have made significant progress in reducing TB cases and TB deaths, thanks in part to the collaborative efforts of USAID, the Global Fund, and international partners in the region.

The burden of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB), however, remains a major challenge across the region. To halt the MDR-TB epidemic, governments in Central Asia are implementing comprehensive patient-centered TB prevention and care and collaborating with stakeholders, including civil society and international organizations, through events like today's conference.



Through its Comprehensive Plan to Fight TB for 2014-2020, the Republic of Kazakhstan leads other Central Asian countries in implementing integrated patient-centered TB care and in initiating a dialogue to address transboundary TB control in the region through bilateral agreements and multilateral mechanisms.

"Currently, Kazakhstan has developed and is successfully implementing a model of integrated TB care for further improvement of quality of TB care delivery to the public. In Kazakhstan, TB care has been integrated into the primary health care system; government funding for treatment of the multi-drug resistant TB has increased; infection control measures have strengthened; and innovative TB rapid diagnostics methods and treatment are further implemented," noted the Republic of Kazakhstan Minister of Health, Elzhan Birtanov.



The conference plenary and moderated sessions are focused on improving governments' ability to operate and finance TB programs. At the Conference conclusion, participants will adopt a resolution summarizing proceedings and recommendations, which will be presented to each national TB program as high-priority actions for further implementation.

"This forum demonstrates the important collaboration and commitment the Central Asian governments and civil society organizations are making to end the spread of this deadly but curable disease. The United States is proud of the more than two decades of partnership we have had with the governments of the countries in Central Asia to eradicate TB. Our work together has improved access to quality health care services and contributed to a significant reduction in the number of TB cases and deaths compared to a decade ago," noted Christopher Edwards, regional mission director, USAID Central Asia.

Three previous conferences on integrated TB control were held with support from USAID in: Almaty, Kazakhstan (2016); Bishkek, the Kyrgyz Republic (2017); and Dushanbe, Tajikistan (2017).