

## [Drug-resistant tuberculosis continues to be serious health threat says UN health agency](#)

1 March 2017 – The United Nations health agency stressed the critical need the critical need for research and development of new antibiotics to tackle the threat of drug-resistant tuberculosis.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in the past 50 years, only two new antibiotics addressing drug-resistant tuberculosis have made it to the third phase of trials. These medicines are now tested on patients to assess efficacy, effectiveness and safety, and will still have to pass the final stage before they can be sold.

“Addressing drug-resistant tuberculosis research is a top priority for WHO and for the world,” says WHO Director-General Margaret Chan. “More than US\$ 800 million per year is currently necessary to fund badly needed research into new antibiotics to treat tuberculosis.”

Drug-resistant tuberculosis is a condition in which the disease causing organism is resistant to at least isoniazid and rifampin, the two most potent tuberculosis drugs.

There were an estimated 580,000 cases and 250,000 related deaths in 2015, about 14 per cent of all tuberculosis related deaths for the year. Only 125,000 were started on treatment, and just half of those people were cured.

During a meeting of world leaders in September 2016, then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned that drug-resistant tuberculosis has been identified in 105 countries.

The disease is treatable and curable by using second-line drugs. However, second-line treatment options are limited and require extensive chemotherapy (up to two years of treatment) with medicines that are expensive and toxic.

A series of high-level global meetings on tuberculosis have been scheduled. Drug-resistant tuberculosis and research will be major themes at the WHO conference in Moscow this coming November. It will also be a key agenda item at the UN General Assembly high-level meeting on tuberculosis in 2018.

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## [War crimes committed by all parties in](#)

# [battle for Aleppo – UN-mandated inquiry on Syria](#)

1 March 2017 – The battle late last year for control over Syria’s war-ravaged Aleppo was a stage of unrelenting violence, with civilians on both sides falling victim to war crimes committed by all parties, read a report issued today by the United Nations-mandated Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria.

The report documents brutal tactics employed by the parties to the conflict in the country as they engaged in the decisive battle for the once iconic city between July and December 2016, resulting in unparalleled suffering for Syrian men, women and children.

“The violence in Aleppo documented in our report should focus the international community on the continued, cynical disregard for the laws of war by the warring parties in Syria,” said Paulo Pinheiro, the Chair of the three-member Commission, which was mandated by the UN Human Rights Council.

“The deliberate targeting of civilians has resulted in the immense loss of human life, including hundreds of children,” he added.

The report notes that the siege-like tactics employed by pro-Government forces in eastern Aleppo last year trapped civilians without adequate food or medical supplies, and that between July and December, Syrian and Russian forces carried out daily air strikes, claiming hundreds of lives and reducing hospitals, schools and markets to rubble.

It adds that Syrian forces also used chlorine bombs – a chemical agent prohibited under international law – in residential areas, resulting in hundreds of civilian casualties. The Commission also notes that it received reports of use of cluster munitions in densely populated areas.

Furthermore, by late December, when pro-Government forces on the ground took control over eastern Aleppo, no functioning hospitals remained.

The intentional targeting of these medical facilities amounted to war crimes, the Commission concludes.

## ***Attack on UN/Syrian Arab Red Crescent humanitarian convoy***

In the course of its investigations, the Commission also examined an attack on a UN/Syrian Arab Red Crescent humanitarian convoy in Orum al-Kubra in Aleppo’s countryside by the Syrian Air Force. The attack killed 14 aid workers, destroyed 17 trucks carrying aid supplies, and led to the suspension of all humanitarian aid in the country.

“Under no circumstances can humanitarian aid workers be targeted,” underscored Commissioner Carla del Ponte, adding: “A deliberate attack against them such as the one that took place in Orum al-Kubra amounts to war

crimes and those responsible must be held accountable for their actions.”

