

TO: **Dr. Ricardo Barros**, Minister of Health of Brazil
Dr. Li Bin, Minister of the National Health and Family Planning Commission of the People's Republic of China
Dr. Aaron Motsoaledi, Minister of Health of South Africa
Dr. Shri Jagat Prakash Nadda, Minister of Health and Family Welfare of India
Dr. Veronika Skvortsova, Minister of Health of the Russian Federation

15 November 2016

Petition to BRICS countries to triple funding for TB R&D to improve TB/AIDS and AMR response

Dear Honorable Ministers of Health from the BRICS Nations,

On the occasion of the 15-16 November 2016 BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) workshops on TB/AIDS and Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) in Ahmadabad and Jaipur, respectively, and in anticipation of the 6th Meeting of the BRICS Health Ministers in New Delhi on 16 December 2016, we petition you to commit BRICS countries to tripling funding for tuberculosis (TB) research and development (R&D).

BRICS countries are home to nearly half of all the world's new TB cases and deaths.¹ Three BRICS countries—India, China, and the Russian Federation—account for nearly half of the burden of drug-resistant TB (DR-TB), a form of TB that is more difficult to diagnose and treat with existing medications. We applaud the 2015 Moscow Declaration of the BRICS Ministers of Health in which you recognized the tremendous toll TB takes on your citizens and on the world, and resolved to continue collaboration toward TB elimination in line with the World Health Organization (WHO) End TB Strategy and the Communiqué of the 4th BRICS Health Ministers' meeting in New Delhi in 2012.² In these statements, you agreed to adopt a cooperation plan at the next BRICS Health Ministers' meeting and highlighted research on TB vaccines, medicines, and diagnostics as an important area of cooperation.

We urge you to turn this resolve into swift action. The WHO recently announced that the TB epidemic is larger than previously estimated. In 2015, TB caused 10.4 million people to fall sick and killed 1.8 million people, making it the world's deadliest infectious disease, as well as a major drain on the economies of BRICS nations and other countries.³ The Review on Antimicrobial Resistance predicts that DR-TB will account for a quarter of the 10 million annual AMR deaths by 2050 unless research into new medicines, tests, and vaccines to prevent, diagnose, and treat TB is accelerated.⁴ In 2015, civil society came together for a march in Cape Town, South Africa and called on BRICS countries to triple TB R&D spending.⁵

Yet funding for TB R&D has dropped precipitously, plunging by US\$53.4 million last year to a total of \$620.6 million.⁶ This represents the lowest level of funding for TB research since 2008. In

¹ <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/92/6/13-133116/en/>

² <http://brics.itamaraty.gov.br/images/Health%20Declaration%202015.pdf>

³ <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/250441/1/9789241565394-eng.pdf?ua=1>

⁴ https://amr-review.org/sites/default/files/160525_Final%20paper_with%20cover.pdf

⁵ http://tac.org.za/sites/default/files/Memorandum_TB.pdf

⁶ Frick M. 2016 Report on Tuberculosis Research Funding Trends, 2005–2015: No Time to Lose. New York: Treatment Action Group; 2015. Available from: www.treatmentactiongroup.org/tbrd2016.

2015, India contributed \$11.1 million, South Africa \$3.9 million, and Brazil \$1.9 million to TB R&D. China and Russia did not report their TB R&D spending. Together, BRICS countries contributed 42 percent of new TB cases and 38 percent of TB deaths in 2015, but only 4 percent of funding for R&D to prevent them.

Despite receiving only a fraction of the required investment, TB scientists have made several significant advances over the past five years, including new rapid diagnostic tests and better preventive and curative TB therapies. This demonstrates that funding TB R&D is a sound investment that can generate significant returns—whether measured by lives saved or livelihoods safeguarded—against the impoverishing effects of TB. In addition, by investing in TB R&D, countries can strengthen their competitive advantage in science by building up research infrastructure and human talent.

As your summit in New Delhi approaches, we ask that you deepen your resolve to fighting TB by committing to:

- include a TB R&D funding target of tripling your countries' spending on TB R&D in the cooperation plan you will finalize in December;
- work with your countries' Ministries of Science and Technology and Ministries of Finance to ensure that TB R&D is fully funded; and
- transparently report annual spending on TB R&D activities.

We look forward to BRICS leadership in ensuring full funding for R&D to end TB.

Sincerely,

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Abou Mere, Kripa Foundation Nagaland, India

Aghasi Vardanyan, Armenia

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