



International Union Against
Tuberculosis and Lung Disease
Health solutions for the poor

HE Mr Andrej Kiska, President, Slovak Republic, to speak at the 7th Union Europe Region Conference on Lung Health

Over 600 delegates will convene in Bratislava, Slovak Republic, 22-24 June

European TB Parliamentary Summit - 24-26 June

Pre-conference capacity building workshop on tobacco tax - 20-21 June

16 June 2016 – The Europe Region of the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) will hold its 7th Union Europe Conference on Lung Health on 22-24 June 2016 at the Slovak National Theatre, in Bratislava, Slovakia. The conference Patron is the President of the Slovak Republic, Mr. Andrej Kiska, who will address delegates at the Opening Ceremony.

The theme of the conference is **'Leave no-one behind: Know, Share, Act in the fight against tuberculosis (TB) and lung diseases,'** reflecting the changing field of activity of global public health and the new era of action within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With the highest rates of multidrug-resistant TB in the world, Europe is a key battleground in the fight against TB. The investment required to eliminate TB in Europe is a fraction of the potential costs of treating it.

"TB poses an intolerable burden of ill health across the countries of Europe with nearly 330,000 women, men and children falling ill every year as a result of the disease and 36,000 of them dying of it. Inaction is not an option," said Prof Ivan Solovic, President, The Union Europe Region.

The Opening Ceremony on 22 June will be attended by the President of the Slovak Republic, HE Mr Andrej Kiska, who will also deliver the opening address. Also speaking: State Secretary prof. Stanislav Spanik, Ministry of Health, Slovak Republic; Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab, Regional Director, Europe, World Health Organization (WHO); and Dr E Jane Carter, President, The Union.

"MDR-TB is still ravaging the WHO European Region, making it the most affected area of the entire world," said Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe. *"Only 62% of MDR-TB patients are found and half of them successfully cured. This calls for a considerable scaling*

up of access to safe, rational and efficient new TB drugs, as well as innovations on rapid diagnosis and care centred on the needs of patients. This is what the global End TB Strategy and the Tuberculosis Action Plan for WHO European Region 2016-2020 are aiming at. We work with countries to improve the quality of and equitable access to their services in line with Health 2020, the European health policy framework.”

Over 600 delegates are registered for the conference, including governmental representatives, scientific experts, opinion leaders, and a broad spectrum of health professionals.

The conference will feature 28 symposia and three workshops led by world experts, dedicated to the broad issue of TB as a serious infectious disease with a major impact on public health and the fight to combat tobacco use and lung diseases such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, pulmonary fibrosis and sleep disordered breathing.

Plenary sessions, symposia, oral presentations, poster sessions, and workshops will provide a wide range of opportunities for delegates to hear about new developments, present their work, meet with colleagues and explore new partnerships.

“Tuberculosis is one of the priorities of the Slovak EU Presidency starting in July this year. There is a continuous need for focused efforts to better diagnose and treat the disease, especially because of the unprecedented growth of its multi-resistant forms in recent years. Therefore, we have also welcomed organising the 7th Union Europe Region Conference in Slovakia,” said Dr Mario Mikloši, Director General of Health Division, Slovak Ministry of Health.

“MDR-TB is a major global public health crisis” said Dr Mario Raviglione, Director of WHO’s Global TB Programme. “One thing is certain – ending TB in all its forms will only be possible with innovation, including new diagnostics and treatments, digital technology and precision medicine. Smarter investments are needed to spur innovation, while simultaneously strengthening the basics of TB prevention and care.”

This year, the conference will also play host to the European TB Parliamentary Summit which brings together political representatives from across Europe with the aim of accelerating progress against TB in all its manifests and push for a pan-European response to the disease. Stephan Albani from Germany and George Khechinashvili from Georgia will lead the work of bringing the European Summit together, with support from the TB Europe Coalition and the Global TB Caucus Secretariat. The Parliamentarians will hold their meetings in Bratislava between 24-26 June.

