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Mar 22, 2019 by [Tara Ornstein](#)

It's Time: Public Diplomacy for World TB Day ^[1]

As Zhikica Zach Pagovski recently wrote in *CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy* , “Multilateral institutions are increasing the use of public diplomacy and other communication tools in order to promote better understanding and sustainable relationships with target audiences.”

One example of successful use of public diplomacy can be found in the STOP TB Partnership’s activities and engagement for World Tuberculosis (TB) Day, which is observed every March 24. It was on this date in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch discovered the bacterium that causes TB, which enabled health professionals to diagnose and cure this disease. More than a century later, TB is still the world’s deadliest infectious killer. Every year, TB kills more people than HIV and malaria combined.

Despite the challenge posed by TB, the STOP TB Partnership has shown its ability to use

conference diplomacy to take decisive action. In the *Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, A.J.R. Groom wrote, “Global conferences are...an occasion for opportunities in which actors can do together that which they cannot do separately.”

STOP TB’s social media campaign has captured the energy and sense of urgency surrounding TB and are using their generate awareness about the disease.

Recognizing that a collective, international and multidisciplinary effort is needed to overcome TB, the United Nations held the first high-level meeting on TB in September 2018. In preparation for the meeting, the STOP TB Partnership organized a series of diplomatic events. In June 2018, the STOP TB Partnership worked with the President of the UN General Assembly and World Health Organization to organize the UN Interactive Civil Society Hearing on TB. Due to the STOP TB Partnership’s efforts,  more than 40 UN missions attended the meeting to listen to TB survivors describe their experiences, needs and priorities. Just days before the high-level meeting began, the STOP TB Partnership also co-hosted the first TB Innovation Summit, which brought together world leaders and influencers to think about new ways of addressing TB.

As Yadira Ixchel Martínez Pantoja wrote here on the CPD Blog, non-governmental organizations play an important role in public diplomacy because they have gained a positive reputation, address specific issues with expertise and often have a better understanding of citizens’ needs. The STOP TB Partnership’s role in the high-level meeting, which was called “United to End TB: An Urgent Global Response to a Global Epidemic,” exemplifies this phenomenon. In April 2018, the STOP TB Partnership drew on its important networks and links to communities affected by TB to develop the “Key Asks from TB Stakeholders and Communities,” which are five priority actions that initially served as the basis for negotiations among UN member states and were later incorporated into the final text of the UN Political Declaration on TB. All UN member states endorsed the declaration and agreed to the commitments, which include a follow-up meeting at the UN in 2023.

In recognition of the commitments made at the high-level meeting last September, the STOP TB Partnership is observing this World TB Day with the theme, “It’s Time.” The messages they are sending include:

- *It’s Time for real-time TB data to facilitate real-time action to end TB. On this #WorldTBDay2019 join @StopTB and check out the data dashboard to check the real-time TB situation in your country.*
- *It’s time for all in need of TB diagnosis to have access to rapid molecular testing. Let’s make this right respected on this #WorldTBDay2019.*
- *It’s Time to fund innovation to end TB. On #WorldTBDay2019 join forces to call for an increase in overall investments for TB R&D to US\$2 billion a year. #ItsTimetoEndTB @StopTB*

In addition to ensuring the theme is appropriate after the High Level Meeting in New York, the

STOP TB Partnership has also chosen a theme that is easy to translate in all languages. By using its ability to successfully harness social media and facilitate discussions at international conferences, the STOP TB Partnership exemplifies strong public diplomacy and serves as a link between global health policymakers and the communities most affected by TB.

STOP TB's social media campaign has captured the energy and sense of urgency surrounding TB and are using their generate awareness about the disease. More information about World TB Day can be found on the STOP TB Partnership's website [here](#).
