



**Statement by Dr Lucica Ditiu, Executive Secretary, Stop TB Partnership
International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples – 9 August**

The Stop TB Partnership's mission is to serve every person who is vulnerable to tuberculosis (TB) and ensure that high-quality diagnosis, treatment and care is available to all who need it. Indigenous peoples are often poor and marginalized and it is among such groups that the burden of TB is highest. A large share of the 370 million indigenous peoples living in 70 countries, have a high burden of health challenges and low access to diagnosis, treatment and care. In industrialized countries, TB incidence and mortality rates are generally several times higher among indigenous peoples than among others born in those countries. Fighting TB among indigenous peoples is therefore at the heart of the Stop TB Partnership's mission.

The Partnership is recognized as a unique international body with the power to align actors all over the world in the fight against TB. Together our more than 1000 partners are a collective force that is transforming the fight against TB in more than 100 countries. They include international and technical organizations, government programmes, research and funding agencies, foundations, NGOs, civil society, affected communities and the private sector. The Partnership believes and promotes the values of building networks and alliances with a vast range of partners.

Following the recommendations of the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues, the Stop TB Partnership encourages initiatives to create awareness of the burden of TB in indigenous peoples globally, promotes partnerships between national health programmes and their respective indigenous citizens' groups, and supports community based initiatives that aim to increase access to services for TB diagnosis, treatment and care in indigenous communities.

So far, the Stop TB Partnership has been promoting the representation of indigenous peoples on national platforms, including partnering initiatives at country level; suggesting the inclusion of indigenous peoples in Global Fund and TB REACH grants; supporting interventions that take into consideration the characteristics and needs of indigenous people; promoting disaggregation of data.

Progress can be made: as an example, a TB REACH project currently being implemented by the KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation in Nigeria demonstrates that among the Koma indigenous people the introduction of innovative approaches and new tools has resulted in the diagnosis and treatment of 70% additional people with TB who may not have been detected through routine on-going efforts.

As we celebrate the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, we want to strongly reiterate the call for a world free of TB - a disease that has disproportionately affected indigenous peoples around the globe. The fight against TB requires that all people have access to health care in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner, and social support to those affected by the disease. Indigenous peoples should be at the centre of this effort, and we call on all countries to live up to their responsibilities to provide equitable and adequate health services to all their people, including their countries' indigenous citizens.