

Joint statement by the Department of Health and the Treatment Action Campaign

By *moderator*

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Acting Health Minister meets with TAC

The Acting Health Minister Jeff Radebe met with the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa, Southern African HIV Clinicians Society, AIDS Law Project and Medecins Sans Frontieres in Johannesburg yesterday to discuss the challenge of Extreme Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (XDR TB).

While the meeting was held at the request of the TAC and others, it formed part of Minister Radebe's programme to strengthen working relations between the Department of Health and various stakeholders in the health sector.

Minister Radebe restated government's commitment to address HIV and AIDS through partnership and united action. The civil society delegation was led by the TAC's chairperson, Zackie Achmat, who welcomed the seriousness and urgency that Minister Radebe demonstrated in addressing Tuberculosis, particularly MDR and XDR TB.

The meeting discussed measures that need to be taken to strengthen the national TB Control Programme including:

- Active case finding
- Efficient diagnosis and tracing of patients
- Improving cure rate and reducing defaulter rate
- Better management of MDR and XDR TB cases
- Infection control measures
- Increase ongoing training for all people working with TB, and
- TB Education for communities and patients

Everyone agreed that TB represented a public health emergency that required urgent but sustained and effective action.

It was agreed that a task team, which is made up of national and provincial health department officials and representatives of civil society and other stakeholders, should be established to discuss these issues in detail and make appropriate recommendations within weeks.

It was agreed that there is a need to strengthen communication between the two parties and strengthen partnerships to address various health challenges in the country.

The Treatment Action Campaign and others present asked Minister Radebe to convey a message of speedy recovery to Health Minister Dr Manto Tshabalala Msimang.

Issued jointly by

Department of Health and Treatment Action Campaign

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