A pre-conference tobacco control workshop will be held on June 20-21. Brussels-based NGO Smoke Free Partnership (SFP) will run the two-day capacity building session on tobacco tax for Ministries of Finance and Health and civil society representatives from central and eastern European countries. SFP are Union grantees under the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use - The Union is a co-host of the workshop. SFP are working to support European tobacco control policy initiatives on tax and illicit trade, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, as well as across the EU generally, to bring them in line with the World Health Organization’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC). The purpose of the workshop is to build knowledge and collaboration to empower countries to work together on implementing strong tobacco taxation rules within their own jurisdictions and at EU level.

Delegates – and the general public – are also invited to join the inaugural event – "Run For Healthy Lungs" – a 4.2 km run on 22 June. The aim of this event is to highlight the serious social and medical problems still posed by TB and lung diseases today. Profits will be donated to the Children's Tuberculosis Institute in Dolný Smokovec. More details: https://www.bratislavamarathon.com/beh_pre_zdrave_pluca/beh_pre_zdrave_pluca/aktuality/index.html

The Slovak National Pneumological Conference on the "Management of the exacerbations of respiratory diseases" will take place at the same venue, concurrently with The Union conference. The Slovak programme is open to all registered delegates.

Keynote speakers:

Dr Mario Raviglione on Ending TB – the global situation and a new strategy in the SDG era.

Mario is Director of the Global Tuberculosis Programme at the World Health Organization. He will deliver the opening lecture of the conference.

Giovanni Battista Migliori, European Respiratory Society Secretary General on The ERS/WHO/Union ER survey on management practices on refugees in the European Region.

Marieke J van der Werf on Prevention and control of tuberculosis in the European Union:

Where do we come from, where are we and where are we going? Marieke is the Head of the Disease Programme Tuberculosis at the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

Lee B Reichman – The Tuberculosis Taboo. Lee is the Founding Executive Director of the Rutgers Global Tuberculosis Institute and Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, in Newark New Jersey.

Knut Lonnroth – From stopping to ending and eliminating TB – what does it mean and how can it be done? Knut is Associate Professor of Social Medicine at the University of Gothenburg.

Dr Martin van den Boom and Dr Viorel Soltan – Jointly tackling tuberculosis and strengthening health systems in the WHO European Region (possible contributions of a multi-partner project approach).

Timothy R Aksamit – TB or non-TB (NTM) Timothy is a consultant and associate professor in the pulmonary disease and critical care medicine division of Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, USA.

Expert speakers at the pre-conference tobacco taxation workshop include **Annerie Bouw** - Director General of TAXUD, European Commission; **Dr Michal Stoklosa** - Senior Economist, Taxation and Health at the American Cancer Society; **Dr Jean Tesche**, tax expert, The Union; and **Dr Hana Ross**, Principal Research Officer for the Economics of Tobacco Control Project, Cape Town University. Participants include representatives from 13 countries including Turkey, Ukraine, Georgia and Romania.

All conference events will take place at the Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava unless otherwise noted

Simultaneous English–Russian–English will be provided for all sessions held in the main conference hall.

Media registration:

Members of the media wishing to register for the conference can do so at:

<https://www.unionconference2016bratislava.org/registration-for-press/>

Conference registration: <https://www.unionconference2016bratislava.org/registration/>

Conference website: <https://www.unionconference2016bratislava.org/>

Programme: The programme for the 7th Union Europe Region Conference can be downloaded here: <https://www.unionconference2016bratislava.org/files/CONFERENCE-PROGRAMME-FINAL.pdf>

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About The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union)

For nearly 100 years, The Union has drawn from the best scientific evidence and the skills, expertise and reach of its staff, consultants and membership in order to advance solutions to the most pressing public health challenges affecting people living in poverty around the world. With nearly 17,000 members and subscribers from 156 countries, The Union has its headquarters in Paris and regional offices in Africa, the Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, North America and South-East Asia. The Union's scientific departments focus on tuberculosis and HIV, lung health and non-communicable diseases, tobacco control and operational research. For more information, please visit www.theunion.org.

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