

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510 - 3505

June 25, 2018

The Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

I appreciate your involvement in negotiations prior to the United Nations General Assembly's High-Level Meeting on tuberculosis (TB) on September 26. I write to ask you to commit to meaningful U.S. engagement around this important event, and to ensure that it results in the urgent investments and actions needed to defeat TB.

TB and its drug-resistant forms constitute a global health crisis. TB is a curable, airborne disease that kills more people worldwide than any other infectious disease. In 2016, 10.4 million people became ill with TB, including 1 million children. In the same year, 1.7 million people died from TB. TB is the leading killer of people living with HIV/AIDS, and the spread of TB undermines the substantial gains made through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

Drug-resistant TB is becoming more frequent and is significantly more expensive to treat than drug-sensitive TB. Most drug-resistant TB cases result from direct person-to-person transmission making it considerably easier for drug-resistant TB to spread to new geographic areas.

The global fight against TB has scored impressive successes – an estimated 53 million lives have been saved from 2000-2016, showing an enormous return on investment. USAID's TB program centers on building the capacity to end TB. In the 23 priority countries, new cases have fallen by 20 percent since 2000 – more than twice as quickly as countries that do not receive U.S. bilateral TB assistance.

New medications for multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB), along with rapid diagnostics, are enabling faster progress against the disease. However, these new technologies are still underutilized, and US assistance is vital to speeding adoption of new approaches.

The UN High-Level Meeting on TB could galvanize faster progress against this deadly disease. In order to do so, we must ensure that the meeting leads to concrete actions addressing real needs. Once a person with TB is taking the correct treatment, the disease rapidly becomes non-infectious. Yet, tragically, an estimated four million people are "missed" and go untreated.

I urge you to emphasize the following priorities, as identified by the Stop TB Partnership and other civil society actors during the negotiations for the declaration text:

1. Reach all people by closing the gaps on TB diagnosis, treatment and prevention;
2. Transform the TB response to be equitable, rights-based, and people-centered;
3. Accelerate development of essential new tools to end TB;
4. Invest the funds necessary to end TB; and
5. Commit to decisive and accountable global leadership, including regular UN reporting and review.

Specifically, I strongly encourage you to preserve language in the declaration text regarding the affordability of new tools and diagnostics, as well as preserve language acknowledging the importance of delinking the cost of investment in research and development from the price and volume of sales so as to facilitate equitable and affordable access to new tools and advancements. Additionally, I encourage you to support efforts to improve global collaboration in research and development, as well as improve data-sharing in an effort to bring new drugs to market faster and provide evidence for how new and repurposed drugs work across settings.

It is in the interest of the U.S. that this High-Level Meeting succeed. The U.S. should remain a strong global leader in providing funding for effective TB programs and research, and not just sustain but expand its commitment. In order to successfully defeat TB, we must make strong commitments to specific funding targets, strong commitments to targets regarding provision of TB care inclusive of treatment and preventive therapy, and strong commitments to meet the needs of vulnerable groups who are disproportionately affected by this deadly disease.

I stand ready to work with you to leverage the unprecedented opportunities for faster progress against TB presented by the High-Level Meeting.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

CC: Kelley E. Currie, Ambassador, Representative of the United States of America on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

CC: Ann S. Blackwood, Director for Health Programs, Bureau of International Organization Affairs