

Final Statement of the IXth BRICS TB Research Network meeting

October 2, 2020

We, members of the BRICS Tuberculosis (TB) Research Network, met virtually on 2 October 2020, on the occasion of the IXth meeting of the BRICS TB Research Network, note the important progress made in TB prevention and care in the past decade, and recognize that these gains made to date are at great risk of being reversed due to the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on health systems, economies, and well-being of people everywhere.

Essential health services may be negatively impacted due to the pandemic, and vulnerable groups, such as people with TB, could also be disproportionately affected, which further exacerbates health, social and economic inequalities within and between countries¹. Therefore, the cross-cutting response to the COVID-19 pandemic must include health and social approaches and new strategies, in which successful experiences and multinational collaboration between TB researchers could be catalytic, as well as research and innovation initiatives, such as the BRICS STI FP response to COVID-19 global pandemic call, which thematic areas include clinical and epidemiological studies on the SARS-CoV-2 and TB co-infection, among other co-morbidities.

We agree that the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic can be minimized through solidarity and cooperation among BRICS countries, the researchers and other stakeholders, with the partnership of the World Health Organization (WHO) in the context of the broader United Nations system.

We commit to do our part in this challenging time by:

1. Reinforcing our efforts to jointly combat TB and COVID-19, by undertaking scientific research and innovation activities to develop effective vaccines, diagnostics, drugs and regimens and other technologies, strategies to overcome the barriers of implementation of activities under national programme that will provide affordable and effective means of diagnosis, prevention, therapy and implementation for both diseases.
2. Sharing knowledge, lessons learned, experiences, best practices, data and research findings on TB and COVID-19, as soon as possible.

To facilitate this, we request WHO to explore the possibility to further strengthen our scientific cooperation in the BRICS TB Research Network, including through the

¹“Maintaining essential health services during the COVID-19 outbreak”
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/related-health-issues>

exchange of information, in its capacity of secretariat support for the network^{2,3} with the agreement of the BRICS countries.

²Joint Communiqué of the BRICS Health Ministers Meeting in Geneva. 72nd World Health Assembly. 2019;
([http://brics2019.itamaraty.gov.br/images/documentos/BRICS Health Ministers Meeting in Geneva - en.pdf](http://brics2019.itamaraty.gov.br/images/documentos/BRICS_Health_Ministers_Meeting_in_Geneva_-_en.pdf), accessed 15 June 2020)

³Declaration of the IX BRICS Health Ministers Meeting. 2019;
([http://brics2019.itamaraty.gov.br/images/documentos/Declarao da Reunio de Ministros da Sade.pdf](http://brics2019.itamaraty.gov.br/images/documentos/Declarao_da_Reunio_de_Ministros_da_Sade.pdf), accessed 15 June 2020)