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UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on the fight against Tuberculosis

In 2016, 374,000 people who had both TB and HIV are estimated to have died. This is in addition to the 1.3 million people who died from TB alone. Also in 2016 there were an estimated 10.4 million new cases of active TB worldwide. Globally, 10% of the incident TB cases in 2016 are estimated to have been among people living with HIV.

The Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030 will not be achieved if we fail to effectively use the existing tools to combat TB, complemented by Universal Health Coverage and social protection to:

- Bring down global TB incidence rates from an annual decline of 2% in 2015 to 10% by 2025.
- Reduce the proportion of people with TB who die from the disease from 15% in 2015 to 5% by 2025.

Challenges to reach the goal include a 1.4 billion US\$ funding gap per year; lack of adequate care to 3.6 million people with TB that are missed within the health care systems; an urgent need for TB/HIV response acceleration and the MDR-TB crisis.

On 26 September, the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Tuberculosis will take place at the United Nations. The High-Level Meeting is a unique opportunity to join forces in the global fight against tuberculosis and raise the required financial resources funding. During this meeting, the gathered international community will determine the next steps to be taken to combat the global tuberculosis epidemic.

Important sections of the draft declaration negotiated so far by the UN member countries have been weakened at the insistence of the USA by removing references to the Doha Declaration of the World Trade Organisation, which reaffirms flexibility of IP legislation for the protection of public health. The so-called TRIPS flexibilities protect a country's right to take the policies necessary to ensure access to affordable medicines for its citizens, e.g. via compulsory licensing. The current text of the draft declaration not only fails to incorporate public health safeguards that countries can exercise under the TRIPS regulations to make the treatment affordable, but also includes problematic language that says 'intellectual property rights are an important incentive in the development of new health products'.

South Africa and thus the entire G77 states do not want to accept these changes. **As negotiations on the final declaration are now being resumed, we urgently call on the EU governments to support South Africa and the G77 states and push back on the Trump administration's attempts to remove access language from the Declaration.**

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People who need medication must also receive it. The UN High-Level Meeting on Tuberculosis is a crucial opportunity to reaffirm the rights of countries to take the necessary measures in order to make the access of their populations to essential medicines, vaccines and diagnostics financially viable.