



SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION
FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION
SECRETARIAT

SECRETARY GENERAL

MESSAGE

The World TB Day is observed on 24 March every year globally to build advocacy and public awareness about the disease, which still remains a major public health problem in the world. The Day has been particularly useful in mobilizing political and social commitment to end the global TB epidemic.

The theme of this year's World TB Day is "It's Time ...".

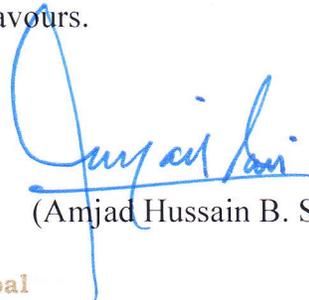
As we are aware, TB is one of the top ten causes of death worldwide. Although TB is preventable and curable, many people in the developing countries, including those in South Asia, continue to suffer from this menace because of poverty, gender inequality, vulnerability, discrimination and marginalization. In the meanwhile, millions of people with TB do not have access to quality care, including affordable diagnostic tests and treatment facility.

It is estimated that one quarter of the world's population is infected with TB bacteria that causes the disease. In the SAARC Region, which has over 36% of the global burden, about 3.7 million new TB cases occur and about 0.5 million die every year due to TB. These morbidity and mortality from TB occur mainly in the economically productive age group of 15-49 years.

SAARC attaches high priority to the prevention and control of TB and other communicable diseases, with several of its Member states committing themselves to eradicate TB before 2030. In order to eliminate TB from the SAARC Region before the global target, the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre has formulated: (i) SAARC Regional Strategy on Migrant Health/Cross border issues in the SAARC Member States (2018-2023); (ii) Revised SAARC Regional Strategy on ACSM (2018-2023); (iii) Revised SAARC Regional Strategy on HIV/AIDS (2018-2023); and (iv) Revised SAARC Regional Strategy on Elimination of Tuberculosis (2018-2023).

Although recent achievements in TB Control are encouraging, more needs to be done. It is time to ensure effective implementation of TB control activities to achieve the desired outcome. Now it is time to intensify advocacy, social mobilization, partnership, research and inter-sectoral efforts to achieve the target of ending the TB epidemic by 2030.

In commemorating the World TB Day, I wish to call upon the Member States and our partners to redouble their efforts to fight the TB epidemic. I also wish the SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre further success in its endeavours.


(Amjad Hussain B. Sial)

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