

Jorge Sampaio

UN Secretary General's Special Envoy to Stop TB

Former President of Portugal

2009 Pacific Health Summit

Unfortunately due to health problems, I was unable to participate in the much waited 2009 Pacific Health Summit. However, nothing in this world would make me miss the opportunity to highlight four points for this influential and leading audience.

Firstly, we are slipping back and losing ground in dealing with the growing pandemics of MDR/XDR-TB. But we know the reasons of this - inadequate treatment, transmission and social determinants. We must therefore roll up our sleeves and get on.

Secondly, a World Bank report proves that investing in effective tuberculosis control would pay off many times over in countries worst hit by the disease, confirming that the economic benefits of TB control are greater than the costs. So, let's avoid making the same mistakes that were made in the past when, during recession times, health spending was cut. Health is a driver for economic, social and cultural development. We cannot risk to loose all the benefits gained in the past years and disable progress in health development.

Thirdly, let's make a coalition of joint efforts – from Governments, corporate sector, civil society – to achieve universal coverage ensured through social health protection, to ensure the right for all to access diagnosis and treatment of MDR-XDR-TB, and to attract investment in operational research and R&D for new diagnostics, medicines and vaccines to prevent and manage TB including MDR-XDR-TB. Multidrug resistant tuberculosis can be defeated if all these actions are rolled out concretely by working together in the framework of a partnership.

Fourth and last point, let's work out a balanced overview of public health issues for TB, as every single pandemic, will not be brought under control without a holistic approach and further coordinated efforts. But to achieve this, we need a significant change and a strong drive. Let's share this aim and work together to attain the highest standard of health for every human being worldwide.