#### ***Indiscriminate attacks by armed groups***

Further in the report, the Commission also notes that armed groups indiscriminately shelled civilian-inhabited areas of western Aleppo with improvised weapons, such as rocket-assisted munitions and mortars, resulting in extensive civilian casualties. A number of these attacks were carried out without a clear military target and had no other purpose than to terrorise the civilian population.

The report also states that in some districts, armed groups shot at civilians to prevent them from leaving, effectively using them as human shields.



Chairperson of the Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria Paulo Pinheiro (right) and Carla del Ponte, Member of the Commission, at a briefing on its special inquiry into events in Aleppo. UN Photo/Violaine Martin

It also notes that pro-Government forces on the ground, composed mostly of Syrian and foreign militias, executed hors de combat fighters and perceived opposition supporters, including family members of fighters.

#### ***Forced displacement of civilians***

The 37-page document reveals that the eastern Aleppo evacuation agreement forced thousands of civilians – despite a lack of military necessity or deference to the choice of affected individuals – to move to Government-controlled western Aleppo whilst others were taken to Idlib where they are once more living under bombardments.

“Some of these agreements amount to forced displacement. It is imperative that the parties refrain from similar future agreements and provide the conditions for the safe return of those who wish to go back to their homes in eastern Aleppo”, said Commissioner Karen AbuZayd.

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria was established by the UN Human Rights Council to investigate and record all violations of international law since March 2011.

The report is based on 291 interviews, including with residents of Aleppo, and the review of satellite imagery, photographs, videos and medical records. It is scheduled to be presented to current session of the Council on 14 March during an interactive dialogue.

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# Defence Minister compliments Directorate General Defence Estates for its successful Swachhta Campaign

Defence Minister Shri Manohar Parrikar appreciated the efforts of Directorate General Defence Estates (DGDE) in translating

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## Speech: St David's Day reception 2017: Prime Minister's speech

I am very pleased to be able to welcome you to Number 10 and to have this opportunity to say Dydd Gŵyl Dewi Hapus.

This reception is about celebrating everything that Wales has to offer to the world – and there is indeed much to celebrate. This proud country – and a special part of our United Kingdom – is home to some of the greatest talent and industry in the world.

And we can see that right here today. Whether it is leading figures from the worlds of business, sport and politics – or one of the finest arrays of award-winning cheese, cakes, ham, wine, beer, whiskys, spirits and flowers that I have ever seen.

It is no wonder there are quite so many Number 10 staff who have suddenly discovered their Welsh heritage.

I want to take this opportunity to say 2 things today.

The first is that I am immensely proud to be Prime Minister of the whole United Kingdom – and together with Alun as Secretary of State, I am absolutely committed to promoting and supporting Wales as part of that honour and responsibility.

As a UK government we will always do everything we can to support Welsh business and to help create more jobs in Wales.

That is why we are investing £500 million in the [Cardiff Capital Region City Deal](#) – the biggest City Deal in the UK. And why we remain committed to negotiating a City Deal for the Swansea Bay City Region too.

It is why we will continue to promote Wales as one of the great tourist destinations in the world, with no fewer than 5 Areas of Outstanding Natural

Beauty, including the first ever, Gower.

And we will continue to champion Wales as a top destination for iconic World sport – from hosting Rugby World Cup matches to the European Champions League Final in Cardiff this May.

The second point I wanted to address briefly, and Alun has alluded to this, is how we seize the opportunity of this great moment of national change as we leave the European Union and forge a bold new future for ourselves in the world. And I have said I will strike a deal with the EU that works for all parts of the UK – and for the UK as a whole.

And we are engaging fully with groups and people from across Wales, including the Welsh government and indeed with all the devolved administrations as we form our negotiating position. I want to ensure that Wales is in the strongest possible position to benefit as we work to spread wealth and prosperity to every part of the UK.

And as we forge bold new trade deals with old friends and new allies around the world – I want that to mean more jobs in Wales, more exports of Welsh products and more growth for the Welsh economy. Because we are one United Kingdom – England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. And we will succeed as one United Kingdom.

