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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Remarks by

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The 9th National TB Research Annual Conference and Commemoration of World TB Day

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Hawassa, Ethiopia

It is my great pleasure to be here today on behalf of United States Agency for International Development, or USAID, to participate with you in the 9th National TB Research Annual Conference and commemorate World TB Day. I would like to thank the Federal Ministry of Health, the TB Research Advisory Committee, and this year's conference hosts, the SNNP Regional Health Bureau and Hawassa University for inviting USAID to underline and reinforce our support for the strong partnership gathered here today to combat this deadly disease.

In 2013, approximately 130,000 cases of all forms of TB were reported, of which the treatment success rate reached approximately 90 percent and the cure rate 70 percent. The Government of Ethiopia has been making progress in addressing TB throughout the country and it has already achieved the Health Sector Development Plan IV (HSDP) 2015 target of reducing TB mortality from an estimated 35 per 100,000 in 2010, to fewer than 20 per 100,000. According to the World Health Organization, Ethiopia's 2013 TB mortality was 18 per 100,000. Congratulations on this achievement.

It encourages us all to continue our efforts to stop the spread of TB. With the reported TB case detection rate at only 58 percent last year, we know that we still have significant work ahead of us.

The U.S. Government supports Ethiopia and all stakeholders to achieve the goal of eliminating TB as a public health problem through key interventions. USAID, as well as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, or CDC, are both guided by the HSDP IV and the global “Stop TB” strategy—we work together in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, to fight against not just TB, but also TB/HIV and multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB).

Our activities focus primarily on four areas:

- First, we are working to strengthen universal access to TB services, which also includes integration of community-based TB care.
- Second, we are strengthening the programmatic management of MDR-TB with a strong focus on prevention and early detection and treatment.
- Third, we are improving collaboration of TB/HIV activities within our TB and HIV programs.
- And finally, we are partnering to improve the health systems by strengthening laboratory logistics capacity, and human resources for health.

As you all know, tuberculosis is a global problem that requires effective evidence-based implementation strategies and policies to achieve TB elimination in a sustainable manner. Program-based operational research is an important component of our activities to enhance evidence-based learning that will impact policy decisions. It is only through proven strategies that we can advance program effectiveness and efficiency in the control of TB, MDR-TB, TB/HIV, and other major infectious diseases.

The TB Research Advisory Committee is especially vital to the coordination and expansion of research efforts, including the dissemination of the evidence generated through relevant forums.

USAID's TB CARE program has worked to strengthen the national TB program's capacity to conduct operational research and you will hear more about this activity during the conference.

The Ministry of Health, the Ethiopian Public Health Institution, and Armour Hansen's Research Institution have shown incredible commitment, leadership, and ownership to strengthen capacity in program-based operational research in Ethiopia. The Ministry of Health has strengthened the TB program capacity at the national and regional levels, including the operational research initiatives through the TB Research Advisory Committee. We applaud your efforts and look forward to the important lessons that will come from ongoing and future research.

Our TB-focused activities, TB CARE, HEAL TB and the Private Health Sector Program along with our integrated programs have made encouraging progress over the last few years. For example, with support from USAID, Ethiopia has enhanced case detection and notified a total of almost 750,000 people of all forms of TB nationally. The treatment success rate for these detected patients reached 90 percent.

Our activities have also contributed to Government efforts to expand MDR-TB prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. By the end of 2013, 20 MDR-TB treatment initiation centers were opened—linked to 200 follow-up centers—and leading to the enrollment of more than 1000 MDR-TB patients. Preliminary information shows that up to 80 percent of the patients on MDR-TB treatment have positive outcomes. It is evident that Ethiopia is moving in the right direction to reduce the impact of TB, TB/HIV, and MDR-TB as major causes of illness and death. And USAID will continue to support and build upon what we have accomplished so far.

Ethiopia continues to be a high-burden TB and multi-drug resistant TB country and so we still have much work ahead of us. But it is through our strong and committed partnership that we have been able to translate our support into action, and I want to take the time to thank our implementing partners managing our TB projects, namely TB CARE, HEAL-TB and the Private Health Sector Program. Our partners have been instrumental in our efforts to meet our goal of enhanced operational research capacity to plan and conduct program based studies.

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Health and the greater partnership of all stakeholders in TB control activities, I am confident that we will achieve the goal of TB elimination here in Ethiopia.

In commemoration of World TB Day, I praise your efforts and encourage a spirit of knowledge-sharing and collaboration during this important national conference. Finally, I wish you success in your efforts to translate the evidence presented here into action that will be instrumental in alleviating the suffering of fellow Ethiopians from tuberculosis.

Thank you.