

PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Development Programme



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Establishing and Pursuing a High Quality of Tuberculosis Control Programme in Montenegro - Official Start

In the presence of a representative of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Welfare, the representatives of the Special Hospital for Pulmonary Disease "Dr. Jovan Bulajić" and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Montenegro signed today a document on cooperation on the Establishing and Pursuing a High Quality of Tuberculosis Control Programme in Montenegro, supported by the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM).

In the presence of Doc. Dr. Miodrag Radunović, Minister of Health, Labour and Social Welfare in the Government of Montenegro the project document was officially signed by Dr. Radovan Mijanović, Director of the Special Hospital for Pulmonary Disease "Dr. Jovan Bulajić" Brezovik and Mr. Garret Tankosić Kelly, UNDP Resident Representative a.i./UN Interagency Focal Point in Montenegro.

Within this project, the Special Hospital for Pulmonary Disease "Dr. Jovan Bulajić" has been provided with the **new and modern X-ray machine, new X-ray diagnostics space and three vehicles for the purpose of establishing directly observed treatment for patients with tuberculosis.** By the end of the year 10 rooms for patients with tuberculosis will be renovated and fully equipped, and the hospital will obtain a modern lab equipment with an aim to improve the level of quality of diagnostics in Montenegro, as well as a computer system for reporting of individual tuberculosis cases in Montenegro.

Doc. Dr. Miodrag Radunović, Minister of Health, Labour and Social Welfare in the Government of Montenegro said that "despite application of modern prevention measures like the powerful antituberculosis therapy of nowadays, the expected suppression of tuberculosis in the world has unfortunately not been achieved. On the contrary, the number of people suffering from tuberculosis is constantly rising, and between two and three million people in the world die every year from this disease and its complications. Thus, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared tuberculosis a global health problem and devised the DOTS, a strategy of directly observed treatment through reduced regime, as a frame for combating tuberculosis all over the world. The DOTS strategy is being applied in 182 countries. Having in mind the WHO recommendations and following the Millennium Development Goals, the Ministry formed a National Commission on Tuberculosis at the end of 2005, which developed a Strategy for Combating Tuberculosis. The National Commission has also developed a five years Establishing and Pursuing a High Quality of Tuberculosis Control Programme in Montenegro. With this Programme we had applied to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria which approved it, and they allocated USD 1.600.000,00 for the realization of activities within this programme".

Dr. Radovan Mijanović, Director of the Hospital in Brezovik mentioned that, according to the Programme, this institution is a doer of the most of the activities and it is anticipated to become a National Centre for Tuberculosis in Montenegro. In this regard, the Hospital in Brezovik and its staff are the key implementators of the Programme in the next five years.

"All the invested funds will be directed for procurement of the needed micro-biological laboratory equipment, RTG devices and education at all health protection levels, for providing of a better quality accommodation for the patients through renovation of one part of the hospital's capacities, establishing of an information system for monitoring and registration of all TB patients on the entire territory of Montenegro, as well as for establishing of a visiting nurse service which will ensure outpatient therapy control," said **Dr. Mijanović**.

"Unfortunately, a man-made side effect of this disease is its subtype, multidrug-resistant tuberculosis created by humans and due to their irresponsibility. It occurs due to irregular taking of medicine as directed or inadequate treatment, which causes resistance to ordinary medicine. One of the main challenges is to make sure that patients take all of the medicine as directed, and to continue taking it until finished. When taken correctly, the chances are excellent that active tuberculosis can be cured," said **Mr. Garret Tankosić Kelly, UNDP Resident Representative a.i./UN Interagency Focal Point in Montenegro**. "With the help of this Programme, and due to its own low prevalence Montenegro stands a good chance to keep tuberculosis under control and to eradicate multidrug-resistant TB," he added.

"This Programme's objective is to identify and diagnose all cases of tuberculosis from now into the future, professionally and to the highest standard and to treat them in a way that will completely eradicate the occurrence of multidrug-resistant TB. In order to do this, completely new and modern system of rapid and accurate diagnostic and treatment will be established," said **Mr. Tankosić Kelly**, emphasizing that one of future results of this Programme will be that, once UNDP has left Montenegro the Government will be able to procure the medicines needed for this special group of people extremely cheap.

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In line with the sixth UN Millennium Development Goal – combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, the Country Coordinating Mechanism developed a five-year **Establishing and Pursuing a High Quality of Tuberculosis Control Programme in Montenegro**, financed by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM). The UNDP Montenegro has been designated as a Primary Recipient of the funds and is responsible for the implementation of the Programme, which should result in significant reduction of mortality rate and reduction in number of new TB cases.

The Programme activities will be implemented in three areas:

Improving of TB surveillance system – Establishing and maintenance of a new electronic surveillance system and its integration in the general surveillance system will allow data collection, and reporting of all the participants will contribute to the preparation of annual plans of activities and to the funding planning.

Improving of diagnosis and treatment and prevention of tuberculosis in the mentioned areas – The goals are: improving of country tuberculosis control system, expert trainings for all of its participants, as well as improving of general health care. Staff highly educated for the work on prevention and treatment of tuberculosis at different levels and increased participation of decision makers are the expected results of the mentioned activities.

Better informed community and increased public participation – This activity aims to a better quality of information for the public and people living with this disease, particularly to the reduction of stigma and increased participation of youth.

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UNDP in Montenegro promotes sustainable development, which is economically viable, socially inclusive and environmentally friendly.