And [as I said on the doorstep of Number 10](#) when I became Prime Minister, I will always fight to preserve our proud, historic union.

And I am determined that we will emerge from this great period of change stronger, fairer, more united and more-outward looking than ever before. And that will be the best possible outcome for Wales – and for the whole of our United Kingdom.

So thank you everybody for coming today – thank you to those who have brought their wares here to sample, thank you for everything that you contribute to Wales, and everything you contribute to the United Kingdom. And please do stay and enjoy the rest of the reception.

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## **Speech: Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA) Speech**

It is a great pleasure for me to be in Brussels this afternoon, and I would like to thank the Institute for International and European Affairs both for hosting this event and for inviting me to address you.

The UK Government is at an important time in our preparations to exit the European Union. Our White Paper has set out a clear, measured plan. And we await the triggering of Article 50 to start our negotiations with the EU on these 12 principles which will guide the Government in fulfilling the democratic will of the people of the UK.

Without giving a running commentary on the negotiation ahead, I want to say something about how these principles relate to Northern Ireland and the unique economic, social and political context of the land border with Ireland; I also want to touch on how we see our future relationships with the EU, and with Ireland.

## **Future relationship with EU**

I want to start with our future relationship with the EU. It remains firmly in the UK's national interest for the EU to prosper, and for the EU to have a strong, new partnership with the UK. One that reflects our common bonds and a mature relationship between friends, partners and allies in an ever changing world. We may be leaving the EU, but we are not leaving Europe.

We want to aim for the freest possible continuing trade in goods and services between the UK and the EU.

We approach these negotiations from a unique position. We have the same rules, regulations and standards as the rest of the EU. This differs from most negotiations, where parties' starting position is divergent systems. Instead, these negotiations will be about finding a way to enable UK companies the maximum freedom to trade with and operate within European markets, and let European businesses do the same in the UK through a new comprehensive, bold and ambitious free trade agreement.

We recognise that our European partners have been a good friend to Northern Ireland over the years. Through the PEACE funding programme and other initiatives, the EU has provided significant support to reconciliation projects that have helped improve community cohesion in border areas. Collectively the EU should take great pride in its role in supporting Northern Ireland make the tremendous progress we have seen over the past decades.

## **Relations with Ireland**

For over twenty-five years successive UK and Irish Governments have worked together to promote political stability in Northern Ireland. Together, we have worked with Northern Ireland's political parties to reach agreement on arrangements for power-sharing government in

Northern Ireland and on its future relationships both with Dublin and London.

We are determined to maintain and strengthen the unique relationship between the UK and Ireland, tied by centuries of history, geography and trade.

The relationship between our two countries has never been better or more settled than today. For our part, the UK Government is determined to build on this strong foundation and to deepen our relationship further, for the benefit of the UK, Ireland and the wider EU.

We completely respect Ireland's commitment to remaining firmly within the EU. But that should not prevent us maintaining our two countries' strong relationship. You should be in no doubt that we want the closest and strongest co-operation with our nearest neighbour, and the only country with which we share a land border.

## **The land border**

Thirdly, I want to turn to the land border itself. Its success today comes from the fact that it is seamless and invisible. People cross it with ease as part of their daily business. And has also allowed the integration of business north and south.

From agri-food to electricity, the unique geopolitical position of Northern Ireland and Ireland has integrated cross border relationships into the respective economies. Although technically international trade, this is very often local trade in local markets that simply happens to cross the border.

The production of milk aptly illustrates how open the land border is: about one third of the milk produced on Northern Ireland's farms (nearly 600 million litres) goes to Ireland for processing.

An example product journey would be milk from a farm in Northern Ireland going over the border for processing and pasteurisation. That milk then returns to Northern Ireland for processing into cheese, and then to a distribution centre for sales to the Northern Ireland, GB and Irish markets.

