

UN high-level meeting on TB



The United Nations High-Level Meeting on Tuberculosis

What is a UN High-Level Meeting?

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly convenes UN High-Level Meetings (UN HLM) to discuss urgent ad hoc events or specific crosscutting issues. These meetings don't happen very often. The UN HLM on tuberculosis will be one of only a handful of these meetings on a health issue, and the first ever to directly address tuberculosis.

Who is in charge of the UN High-Level Meeting?

The President of the General Assembly (PGA), along with the two countries, who are co-facilitators, officially coordinate the whole process. Co-facilitators are countries chosen by the PGA, who coordinate the organisation of the UN HLM, work with other nations to agree upon the text of the political declaration and are the focal point for engagement with the PGA. There are no rules as to who can be a co-facilitator, apart from that they cannot be members of the UN Security Council. For the 2017-2018 period, Mr Miroslav Lajčák, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Slovakia, has been elected as President of the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly.

Who attends a UN High-Level Meeting?

The meeting will take place in 2018 in New York, and is open to all 193 national delegations to the UN. The UN HLM's are usually attended by each countries' Ambassador to the UN, national ministries, and also by the Heads of State. It is critical that the TB UN HLM takes place

in September 2018 as many Heads of State and government will be in New York for the September session of the General Assembly and are therefore more likely to attend. Although the date will be confirmed in early 2018, advocacy by the TB community will hopefully mean it is planned for September 2018.

What are the outcomes of a UN High-Level Meeting?

A political declaration is the usual outcome of a UN HLM. The text is drafted by the states – usually representatives of national governments in UN Missions in New York, coordinated by the co-facilitating countries, before the meeting. However, the final text of the declaration is usually agreed at the meeting itself, with last minute negotiations taking place on the side-lines.

A political declaration is generally considered a set of guidelines or principles that countries agree to commit to and deliver on. The exact content of a political declaration may vary, depending on the issue at hand and commitment level of the countries. The UN Special Session on HIV in 2001 saw member states agree upon the 3 x 5 targets to provide three million people living with HIV in low- and middle-income countries with life-prolonging antiretroviral treatment (ART) by the end of 2005. This target has resulted in thousands more people accessing life-saving ART. The 2016 UN HLM on Antimicrobial Resistance saw the call for the creation of a

specific interagency coordinating group, who have since been coordinating global efforts to tackle drug-resistance.

The TB UN HLM provides us with an opportunity for world leaders to agree on ambitious targets and a robust mechanism to enable civil society and communities to hold them to account for the commitments made, with regular reporting, for years to come. **It is often up to civil society to make sure that the countries show real commitment in meeting the targets they commit to in a transparent and accountable manner.** The active engagement of global civil society and regional networks such as the TB Europe Coalition, before and after the UN HLM is essential to achieve strong commitments from national governments.

What is civil society doing at the global and regional level?

The global TB community believes that a successful and well-attended UN HLM can lead to increased political commitment and will to fight TB not only at the global, but also regional and national levels. A comprehensive political declaration, alongside a strong accountability framework, can provide the vital push for national governments to address key TB issues within their own country, ranging from greater investments in TB research and development to readiness to reform national health systems in favour of more integrated approach and focus on people-centred care.

The global TB community, ranging from international organisations such as World Health Organisation and the Stop TB Partnership, to civil society, has identified and organised itself into eight different work tracks ahead of the meeting. The civil society engagement and input is coordinated via Work Track 6, which foresees creation of Affected

Communities and Civil Society Advisory Panel (hereafter, Advisory Panel) that is coordinated by International Civil Society Support (ICSS) and supported by the STOP TB Partnership.

