

ADVANCING PREVENTION



For Immediate Release

Media Release

President Bill Clinton and World Health Organization Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus confirmed as speakers at the 51st Union World Conference on Lung Health

TB survivors Tamaryn Green (South Africa) and Divya Sojan (India) to address the Opening Ceremony

Symposia session to publish new data on immunology post-partum outcomes of pregnant women with SARS-CoV-2

Tuesday 6 October, 2020 (Paris, France)— The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) has announced today that **President Bill Clinton** and World Health Organization Director-General **Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus** will both address the opening ceremony of the [51st Union World Conference on Lung Health](#) (Union World Conference), taking place virtually 20-24 October 2020. Some 7000 delegates are expected to attend. President Clinton will give the keynote address.

President Clinton and Dr Tedros will be joined at the conference by [Her Royal Highness Princess Dina Mired of Jordan](#), UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director **Shannon Hader**, [Dr Anthony Fauci](#), Director of NIAID and a member of the White House COVID-19 taskforce, UK Film and TV Actress **Claire Forlani**, The Union's Ambassador, and **Katherine Maher**, CEO of the Wikimedia Foundation.

"Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic requires strong leadership and we are thrilled to have two global health leaders like President Clinton and Director-General Tedros commit to speaking to Union World Conference delegates at this critical time," said **José Luis Castro**, Executive Director of The Union.

"We ensure that this year's Union World Conference is a key platform for scientists, community, policymakers and political leaders to both deliver and promote solutions that can contribute to getting us on the path to end the pandemic. Scientific integrity and evidence-based policy must be at the heart of everything we do."

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Union World Conference will now 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 tuberculosis (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*.

"COVID-19 is a stark reminder of the vital importance of breathing, and the devastating effects of anything that takes our breath away, including tobacco, air pollution and diseases such as TB," said **Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**, WHO Director-General. "The

pandemic is a wake-up call to do everything in our power to make sure everyone, everywhere can breathe freely and cleanly.”

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.

Some 400 TB survivors have already registered as delegates for the Union World Conference. At the Opening Ceremony, survivors **Tamaryn Green** (South Africa) and **Divya Sojan** (India) will speak of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on those affected by TB in their respective countries.

Scientific Highlights

The conference will feature a series of symposia, some delivering ground-breaking data. They include:

- COVID-19 in Pregnant Women
- Short, all-oral regimens for rifampicin-resistant tuberculosis: progress towards programmatic implementation at country level
- Strengthening evidence on optimal treatments for multidrug-resistant TB: approaches to studying timing and duration
- National TB prevalence surveys in Southern Africa: key results, lessons learned and programmatic implications

[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.

Twitter: @TheUnion_TBLH