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H.E. Mr. Kaha Imnadze
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations
One United Nations Plaza, 26th Floor
New York, NY 10017

15 October 2020

Re: UNGA Special Session in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, 5-6 November 2020

Your Excellency,

On behalf of the Stop TB Partnership (STBP), a United Nations-hosted entity dedicated to ending tuberculosis, I am contacting you in advance of the upcoming UN General Assembly Special Session in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, due to take place on 5-6 November 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire world, and the international community has mobilized to meet the enormous challenge it presents. We welcome the decision of the General Assembly to hold a Special Session to address this important issue and discuss the way forward for the coming months and years.

Notwithstanding the multiple, serious impacts of COVID-19, tuberculosis (TB) remains the world's deadliest infectious disease, causing 1.4 million deaths every year. In Georgia's statement to the Special Session, I wish to kindly encourage you to **highlight the situation of people with TB and call on your fellow Member States to step up efforts to achieve the targets agreed at the UN High-Level Meeting on TB in September 2018.**

With two years until the deadline of 2022, the world is, unfortunately, not on track to fulfil these important commitments. We believe it is important for Georgia to take the opportunity to signal your political commitment to get the TB response back on track and ensure that COVID-19 does not contribute to additional preventable deaths, sickness, and hardship resulting from TB.

The challenge presented by COVID-19 has caused a rollback in the achievements on TB to date. A [modeling study](#), conducted by STBP together with the Imperial College, Avenir Health, Johns Hopkins University, and USAID, found that this could result in an additional 6.3 million cases of TB between 2020 and 2025, and an additional 1.4 million TB deaths. The recently-launched World Health Organization [Global TB Report 2020](#) outlines the significant drop in the number of people diagnosed and treated with TB in 2020, while TB transmission and mortality are increasing. A [civil society report](#) shares the community perspective and makes it clear that, to recover lost ground and reach our shared UN HLM TB commitments, we will need to redouble our efforts.

We at STBP, working with our partners, recommend that states should maintain and scale up TB services using new diagnostic, treatment, and prevention tools, digital health tools and community/home-based care. We also recommend that states should consider integrate TB and COVID-19 testing and tracing. Both diseases are airborne and share

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common symptoms, while TB diagnosis and case-finding platforms can be adapted to include COVID-19. States should also strengthen efforts to overcome the barriers that people continue to face when accessing TB services. The UNGA Special Session on COVID-19 presents an excellent opportunity to highlight the potential benefits of such an integrated approach.

In your development agenda, as well as in your national TB response, we call on you to:

- Fund and strengthen integrated TB and COVID-19 mitigation and response measures, with simultaneous screening and diagnostics;
- Scale up TB services without any disruption, and include comprehensive, inclusive, accessible social protection;
- Ensure your TB response is people-centered, prioritizing community-led monitoring, peer support, and the elimination of stigma and discrimination; and
- Invest in research, development, innovative approaches, digital technology, and artificial intelligence to improve TB tracing, prevention, and treatment, with real-time TB data including TB key population data.

These measures are in line with UNGA resolution [A/RES/74/306](#) on a comprehensive and coordinated response to COVID-19, adopted on 11 September 2020, which calls upon Member States to strengthen efforts to address tuberculosis and other communicable diseases, as part of universal health coverage and to ensure that the fragile gains are sustained and expanded by advancing comprehensive approaches and integrated service delivery, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Please do not hesitate to reach out in case we can provide any further information or advice to support this request.

Yours Sincerely,



Dr. Lucica Ditiu
Executive Director
Stop TB Partnership

About the Stop TB Partnership

The Stop TB Partnership is a unique United Nations-hosted entity based in Geneva, Switzerland, committed to revolutionizing the approach to tuberculosis (TB) to end the disease by 2030. The organization aligns more than 2,000 partners worldwide to promote cross-sectoral collaboration. STBP takes bold and smart risks to identify, fund, and support innovative approaches, ideas, and solutions aimed at ensuring that the TB community has a voice at the highest political levels, and that all TB-affected people have access to affordable, quality, and people-centered care. Learn more at www.stoptb.org, and follow us at [@StopTB](#).

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