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Statement by Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher at the Thirteenth Conference on the High-Level Meeting on Tuberculosis

The following is the statement given in New York by Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States and International Organizations of the Secretariat of State, at the High-Level Meeting on Tuberculosis:

Statement by Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher

**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher,
Secretary for Relations with States and International Organizations of the Holy See, at the High-level Meeting on
Tuberculosis
22 September 2023**

Mr. President,

The Holy See welcomes the holding of this high-level meeting on tuberculosis, which remains an issue that “require[s] urgent political attention, above and beyond all other commercial or political interests.”^[1] Tuberculosis is indeed a leading cause of death worldwide and the highest cause from a single infectious agent.^[2] People in every corner of the world suffer from this illness, but mostly in developing countries.

Thankfully, important progress has been made since the first high-level meeting in 2018. To begin with, a number of countries have significantly lowered their tuberculosis incidence. In addition, the target of providing six million people living with HIV with preventive tuberculosis treatment between 2018 and 2022 was exceeded, with an estimated 10.3 million people reached, while shorter duration, all-oral treatment regimens are both available and recommended.

Nevertheless, significant gaps remain, many of which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the sole, century-old vaccine that exists is only administrable to very young children, but remains

ineffective on tuberculosis of the lungs, hobbling prevention efforts. This means that millions lack treatment, especially children, and persons with multi-drug resistant tuberculosis are at particular risk, despite heavier regimens.

Mr. President,

The effects of poverty, particularly malnourishment, are associated with a significant proportion of new cases. Meanwhile, the costs related to treatment cause financial hardship for half of tuberculosis patients and their households. Addressing these aspects requires renewed dedication and commitment.

In addition to the work and assistance provided on the ground by many Catholic faith-based organizations, the Holy See has been working hard to address tuberculosis, particularly in children. To give a new impetus at international level, the Holy See held the Rome Dialogues on Pediatric HIV and Tuberculosis. First convened by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in 2016, the dialogues have brought together States, United Nations agencies, faith-based and civil society organizations, academia, and pharmaceutical companies to address gaps in diagnosing and treating children with HIV and tuberculosis. The resulting pledges have included: developing child-friendly treatments and increasing their availability, including for shorter duration regimens; bettering diagnostics; and improving affordability for testing and treatment. At the 6th Dialogue, held last December, several commitments were dedicated to improving testing materials and the availability and treatment for children and pregnant, post-partum, and nursing women, including through more inclusive study protocols. These actions are key to ensuring a more integrated, family-based approach to tuberculosis care, especially for children.

Mr. President,

There is still much work to be done in preventing, diagnosing, and treating tuberculosis. As Pope Francis often points out, “the plight of the sick is a call that cuts through indifference.”^[3] Therefore, the Holy See is confident that together we can end the tuberculosis epidemic, and pledges to continue doing all that it can to eradicate this illness.

Thank you, Mr. President.

[B0661-XX.01]

[1] Pope Francis, *Address upon a Visit to the United Nations Office Nairobi*, 26 November 2015.

[2] See *Report of the Secretary-General: Comprehensive review of progress towards the achievement of global tuberculosis targets and implementation of the political declaration of the United Nations high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the fight against tuberculosis* (Advanced unedited version), 18 March 2023, at No. 13.

[3] Pope Francis, *Message on the XXXI World Day of the Sick*, 11 February 2023.
