



Treatment Action Group

Tuberculosis Multistakeholder Hearing — TAG Statement

This statement on universal health coverage is delivered by Erin McConnell on behalf of Treatment Action Group (TAG).

Tuesday, May 9, 2023

1. Treatment Action Group is an independent, activist, and community-based research and policy think tank, based in New York, in consultative status with ECOSOC, and committed to ending the HIV, tuberculosis, and hepatitis C virus pandemics.
2. COVID-19 laid bare the effects of years of underinvestment in public health and underscored the importance of a functional, well-funded, and universal health system. And revealed the importance of restructuring global governance of debt as a tool to enhance health investment.
3. Funding remains a crucial barrier to expanding universal health coverage and meeting Sustainable Development Goal 3: health by 2030. An estimated US\$400 billion per year is required to meet the SDG for health for all low and middle-income countries.
4. Spending on essential TB and HIV services dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic. Access to diagnostics, treatment, and prevention were hampered by strains on capacity and funding, reflecting the financial challenges health systems face during crises.
5. TB health system infrastructure, human and other resources were co-opted to respond to COVID-19. And as a result, in 2020 and 2021, for the first time since 2005, TB incidence and deaths increased, reversing nearly two-decades of progress
6. An estimated US\$15 to 32 billion dollars is needed each year to meet SDG for TB. However, many States face unsustainable debt burdens that encourage nations to divest from health systems, including essential TB and HIV services, and health research undermining the right to health, right to science, and progress toward the SDGs.
8. The current system of foreign debt actively hinders the realization of these goals, entrenching longstanding global inequities and limiting the ability of debtor nations to invest in critical initiatives to reach universal health coverage. The prioritization of creditor returns over health and human rights is incompatible with universal health coverage and other targets under SDG 3.
- 9. The world cannot reach universal health coverage, eliminate TB, or achieve any other SDG without developing a financial system that provides financing that meets the health and other needs of LMICs and establishes adequate protections against debt distress.**

10. TAG strongly urges the co-facilitators to place debt provision that **accounts for the minimum necessary funding to continue to invest in universal health coverage and human rights and rejects austerity measures during times of debt distress** as a central component of the political declaration.

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