THE LAUNCH OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN TB CAUCUS

The South African TB Caucus was officially launched on Tuesday, 04 September. It is the local chapter of the Global TB Caucus, which consists of over 2 300 parliamentarians from 130 countries around the world.

TB HIV Care, a national non-profit company based in Cape Town, has been appointed to act as the secretariat for the SA TB Caucus, and was in Parliament when both houses, the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces, resolved to establish the SA TB Caucus. Once MPs left the chamber, they were asked to sign a pledge – publicly declaring their commitment to ending TB in South Africa.

The Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of Legislatures (MPLs) who joined the SA TB Caucus have been asked to:

- Raise awareness of TB in their constituencies
- Engage with media to raise awareness of TB
- Monitor government funding for health and the performance of health programmes
- Pass legislation that creates an enabling environment for healthcare in general, and TB services in particular

The official launch took place later that night at the Westin Hotel in Cape Town. It was a special evening, which brought together TB survivors, ambassadors and TB champions from all walks of life.

Miss South Africa, Tamaryn Green, and the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr L Tsenoli, MP, both shared their own personal experiences with TB – as did programme director of the event, media personality Gerry Elsdon. The event hoped to ‘break the stigma’ often associated with TB, by bringing together a number of celebrity TB ambassadors (many of whom have also been affected by
the disease). These included Prince Nhlanganiso Zulu, Lira, Kelly Khumalo, Thabo Pelesane, Zolelwa Sifumba, Basetsana Kumalo and Yvonne Chaka Chaka.

The event was hosted by South Africa’s Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi (who is the Chair of the Board of the Stop TB Partnership), together with Ms Baleka Mbete (Speaker of the National Assembly) and Ms Thandi Modise (Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces), who have agreed to act as patrons of the SA TB Caucus and signed the declaration on stage at the close of the evening.

In the words of Dr Aaron Motsoaledi:

“Members of parliament must be at the centre of challenges that face the citizens they represent. No other battle desperately requires the leadership, advocacy and guidance by parliamentarians than the battle against TB.”

The SA TB Caucus was well represented at the UN High Level Meeting in New York on 26 September 2018.