Background

In 2014, the 67th session of the World Health Assembly convened by the World Health Organization (WHO) proclaimed the goal of ending the global tuberculosis (TB) epidemic by adopting the WHO’s End TB Strategy (the Strategy). The Strategy sets targets of a 95% reduction in TB deaths and a 90% reduction in TB cases by 2035 as compared to 2015 and aims to ensure that no family is burdened with catastrophic expenses as a result of TB.

Integrated, patient-centered TB care and prevention represent one of the Strategy’s three pillars upon which these ambitious goals can be achieved. Integrated TB Control is an approach that shifts the focus to synergistic engagement of all stakeholders within the government, private, and civil society sectors to provide those who are highly vulnerable to TB infection with quality TB diagnostics, treatment, and prevention services.

The Central Asian states and their ministries of health and national TB programs have demonstrated a growing commitment to reducing the burden of TB and implementing the new Strategy. These efforts have been supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the Global Fund); and other international development and public health organizations.

National TB programs in partnership with international organizations focus on integrating new efforts under the Strategy and available resources in building sustainable national TB control and prevention systems and ensuring opportunities for effective coordination of TB Control in the Central Asian region.

Such coordination cannot be achieved without a forum to share knowledge, experience, expertise, successes, and lessons learned among TB experts and public health professionals. The National Center for Tuberculosis Problems of the Republic of Kazakhstan Ministry of Health and Social Development with support of USAID, the Global Fund, and Project HOPE are providing such a forum by convening a conference that will serve as a central gathering point on TB Control for professionals from the Central Asian region and experts from around the world.
Conference Goals and Description

The International Conference on Integrated TB Control (the Conference) will bring together representatives from the ministries of health of the Central Asian countries (the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkmenistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan), the Republic of Belarus, the People’s Republic of China, the Russian Federation, South Korea, Ukraine, the United States of America, and other countries, and TB experts from WHO, USAID, the Global Fund, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (USA), Rutgers University (USA), and international non-governmental organizations.

The Conference will provide a forum for participants to share knowledge, experience, and practical expertise. At the conclusion of the Conference, the participants will identify priorities and formulate recommendations for action to advance, coordinate, and implement integrated approaches in TB treatment and care across the Central Asian region.

The Conference will be held in a format of plenary sessions during which international and national experts will present strategic views and leading TB control practices, followed by four parallel working group breakout sessions on four TB priority areas:

- TB service reform in accordance with the WHO End TB Strategy: analysis and revision of regulatory frameworks, finance mechanisms, and human resource capacity building;
- Scale-up of TB outpatient models of care with a patient-centered approach with consideration of the needs of vulnerable groups of patients and provision of effective infection control with support by government structures and civil society;
- Perspectives of strengthening national laboratory services to ensure complete access to rapid diagnostic tools for detection of TB and its drug-resistant forms;
- Expanding treatment opportunities in the era of new drugs for multi- (MDR) and extensively drug resistant (XDR) TB treatment.

Concurrently, continuing education seminars -- master classes -- will be held for TB practitioners. Leading TB experts will share their expertise in the current approaches to organization of TB services and in TB and M/XDR TB prevention, detection, diagnostics and treatment.

Recommendations developed by the working groups will be summarized in a Conference resolution that will provide a set of principles to implement integrated TB control under national TB programs and establish a regional mechanism for TB control in the countries of the Central Asian region.