



SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION  
FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION  
SECRETARIAT

SECRETARY GENERAL

MESSAGE

“Invest to End TB. Save Lives.”

Every Year, the World TB Day is observed on 24 March to commemorate the discovery of Mycobacterium Tuberculosis by Dr. Robert Koch in 1882. This Day provides an opportunity to raise public awareness; sensitize communities for broader commitment from all stakeholders; and gather support from various collaborating partners for the fight against this menace.

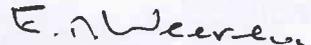
TB is still a leading infectious killer disease despite a substantial investment for its treatment and prevention. The major causes for high cases of TB are rapid urbanization, high-density of population, air pollution (indoor and outdoor) and migration with drastically rising incidences of diabetes, escalating drug resistance, and an unregulated private health sector. Similarly, social determinants of health, such as education, employment, social support, family income and nutrition, also augment the TB incidence.

While we are still battling with COVID-19, many parts of the SAARC region are facing severe economic and social situations. This has adversely affected anti-TB activities of the Member States. There are funding gaps for TB activities, which are further exacerbated by economic setbacks triggered by the pandemic, while additional funding is required to build back effectively from its adverse impacts. The theme chosen by the World Health Organization for this year's World TB Day, "Invest to End TB. Save Lives." is, therefore, very significant.

I congratulate the SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) for facilitating the regional campaign to control TB through active involvement of the National Programmes of the Member States of SAARC, which have adopted WHO's Global Stop TB Partnership strategy, envisioning a TB-free world by 2030. However, the national strategic plans have also been adversely affected by COVID-19, leading to an increase in TB mortality, and a decline in the number of people diagnosed and treated for TB, thereby affecting the rights of people with TB.

Though the recent achievements of the Member States in TB control are encouraging, there is a greater need to ensure effective implementation of TB control activities by investing resources to achieve the 2030 target. I am confident that the esteemed Member States will make every endeavour in this respect.

Kathmandu, 24 March 2022

  
(Esala Ruwan Weerakoon)