

24 March 2014

**Message of H.E. John W. Ashe
President of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly,
on World Tuberculosis Day**

Today on this year's World Tuberculosis Day, we are reminded that we are moving ever closer to the deadline of the Millennium Development Goals. And there is good news to report: the international community has turned a corner in its collective fight against the tuberculosis epidemic. Twenty-two million men, women and children's lives have been saved between 1995 and 2012.

It is clear that we are seeing positive and welcome returns on the investments made by national governments and development partners.

At the same time, it is true that far too many die from TB and drug-resistant strains of this disease and the declines have been too slow.

To create a world where people, including those living with HIV, are free from the risks of TB and where drug-resistant strains of the disease no longer pose a threat, we must act promptly.

On World TB Day 2014, the global community has come together to reach the 'missed 3 million' people who go untreated. Of the nearly 9 million people a year who are afflicted with TB, a third are either never diagnosed or not reported, and their treatment is therefore either non-existent or ineffective.

Many of the "missing" three million people live in the world's poorest, most vulnerable communities or are among marginalized populations such as migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons, prisoners, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities and drug users. In addition, there is also an emerging problem of patients severely ill with drug-resistant TB who are not diagnosed and are not treated.

If we work together, we can reach and treat those who are at the greatest risk: the missed 3 million patients. We can also prevent drug-resistant TB from spreading. We must devote resources to empower communities, hospitals and the health care workers who can engage and reach those who are isolated and denied access to treatment and care.

As we work to create a Post-2015 Development Agenda, I call on governments to seize the opportunity to frame and implement a new global TB strategy, one that is aligned with the wider agenda of greater health, security and sustainable development for all. Only then will we set our sights on a world free from TB.