

PRESS RELEASE: RELAUNCH OF THE SA TB CAUCUS

Renewed Commitment to Ending TB in SA with Relaunch of Country's TB Caucus

South Africa's parliamentarians will today pledge their renewed commitment to tackle TB in South Africa by relaunching the chapter of the Global TB Caucus.

The caucus is a network which galvanises parliamentarians to become champions in the fight against tuberculosis, which remains the single biggest infectious disease killer in South Africa, taking the lives of 56,000 people every year.

As part of the launch, parliamentarians will sign the Barcelona Declaration at 4 p.m. today after a debate during the sitting led by Health Minister Dr Aaron Motsoaledi. The Barcelona Declaration on TB is a 2014 pledge signed by parliamentarians to increase political commitment and investment in the fight against tuberculosis, and it established the Global TB Caucus.

Speaking to the media ahead of the official launch in Parliament later today, Motsoaledi said the role of parliamentarians was to keep the TB message alive.

"TB is not just a medical issue but a societal issue; it needs political will that is driven by parliamentarians," said Motsoaledi.

He urged parliamentarians to be the bridge between the health sector and the communities they were elected to serve.

Acting chairperson of the Health Portfolio Committee, Sheilla Xego, said the relaunch was a call to action. "Today is more than just a formal gathering; it is a powerful moment. It is a renewed commitment to end a deadly disease," she noted. "Parliament isn't standing by as TB continues to kill people," she added.

As part of the relaunch, parliamentarians from Zambia and Lesotho offered messages of support.

Dr Joseph Simuumpuka Munsanje, Zambian Health Committee Chair and member of the SADC Regional TB Caucus, said renewed political commitment was essential in the fight against TB.

"It is not only symbolic; it is strategic. It signals our responsibility to strengthen accountability and accelerate progress to end TB. Political leadership must remain at the heart of the fight against TB," he said.

Mokhothu Makhalanyane, Chair of the Network of African Parliamentary Committees of Health, emphasised the importance of inter-country programmes and support in the region to ensure that the spread of TB is contained.

Speaker of the National Assembly, Thoko Didiza, emphasised the important role of collaboration among SADC countries: “I’m encouraged by the presence of the regional TB Caucus delegation from Zambia, Kenya and Lesotho. TB is a shared burden that requires concerted effort among all of us to ensure that we eliminate TB in our region.”

Solly Nduku, who is the SA National AIDS Council Civil Society Forum National Chairperson, and Russell Rensburg, TB Accountability Consortium programme director, said the relaunch would encourage political accountability as part of citizens’ right to health. Rensburg co-chairs the SANAC Civil Society Forum TB Technical Task Team.

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