

Launch of African TB Caucus signals renewed political commitment to ending TB in Africa

Sunday 17th July, Durban, South Africa

Political representatives from twenty African countries came together Sunday to formally launch an African TB Caucus, a network of parliamentarians spanning the African continent and dedicated to leading the fight against tuberculosis (TB).

The decision came at the finale of the African TB Summit, the biggest ever meeting of parliamentarians from the African continent, solely dedicated to TB. The meeting was hosted and chaired by Minister Aaron Motsoaledi, the South African Health Minister and chair of the Stop TB Partnership, who is one of the founders and co-chairman of the Global TB Caucus.

The parliamentarians endorsed the 90-90-90 TB targets and Global Plan to End TB as crucial in the development of new approaches in the global commitment to leave no one with TB behind. In addition to the unanimous decision to launch the African network, delegates agreed on a set of concrete steps to raise the profile of TB in the “Statement of Commitment to End TB in Africa.” These included an effort to launch parliamentary networks dedicated to TB in each of their countries, a campaign to lift the disease up the list of priorities for Ministers of Health across the region, and renewed efforts to build pressure for action on TB through parliamentary routes.

The delegates appointed five co-chairs to ensure each geopolitical region was adequately represented: Senator Pierre Flambeau Ngayap from Cameroon, who will also work with the newly launched Francophone TB Caucus to ensure that the African Caucus brings together representatives from Anglophone and Francophone Africa; the Hon Stephen Mule MP from Kenya, who is a founding member of the Global TB Caucus and the chairman of the Kenyan TB Caucus; the Hon Ruth Labode MP from Zimbabwe, who leads the Zimbabwean national TB caucus; Fatima Nacira Bourouis from Algeria to represent North Africa; and Hon David Emmanuel, the Chair of the Nigerian Committee on HIV, TB and Malaria Control.

Speaking at the Summit, Minister Motsoaledi congratulated the new chairs of the African TB Caucus, but reminded delegates that all MPs have a responsibility to tackle TB: “No one around this table can honestly say that they do not have TB in their countries, and in their constituencies. Although we have elected three co-chairs of this African network, we will only win the fight against TB if we win it in each individual country in Africa. You all have a critical role to play.”

The founding of the African TB Caucus launches the end of the first phase of the Global TB Caucus project. Launched in Barcelona in October 2014, the Caucus has grown into a global network with representatives in 126 countries. It has also established four regional networks to drive greater local leadership against the disease and a dedicated Francophone TB Caucus to work in French-speaking countries.

Now the Caucus will focus on building a sustainable political response to TB, by focusing on building groups – rather than individuals – of dedicated MPs in key countries supported by local civil society organisations.

Dr Lucica Ditiu, Executive Director of the Stop TB Partnership which hosts the Global TB Caucus Secretariat, said: “These Parliamentarians’ outstanding commitment to TB represents the heart of the paradigm shift called for in the Global Plan to End TB. Parliamentarians have the power to change policies, increase funding, and mobilize action from the community up to the highest levels of office. I am confident they will drive enormous change in their respective countries and turn the ambitious commitments made in Durban into action.”