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TB prevention faces gap of $1.6bn: WHO estimates

April 24, 2013 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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Singapore: WHO and Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria have stressed on strains of tuberculosis with resistance to multiple drugs could spread widely and highlighted an annual need of at least US$ 1.6 billion in international funding for treatment and prevention of the disease.

Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General of WHO, and Dr Mark Dybul, Executive Director of the Global Fund, said that the only way to carry out the urgent work of identifying all new cases of tuberculosis, while simultaneously making progress against the most serious existing cases, will be to mobilize significant funding from domestic sources and international donors.

With the overwhelming majority of international funding for tuberculosis coming through the Global Fund, they said, it is imperative that efforts to raise money be effective this year. Growing alarm about the threat of multi-drug resistant TB, also known as MDR-TB, is making that even more pressing.

"We are treading water at a time when we desperately need to scale up our response to MDR-TB," said Dr Chan. "We have gained a lot of ground in TB control through international collaboration, but it can easily be lost if we do not act now."

WHO and the Global Fund have identified an anticipated gap of US$ 1.6 billion in annual international support for the fight against tuberculosis in 118 low- and middle-income countries on top of an estimated US$ 3.2 billion that could be provided by the countries themselves. Filling this gap could enable full treatment for 17 million TB and multidrug-resistant TB patients and save 6 million lives between 2014-2016.