



## **Global Forum on Tuberculosis Vaccines - February 22-25, 2022**

### **Editorial of the President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron**

As the Global TB Vaccine Forum opens in Toulouse, awareness of the seriousness of this disease remains high in our country. It is not so long ago that tuberculosis was rampant in France, that everyone was anxiously tested, that parents were prevented from kissing their children for fear of transmitting the disease, and that some lives languished in sanatorium recliners.

Three years after the last Forum in New Delhi, India, we are proud to bring together nearly 500 of the world's leading scientists, clinicians, industrialists, NGOs and policy makers from more than 30 countries to review the state of knowledge and identify innovative approaches to TB vaccine research and development.

To make this event a true forum, it will be designed as a space for dialogue on topics ranging from basic research and clinical trials to community engagement and advocacy. And for it to be truly global, I wanted actors from the countries most affected by the epidemic, particularly those in Africa and Southeast Asia, to play a leading role.

The media focus of the last two years on Covid-19 should not obscure the fact that other infectious diseases are killing people, first and foremost tuberculosis, which claims 1.5 million victims each year, especially among the most vulnerable populations.

Its eradication requires active health policies to ensure diagnosis, to make antibiotic treatments accessible and to avoid the development of resistance. It requires funding, public attention, individual commitment and consultation. In 2019, the 6<sup>th</sup> replenishment conference of the Global Fund to Fight HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria in Lyon was an opportunity to outline the foundations of a fairer world, less unequal in the face of disease, a world where, by 2030, the three major pandemics would have ceased to cause devastation. All the players in our societies - political, scientific, philanthropic and private - have joined forces, raising more than 14 billion dollars for the 2020-2022 cycle. France, the second largest contributor to the Global Fund, has assumed its responsibilities by increasing its donations by 20% to 1.296 billion euros.

The pandemic that has been raging for the past two years has reminded us that vaccines and treatments are global public goods that each continent should be able to produce locally, a necessary condition for global access. This is why France is investing massively in the medical industry in Africa and vigorously supports the network of technology transfer sites for messenger RNA vaccines that the WHO has planned.

I am convinced that these levers could be applied to tuberculosis, based on public funding of research: sharing data, knowledge and technological know-how, setting transparent and fair prices, strengthening health systems, consolidating the distribution of diagnostics, treatments and vaccines according to WHO recommendations, ensuring sufficient funding to multilateral agencies such as the Global Fund, Stop-TB Partnership, and Gavi, and involving them from the beginning to the end of the process, including in the procurement phase.

To date, only one TB vaccine has been developed, BCG, discovered by Frenchmen Albert Calmette and Camille Guérin at the Pasteur Institute in Lille after 13 years of work, and first administered in 1921. But while its effectiveness in adults is very uneven, no alternative has yet been discovered for a century, which is a challenge to research and an invitation to redouble our efforts.

It is with full awareness of these issues that the French government announced, in March 2020, an additional 25 billion euros for public research over the next decade, leading to an annual research budget in 2030 that is 5 billion higher than it is today - and of this increase, 1 billion will go each year to health and life sciences.

These efforts will support the remarkable work of our researchers in the fight against tuberculosis, both in France at the CNRS and the University of Toulouse, in partnership with Toulouse Métropole, and on a European scale, supported by the 9th European Framework Program for Research and Innovation, Horizon Europe.

This Forum, which is at the heart of the agenda of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, is rich in hope and perspectives. Each of your scientific conquests gains ground on disease and inequality. The day when tuberculosis is finally relegated to our medical archives, when a page of history and progress is written, it will be signed by all the names that have participated in defeating it, and we will read yours.

**Emmanuel MACRON**