

## Media Release

# World Lung Cancer Day 2020: Respiratory groups stress lung cancer risks and importance of early screening and treatment

**Cape Town, Glenview, Lausanne, Montevideo, New York, Paris, Tokyo, 1 August 2020**

In support of World Lung Cancer Day, the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS), of which The Union is a founding member, calls for more awareness and understanding of lung cancer risk factors, as well as the importance of early screening and treatment.

Lung cancer is responsible for nearly one in five cancer deaths according to the World Health Organization. While lung cancer and breast cancer are diagnosed at the same rate (11.6 percent), lung cancer kills more people yearly than breast, colon and prostate cancers combined. Lung cancer mortality is projected to reach 2.45 million by 2030, a 39 percent increase in just over a decade.

While most understand that smoking is the single greatest risk factor for lung cancer at 80 percent of all cases, other lesser known risk factors include the environment and genetics. Environmental exposure to radon, asbestos, arsenic, beryllium and uranium has been linked to lung cancer. The risk of lung cancer also increases with a history of cancer in another part of the body, age, family history, radiation to the chest area and lung diseases like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Access to screening options and education is vital for early detection and treatment. Low-income countries, where survival rates are significantly below the average, report only a 15 percent availability of treatment through public health systems. More than 90 percent of high-income countries report vital access to care.

Lung cancer symptoms include change in mucus, chest or back pain, coughing up blood and difficulty swallowing. Tests that may be used to diagnose lung cancer include chest x-rays, CT and PET scans, bronchoscopy and needle biopsies. If you are a current or former smoker and over the age of 55, you may be a candidate for a low-dose CT scan screening that can potentially detect lung cancer in its earliest stages.

“We know that the leading risk factors of lung cancer can be prevented,” said Dr Paula I Fujiwara, Scientific Director at The Union. “Smoking causes 80 percent of lung cancer cases, so we must focus on implementing the evidence-based policy measures that we know will reduce tobacco use. Air pollution also causes lung cancer, so we must take concrete action there as well. It is inexcusable to allow a preventable and agonising disease like lung cancer to continue to claim the lives of millions of people every year.”

## About FIRS

The Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) is an organisation comprised of the world's leading international respiratory societies working together to improve lung health globally: [American College of Chest Physicians \(CHEST\)](#), [American Thoracic Society \(ATS\)](#), [Asian Pacific Society of Respiriology \(APSR\)](#), [Asociación Latino Americana De Tórax \(ALAT\)](#), [European Respiratory Society \(ERS\)](#), [International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease \(The Union\)](#), [Pan African Thoracic Society \(PATS\)](#), [Global Initiative for Asthma \(GINA\)](#), and the [Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease \(GOLD\)](#).

The goal of FIRS is to unify and enhance efforts to improve lung health through the combined work of its more than 70,000 members globally.