**Statement from FIRS for World TB Day**

**INVESTMENT AND ACTION NEEDED TO END TB**

In support of World TB Day, 24 March, the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) calls for united efforts to mobilise the financial and human resources to end tuberculosis (TB).

World TB Day this year comes on the cusp of a new era driven by the Sustainable Development Goals and other ambitious plans, such as those set by the End TB Strategy and the Global Plan to End TB, 2016-2020, which together aim to end TB as a global health problem by 2035. To meet this goal, we must bring about a paradigm shift in the global fight against TB. We cannot continue with business as usual.

TB is curable in the vast majority of cases, and yet slow progress against the disease means that it now kills more people annually than any other communicable disease. According to the World Health Organization, 9.6 million people developed TB in 2014 and 1.5 million people died from the disease. This includes 1 million children who became sick with TB and 140,000 who died as a result. Approximately one in three people who develop TB are never even diagnosed.

The massive numbers of people developing TB disease each year arise from the fact that up to one in three people worldwide may be living with a latent TB. People have a right to know their TB status and receive treatment for latent TB before the infection has an opportunity to advance to active disease. We need greater investment in efforts to provide screening and treatment for latent TB targeted toward those at high risk.

The fight against TB is being hampered by a crisis caused by the spread of deadly drug-resistant strains. The spread of multidrug-resistance TB (MDR-TB) represents one of the biggest threats to eliminating TB. Of the 480,000 people who developed MDRTB in 2014, three quarters of them did not know their TB was resistance. Only half of people diagnosed with MDR-TB are treated successfully.

With the elimination of tuberculosis as the goal, we need to unite to find the critical investments needed in drug and vaccine development, new programmes for diagnosis and treatment, community-led solutions, and the crucial protection of the health workers who put themselves at risk every day. Governments and private-sector partners must work together to invest US $2 billion annually in the research and development of new TB diagnostics, medicines and a vaccine.

This year’s World TB Day theme is ‘Unite to End TB.’ The Global Plan to End TB 2016-2020 lays out the steps we must take together to put the world on track to end TB. FIRS calls on all countries of the world to take the actions necessary to implement the plan, which provides guidance based on local epidemiological trends, rooted in human rights and gender equity, that delivers people-centred treatment and care with a focus on communities most heavily impacted by TB.

Sources:

World Health Organization. 2015. Global Tuberculosis Report 2015. http://www.who.int/tb/publications/global\_report/en/

Stop TB Partnership. 2015. Global Plan to End TB, 2016-2020. http://www.stoptb.org/assets/documents/global/plan/GlobalPlanToEndTB\_TheParadigmShift\_2016-2020\_StopTBPartnership.pdf