UNHLM on TB Work Tracks Secretariat: Stop TB Partnership

Work Track 1: UNSG Engagement & UN Missions in New York and Geneva

Work Track 2: Development of Modalities Resolution

Work Track 3: Develop content for Political Declaration and Accountability Mechanism

Work Track 4: In-Country Advocacy and High-level Engagement

Work Track 5: PR and Communications

Work Track 6: Affected Communities and Civil Society

Work Track 7: Private Sector Platform

Work Track 8: Logistics

The Advisory Panel is a group of 15 elected members with the global representation to consult, engage, and mobilize TB communities for the UN HLM, leading the advocacy agenda. The members were selected through a competitive process conducted by the Community Representatives to the STOP TB Partnership Coordinating Board. The STOP TB Partnership supports the work track, with ICSS serving in the capacity of the Secretariat of the

Advisory Panel. Furthermore, ICSS was also selected as the Affected Communities and Civil Society Platform for the HLM, responsible for coordination and facilitation of CS engagement and activities in the lead-up to and during the UN HLM. The members of the Advisory Panel are expected to represent the voices and priorities of their geographic regions and professional organizations and affiliations through ensuring that affected communities and civil society are actively engaged at all levels of the process, and that the UN HLM outcome document reflects their asks. The Advisory Panel holds regular calls open to all civil society and community members to update on the process in all of the work tracks. The Advisory Panel members also have the focal points to liaise with other Work Tracks.

The Advisory Panel anticipate that there will be both a Civil Society Hearing in advance of the HLM, where civil society and community members will have an opportunity to present their demands in sessions with the missions in New York, and also potentially a Lobby Week, where civil society will be invited to New York to engage directly with the national missions.



Two panel members are part of the TBEC network – Yuliya Chorna, TB Advocacy Manager for TB-REP at Alliance for Public

Health and Safarali Naimov, Secretary of STOP TB Partnership, Tajikistan and member of TB People – Eurasian Network.

Where do YOU come in?

The UN HLM is a unique opportunity to gain high-level political attention and drive momentum on addressing TB at the highest levels. You have an opportunity to influence this process in THREE key ways:

Before the UN High-Level Meeting

You have a unique chance to influence national negotiating positions by engaging with your government on the UN HLM. Your engagement at the national level will be critical to ensure that each country not only understands key TB issues, but also is willing to address them by agreeing an ambitious political declaration and committing to strong accountability framework. This is something very difficult to achieve for regional and global members of the TB community and provides you with a special role throughout the process.

During the UN High-Level Meeting

The UNHLM is an intergovernmental meeting and it is ultimately up to member states to decide on the outcomes. However, in line with the precedent set by the UN HLM on HIV/AIDS, the TB community should insist that civil society has a voice in all processes, decision, and outcomes related to the UN HLM on TB, and is represented in all sessions and panels at the UN HLM. Each national government can

decide their own process for involving civil society and often include civil society in their delegations to the meeting. The process of joining the delegation varies from country to country, for example, through involvement with existing national TB platforms and networks, or via direct request to the key government officials. This is a good opportunity to influence your countries' input into the declaration directly. However, if you are invited to join your country's delegation, you will be considered as a representative of your country rather than civil society member, which in turn may limit your ability to undertake certain activities at the meeting, or advocate certain positions.

After the UN High-Level Meeting

As a civil society member, you will be able to hold your national government accountable for the commitments it has undertaken during the UN HLM. One of the key outcomes may be the approval of a strong accountability framework¹. This framework will be intended to make a difference in years to come, with countries reporting on their progress every one or two years. You will play a crucial role in working with governments to achieve the goals set out in the political declaration, and to holding them account for their promises.

BEFORE

The best time for advocacy activities is before and after the UN HLM. Engaging in this process also provides an opportunity for you to form relationships with a variety of policy

makers in your government, and increase their understanding and awareness of the TB situation in your country.

Figure out your asks

Work out what you would like to see in the political declaration. There is broad consensus from the TB community that there are five main areas which require urgent attention at the UN HLM, and which can be adapted to the national context:

1. Successfully **treat at least 10 million people for TB a year by 2022.**
2. **Close the TB funding gap** and ensure sufficient and sustainable domestic and donor financing.
3. Renew global **support for TB innovation**, including supporting mechanisms to fast track the development and uptake of new drugs, diagnostics, vaccines and interventions for TB.
4. Ensure all countries adopt and implement **World Health Organisation standards and guidelines and adopt people-centred models of care.**
5. Commit to a **robust, independent accountability mechanism** at the Head of State level to monitor progress towards ending TB.