The land border is also important to small business in Northern Ireland. The overwhelming majority of businesses – almost 95% – employ fewer than ten people. We also know that these businesses are heavily engaged in cross border trade. When we are thinking about a mutually beneficial new customs agreement with the EU, these micro businesses, and their ability to adapt to these new arrangements, must be at the forefront of our minds.

In terms of the movement of people, our White Paper made clear that

we want to protect the ability to move freely between the UK and Ireland, north-south and east-west, recognising the special importance of this to people in their daily lives. Thousands of people regularly commute across the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland for work or study. This cross border movement of people is an essential part of both economic integration and daily community life.

We want to maintain the Common Travel Area with Ireland. It has served both of our countries well for nearly a century. And we are confident it will be possible to find a way of maintaining this, protecting both our strong historic ties with Ireland and the integrity of our own immigration system.

I recognise that the movement of goods presents a separate challenge, as we will be leaving the Single Market and will no longer be bound by the Common External Tariff. However, we are clear in our intent in wanting to secure tariff free and barrier free trade. And we are open minded in the method to secure as frictionless arrangements as possible – whether that be through associate membership of a Customs Union or through a bespoke customs agreement.

I agree with those who say that this presents one of the most complex challenges in our preparations for Exit. However, I am committed to working to find a practical solution that recognises the unique economic, social and political context of the land border with Ireland, without creating any new obstacles to trade within the UK.

We continue to explore this, and indeed many other issues, with counterparts in the Northern Ireland Executive and Irish Government, with a shared commitment to wanting to avoid a return to the borders of the past.

## **Security**

Fourthly, there must be no let-up in the security co-operation.

We have set a firm commitment to cooperating with the EU in the fight against crime and terrorism. This principle is particularly relevant to Northern Ireland. Although the security situation is markedly different from the dark days of the Troubles, there can be no let-up in our vigilance. Equally, the shared risks from organised cross-border crime and from Daesh and Al Qaida inspired terrorists underlines the essential need for more co-operation, not less.

Today's effective cooperation and coordination between the justice and security agencies in Northern Ireland and Ireland are essential



in containing the threat from terrorist and paramilitary groups, whose activities can undermine Northern Ireland's security.. This operational and practical cross-border cooperation is an exemplar of the type of relationship we want to have with the EU on these issues.

## **Political stability**

Finally, I want to make clear that the UK government will take no risks with Northern Ireland's hard-won political stability.

We stand by our commitment to the Belfast Agreement and its successors. And I emphatically reject any suggestion that the decision to leave the EU will somehow weaken or imperil the political settlement in Northern Ireland or the peace that we now have.

On the eve of the Northern Ireland Assembly election we have an opportunity to reset and renew the political debate across Northern Ireland and I would urge people to seize this moment.

All people across Northern Ireland – including political leaders, businesses and community groups – need to take this chance to make sure their voice is heard loud and clear; and that the demand for stable, devolved partnership Government is heeded.

My priority is to work together and deliver on a positive and successful vision for Northern Ireland. I will always be a loud champion for the interests of Northern Ireland within Government and externally.

But political leaders in Northern Ireland also have a responsibility to work together to make sure that they are speaking up for Northern Ireland as well.

We will do all that it can to deliver an effective, stable, power-sharing devolved Executive in Northern Ireland. I know the Irish Government is similarly committed. But we cannot do it alone. The priority must be politicians locally working together to strengthen the economy, to deal with the challenges and opportunities of EU Exit, and build a stronger, shared society based on respect for everyone.

So I approach the future with optimism, a positive sense of what we can achieve, and a shared commitment to get the best possible deal for Northern Ireland – outside the EU but inside the UK – as we define a new and successful future for both the UK and the EU.

We want do this in ways that preserve stability in Northern

Ireland; that recognise the unique economic, social and political context of the land border; that support the factors that in the link our citizens together; and continue to strengthen our common bonds.