

Strictly embargoed: Tuesday 19 September, 1800 hrs EDT/2300 hrs BST

**THE UNION WELCOMES THE WHO'S RECOGNITION OF TUBERCULOSIS
ALONGSIDE OTHER PATHOGENS AS GLOBAL PRIORITY FOR R&D**

Two new reports launched today by the World Health Organization (WHO) call for global research and development for tuberculosis (TB) as a priority pathogen

Tuesday 19 September - The Union welcomes the WHO's Priority Pathogen Report, released today, highlighting drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB) as a priority for research and development in the battle against antimicrobial resistance (AMR). AMR poses a grave challenge caused by the spread of bacteria, viruses and fungi that are resistant to available medicines.

The report highlights five key reasons why TB is a global priority for research and development—including that TB is the number-one global infectious-disease killer today, yet only two new antibiotics for the treatment of TB have reached the market in the past 70 years. (And both are currently in limited use for certain forms of MDR-TB.)

José Luis Castro, Executive Director, The Union said: “When it comes to facing the TB challenge, we cannot overstate the urgent need to increase research and development. The antibiotics we have for curing TB are becoming less and less effective, and right now we don't have enough new drug candidates lined up that could potentially replace them. TB needs new research funding and needs it now.”

The announcement follows a review of WHO's first-ever *Global priority list of antibiotic-resistant bacteria to guide research, discovery, and development of new antibiotics*, published 27 February 2017, which did not include TB. The Union has campaigned with many others for a review of this list and welcomes the new report now ensuring TB is considered to be the priority that it needs to be.

According to WHO, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* kills more people than any other communicable disease, and the global TB burden is increasingly characterised by drug-resistant forms. In 2015, an estimated 580,000 people were reported to have become sick from DR-TB. And yet TB R&D has been systematically underfunded during the previous decade. From 2011-2015, TB research received merely a third of the funding need identified by the Global Plan to Stop TB 2011-2015.

This reinforces the importance of another report that WHO released today, which gives an analysis of the research and development pipeline for AMR diseases, including TB. The report clearly identifies the need for more investment in basic science, drug discovery and clinical development for AMR conditions, especially for DR-TB.

The Union is working with other partners on a new mechanism, The Life Prize (formally the 3P Project) to incentivise new funding into TB R&D, to facilitate the development of TB regimens of the future and ensure that they are available for all.

Project Lead, Dr Grania Brigden, said: “The WHO AMR Pipeline report highlights the challenges that are faced in developing the new antibiotics of the future, including for TB. The old model of R&D for new antibiotics isn’t working for TB. We need new models like The Life Prize to deliver a brand new treatment regimen for TB and make sure it’s appropriately available to all.”

A review of the threat of AMR commissioned by the UK government has projected that if nothing changes in the treatment of TB there could be up to 2.5 million lives annually lost due to DR-TB by 2050 and 75 million lives lost to TB between now and 2050, representing a quarter of all deaths linked to drug resistant infections.

ENDS

Press contacts:

Jo Waters
Global Communications - The Union
Mobile: +44 (0) 7949 770 409
e-mail: jwaters@theunion.org

Michael Kessler
Michael Kessler Media
Mobile: +34 655 792 699
e-mail: michael.kessler@inton-media.com

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

The Union is a global scientific organisation with the mission to improve health among people living in poverty. We do that by conducting scientific research, working with governments and other agencies to translate research into better health for people around the world, and delivering projects directly in the field. The Union is made up of a membership body of people around the world who help to advance our mission, and a scientific institute that implements public health projects within countries. For close to 100 years, we have been leaders in the fight against some of the world’s biggest killers, including tuberculosis, lung diseases and tobacco use.