Published on *Treatment Action Campaign* (http://www.tac.org.za/community)

Global march for TB education, prevention, treatment and cure

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Created *2007/11/09 - 12:00am*
9 November, 2007 - 00:00 ? moderator

On the evening of 8 November 2007, about 5,000 people marched through the streets of Cape Town at the onset of the 38th Annual Union World Conference on Lung Health to demand better TB education, prevention, treatments and cures. A global call was handed over to the organisers of the conference. The march was a joint initiative of the Treatment Action Campaign and the AIDS & Rights Alliance of Southern Africa.

Global call to action for the 38th Annual Union World Conference on Lung Health

Save lives: Transform TB prevention, diagnostics and treatment

The 38th Annual Union World Conference on Lung Health is being held in Cape Town on the 8-12 November 2007. It is the first time in its 125-year history that the conference will be held outside of the northern hemisphere. This is important as Southern Africa is experiencing an extremely large and deadly TB epidemic, fuelled by a HIV epidemic. The response has been inadequate; new infections and needless deaths continue unabated.

We call on the delegates to adopt a Global Call for Action and Declaration on TB:

1. Every year TB kills more than 2 million people worldwide. In Southern Africa it is by far the greatest killer of people living with HIV.

2. In South Africa, over 70,000 death certificates recorded TB as a cause of death in 2005.

3. Despite regional governments declaring an emergency in 2005, TB control and AIDS programmes in Southern Africa are failing to adequately deal with the twin epidemics of TB and HIV.

4. This inadequate response is no longer acceptable.

5. Current diagnostic techniques and drugs are out-of-date; we need simpler, more effective and accessible tools for testing and treating TB.

6. TB prevention, care and treatment programmes must adopt a decentralized, patient-centred approach with treatment literacy, adherence support and community education.

7. More resources for TB research are desperately needed.

8. Provision of a decent public health system that is based on the right of every person to life, dignity, health and equality is the duty of every state and the advocacy work of every HIV/TB activist.

9. Access to decent housing, employment, social security and nutrition are indispensable to the elimination of tuberculosis.

10. The TB crisis has caused tremendous suffering and generated confusion, fear and stigma. Protecting public health is not incompatible with promoting a human-rights approach to dealing with this contagious epidemic. It requires a plan and community consultation not repressive measures against individuals.

11. Support services for health professionals and allied workers engaged in saving the lives of people living with TB must be researched and funded immediately.

12. This conference must serve as a platform for consensus on key issues related to the treatment, prevention and care of TB, including MDR and XDR TB. We must review and update our national TB and HIV plans and through partnerships commit the necessary resources to begin implementing the following key areas for action:

- Improving infection control
- Getting more people living with HIV tested for TB and people infected with TB tested for HIV
- Integrating and decentralizing TB and HIV services
- Preventing and treating drug resistant TB (MDR/XDR TB)

We demand vision, research, funding, action and activism on TB/HIV and the crisis in public health now!

Endorsed by:

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African Civil Society Coalition on HIV and AIDS Nigeria

African Services Committee USA

AIDS Action Baltimore USA

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Association morocaine du lutte contrele SIDA Morocco

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Source URL (retrieved on *2016/12/04 - 4:12pm*): http://www.tac.org.za/community/node/2126