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Media Release

Her Royal Highness Princess Dina Mired of Jordan, UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director Shannon Hader and Katherine Maher, CEO of the Wikimedia Foundation confirmed as speakers at the 51st Union World Conference on Lung Health

Study co-authored by United Nations Special Envoy for Tuberculosis estimates global economic cost of not ending TB by 2030

Breaking news on COVID-19 science, promising trial results around a blood tuberculosis (TB) biomarker and new TB treatment breakthrough for children, among other conference scientific highlights as full programme unveiled

Tuesday, 15th September, 2020 (Paris, France)— The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) has announced today three additional VIP speakers to the programme of the [51st Union World Conference on Lung Health](#) (Union World Conference) taking place 20-24 October 2020.

UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director **Shannon Hader** and **Katherine Maher**, CEO of the Wikimedia Foundation, will both address the opening ceremony on 20 October and **Her Royal Highness Princess Dina Mired of Jordan** will moderate a special symposium on Human rights, tobacco control and children's health. They will be joined at the event by **Dr Anthony Fauci**, Director of NIAID and a member of the White House COVID-19 taskforce, and UK Film and TV Actress **Claire Forlani**, The Union's TB Ambassador, [both of whom were announced as speakers last month.](#)

"We are delighted to be able to count on the presence of such esteemed ambassadors at this year's conference in what are challenging times," said **José Luis Castro**, Executive Director of The Union. "We will make committed steps to ensure that this year's Union World Conference is a key platform for scientists, community, policy makers and political leaders to both deliver and promote solutions that can contribute towards getting us on the path to ending the pandemic. Scientific integrity and evidence-based policy must be at the heart of everything we do."

VIP Speakers

"Digital misinformation about COVID-19 has inflamed social tensions at a time when our collective well-being requires cooler heads," said Katherine Maher, CEO of the Wikimedia Foundation, the non-profit organisation that operates Wikipedia and the Wikimedia projects. Maher will be interviewed by WIRED magazine's Noam Cohen as part of the conference's Opening Ceremony.

"From bad science to disproven treatments and worse, this infodemic is making it harder for people affected by COVID-19, survivors, and their loved ones," said Maher. "We urgently need to rebuild public trust in science, knowledge, and the institutions that are dedicated to protecting the public's health."

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Union World Conference will take place virtually this year. Originally planned to be held in Seville, Spain, the event will continue to host a programme featuring cutting edge science around TB, air pollution and tobacco control, but also deliver a track and special sessions dedicated to COVID-19 and its intersection with lung health and infectious diseases. The theme of this year's conference is *Advancing Prevention*.

“With tobacco rates worldwide increasing, especially with the new tobacco products non-combustible and otherwise, making a new attack on our vulnerable youth, it is now imperative to relocate tobacco control front and centre of the human rights discourse to protect the rights of our children,” said Her Royal Highness Princess Dina Mired of Jordan, who is also the President for the [Union for International Cancer Control \(UICC\)](#).

Her Highness added: “The human rights approach not only strengthens the momentum started by the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) but also frames this criminal behaviour in a way that is unnegotiable, morally more compelling, and politically urgent.”

Scientific Highlights

Impact of COVID-19 on TB

The Union World Conference will feature a special focus on the intersection of TB and lung health with COVID-19. Numerous studies evaluating the pandemic's impact on national TB programmes in Nigeria, Japan, Tibet, Uganda and Belarus will be presented.

It has been [estimated](#) that globally, a three-month lockdown and a protracted 10-month restoration could lead to an additional 6.3 million people falling ill with TB and an additional 1.4 million TB deaths over the next five years. That would result in a setback of at least five to eight years in the fight against TB – bringing 2021 global TB incidence and deaths to levels not seen since 2013 and 2016 respectively – due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 Science

Two separate late breaker studies analysing the infection and mortality rates from SARS-CoV-2 for people living with TB are likely to attract broad interest from conference delegates and the media.

TB Science

Key abstracts include:

- Results of an extensive universal testing trial undertaken in South Africa.
- Economic modelling of the cost of inaction of ending TB by 2030, co-authored by UN Special Envoy for TB, Eric Goosby.
- First large-scale study in 50 years of workers in gold mines demonstrating high rates of TB infection.
- Results from a TB self-screening application trial in Tanzania.
- Results from the CORTIS Trial on the efficacy of a blood-based TB biomarker.
- Results of the SHINE Trial on reducing treatment time for children living with TB.

[TBScience 2020 event](#)

The Union World Conference programme will feature basic and translational TB research at the TBScience 2020 event held 20-24 October.

ENDS

Full Union Conference Programme [is available here](#).

[Media registration](#) is open and free to all accredited media representatives.

See how The Union is supporting the [COVID-19 response](#).

Further Information:

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About the [51st Union World Conference on Lung Health](#)

The Union World Conference on Lung Health, convened by the [International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases \(The Union\)](#), is the world's largest gathering of clinicians and public health workers, health programme managers, policymakers, researchers and advocates working to end the suffering caused by lung disease, with a focus specifically on the challenges faced by low-and lower-middle income populations. Of the 10 million people who die each year from lung diseases, some 80 percent live in these resource-limited settings.

Organising international conferences on TB and related subjects has been a core activity of The Union since its founding in 1920.

Twitter: @UnionConference

About the [International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease \(The Union\)](#)

The Union was founded in 1920 and is the world's first global health organisation. We are a global leader in ending TB, we fight the tobacco industry, and we solve key problems in treating major diseases. We use science to design the best treatments and policies for the most pressing public health challenges affecting people living in poverty around the world. The Union's members, staff and consultants operate in more than 140 countries and embody our core values of accountability, independence, quality and solidarity.

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