Having a solid, common position of which to base your asks from will be important throughout the process. To get this, you may want to:

- Hold a consultation in country with civil society and other stakeholders, including Members of Parliament, national TB

¹ TBEC understands accountability framework as a joint commitment, with clear goals, principles and procedures, as well as process of how to measure the desired changes based on the identified goals and priorities on a country level.

programs, health and social care providers, academia etc., to formulate a common national position;

- Encourage regional organisations to agree a common position for several countries in a region;

Build relationships

Find out the priorities for your country through an inquiry to the government department, which will be in charge of preparatory work for the UN HLM at the country level. For most countries, it will be the Ministry of Health, but it could also be the Cabinet of Ministers Department or the Administration of the President. Identify the relevant ministers and officials who oversee the negotiations and build relationships with them. Every government has the opportunity to feed-in to the discussions and many may not have formed their positions yet, so providing them with ideas and information now may help you become an ally to them. Please also be aware, that the UN HLM process may involve officials you have never worked with before and may include, but not be limited to:

- Ministry of Health;
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- Permanent Representation to the UN in New York and Geneva;
- Director of National TB Programme (they can be a source of support to you in engaging high-level officials, as they want attention on TB as much as you do);
- Work with parliamentarians to influence Ministers and Heads of State that you cannot reach;

Reach out and ask for a meeting or a phone call to discuss the upcoming UN HLM on TB.

You can contact parliamentarians in your country via The Global TB Caucus. For more information on the Global TB Caucus and its network of over 200 parliamentarians across the European region, contact us or visit: www.globaltbcaucus.org.

Once you've made contact, holding regular meetings or calls whenever there is an update in the process could be helpful. At the beginning of engagement with national governments, it may be necessary to start with raising awareness on the issue of TB and the importance of the UN HLM, as they may never have worked on TB before. As the months progress you can move on to providing them your comments on draft political declarations to be included in to the countries' official feedback to the process. Directly inputting in to national positions is one of the biggest opportunities to influence the process.

If you need help finding contact information or in preparing any briefings, let us know and we can help. The UN HLM will only be a success if we are all on the same page when it comes to the advocacy. Your intel on the position of your country may be important or influential to another TBEC member. If you would like to know what other TBEC members are doing or need guidance, please let us know! Please write us at coordinator@tbcoalition.eu

DURING

The UN HLM provides a good opportunity to attract increased media and press interest on TB issues in your country.

On the days of the UN HLM, you can:

- Send out a press release to key national media outlets on the TB situation in country in view of the UN HLM, with interesting statistics and quotes from your organisation;
- Arrange an interview with a person who's been affected by TB and/or his or her family in your local newspaper;
- Write an opinion piece for your national or local news website on how international engagement at the UN level can help address TB issues in the country;
- Organise a variety of public events from academic debate in the university on TB issues, streamed via social media to high-level discussion at your national parliament to raise awareness on TB amongst parliamentarians;
- Work with your national parliamentarians to help them organise an event in the parliament such as hearings on TB, or a presentation to the Health/Foreign Affairs Committee;

To learn more about how to write a good press release and engage with your parliamentarians, please have a look at TB Europe Coalition website: www.tbcoalition.eu

AFTER

A successful UN HLM will deliver commitments on ambitious targets at a global and national level. Nevertheless, the impact of the UN HLM

won't be seen overnight and no immediate results and impact are to be expected, especially at national and local levels. The results of this meeting will most likely offer an advocacy framework, accountability tool, and reference point to you for years to come. The role of civil society will be absolutely critical in evaluation and monitoring of any accountability framework at the country level post UN HLM to make sure that the commitments result in action. It will help you to hold your governments accountable for political and financial commitments made at the meeting through:

- Regular references to the commitment made during the UN HLM with key parliamentarians and government officials in the Ministries of Health, Finance and Foreign Affairs;
- Providing "shadow" reports regarding the progress of the fight against TB in your country, especially if there is a reporting structure and timeline agreed upon during the UN HLM;
- Media engagement – especially, when showcasing innovative health approaches or importance of civil society engagement in health reforms and service delivery;

Civil society and communities have a crucial role to play in working with governments to achieve the goals set out in the political declaration.



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TBEC is an informal advocacy network of civil society organisations and individuals that share a commitment to raising awareness of TB and to increasing the political will to control the disease throughout the WHO Europe Region and worldwide.

If you want to learn more about TBEC, please visit TBEC website tbcoalition.eu or send an email to coordinator@tbcoalition.eu