



**SOUTH AFRICA'S COUNTRY STATEMENT
THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON TUBERCULOSIS**

DATE: 22 September 2023

Mr President,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. South Africa welcomes the opportunity to participate at this esteemed general assembly's High-Level Meeting on Tuberculosis.
2. We align ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the Member States of the Africa Group.
3. We gather here not just as representatives of our nations, but as a global community bound by a common resolve – to eliminate the scourge of tuberculosis from our world. Allow me to share a glimpse of our journey since the last UNHLM in 2018.
4. Tuberculosis remains a pressing concern for South Africa, as it does for many nations. Approximately 300,000 people are estimated to get TB every year in South Africa. Last year we managed to notify and put 224,000 people on TB treatment. Although our incidence is declining, we are worried about the unacceptable death rate among our TB patients. A major driver of our TB infection is HIV; 48 % of our TB patients were people living with HIV in 2022.

Our National Strategic Plan addresses both HIV and TB. Our large Anti-Retroviral programme has led to decrease in TB incidence.

5. Following a negative impact from Covid-19, South Africa developed a TB Recovery Plan through involvement by all stakeholders, particularly Civil Society. This plan aims at finding missing people with TB and linking them to care. Advocacy and communication aim at creating demand for TB testing. TB prevention and improvement of data systems are also prioritized.
6. The South African TB recovery plan reflects our commitment to leaving no one behind. South Africa moved from symptom-based approach for TB testing, to testing regardless of symptoms among high-risk groups. This approach increased TB testing significantly and contributed to a drop in the notification gap from 46 % in 2017 to 26 % in 2022.
7. We also managed to find and treat 75,694 children with TB against a target of 95,500 (79 % achievement). We have achieved 97 % of a target of 1.97 million people living with HIV provided regarding TB preventive treatment. South Africa has been at the forefront of introducing and scaling up new tools for diagnosis and shorter treatment regimens for drug-resistant tuberculosis. However, there is a need to do more to improve linkage to care and retention in care.
8. Recent progress in TB vaccine development offers a glimmer of hope, and we stand prepared to implement TB vaccines when they become available. We are participating in TB vaccine's trials. Addressing the social determinants of TB – poverty, gender inequality, and lack of access to education – is essential for achieving lasting health outcomes.
9. In conclusion, South Africa remains unwavering in its commitment to defeating TB. Our journey is one of progress, challenges, and partnerships. As we reflect on the steps we have taken, we recognize that we cannot

overcome this global challenge in isolation. Our collective efforts must transcend borders, ideologies, and individual interests.

10. Let us use this High-Level meeting as an opportunity to reinvigorate our commitment, to pledge our resources, and to redouble our efforts. A world without TB is not just an aspiration but an attainable reality, and we stand ready to play our part in making that vision a shared triumph. Let us commit to the implementation of the Political Declaration.

11. Yes, We CAN END TB in 2030!

12. **I thank you.**

Dr MJ PHAAHLA, MP
MINISTER OF HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA