

Speech: UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on the Fight Against Tuberculosis

I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly, Japan, and Antigua and Barbuda for their leadership on bringing us together for the Political Declaration. This is a moment for us all to collectively step up our commitment to ending tuberculosis (TB).

The UK has been, and will continue to be, a major driver in the development and deployment of the new technologies, diagnostics and treatments we believe are crucial to fight TB and the scourge of Multi Drug-Resistant TB.

But we all know that ending this disease also requires tackling poverty, weak health systems and HIV, particularly in Africa.

Without innovation and fresh approaches, we have little chance of meeting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal on ending the TB epidemic. On current rates of progress it won't be for at least another 150 years.

But scientific advances give us hope that we can achieve that goal. And I can today inform you that a global team lead by the University of Oxford has made a major breakthrough in our understanding of TB's genetic code. This study is being published today in the New England Journal of Medicine, and I can tell you is that it promises a paradigm shift in the way we treat TB. □ For the first time we can start to develop tailored therapies to treat TB patients based on their DNA profile. Where at the moment, in many countries we rely on a "best guess" for the right treatment, this breakthrough means we have the potential to give the correct drugs more rapidly to more patients. It presents us with the opportunity to improve cure rates and help stop the spread of resistant strains. And it signals a new era in TB diagnostics after 70 years of relying on slow bacterial culture to determine which drugs are best suited to a patient's infection.

□ This is an excellent example of what the UK, in partnership with global research networks, can offer in the fight against TB. □ I can also announce today that £7.5 million of UK aid will go to the TB Alliance to help develop three new TB drugs, which offer the prospect of more effective and quicker-acting treatments for the millions of people affected by drug-sensitive or drug-resistant TB each year. This is in addition to our current, extensive research portfolio.

We were the second largest donor to the last replenishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and malaria, which provides the bulk of international funding to fight TB in low and lower-middle income countries where the incidence and mortality of TB is highest. Finally, and critically, we are the second largest donor and research leader in this area, behind only the US.

While fresh commitments and additional funding are essential, we must also ensure we draw on the best of what each of us have to offer. And that collaboration and partnership are embedded in everything we do to bring an end to this cruel disease.

Today, we have seen a political declaration that signals a step- change in the international leadership and commitments necessary to drive progress on fighting TB.

We hope that it will lead to increased investment and co-ordination in TB research and development, greater progress in preventing infections, and improved care for patients particularly those in the poorest countries.

These are our priorities. I look forward to hearing yours and how we can work together to end TB once and for all.