



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Uniting to Combat NTDs Stakeholders Celebrate the Launch of the Expanded Special Project for Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases (ESPEN)**

**23 May 2016** – Uniting to Combat Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) welcomes the announcement by WHO AFRO and its partners of the launch of the Expanded Special Project for Elimination of NTDs at the 69<sup>th</sup> Annual World Health Assembly in Geneva.

ESPEN, a new initiative hosted and managed by WHO AFRO in partnership with endemic country governments, donors, NGOs and pharmaceutical companies, will help African countries reduce the burden of NTDs by offering technical and financial assistance to ensure they reach every community and individual in need.

The global effort to control and eliminate NTDs is one of the largest public health initiatives in history. More than one billion people are affected by NTDs, 40 percent of whom live in the African Region. These diseases hold people and communities in cycles of poverty, destroying lives and hampering development. The announcement of ESPEN is a strong step toward the control and elimination of these diseases from Africa, and ultimately the world.

Find out more about what Uniting to Combat NTDs is doing at [www.unitingtocombatntds.org](http://www.unitingtocombatntds.org) and at [@CombatNTDs](https://twitter.com/CombatNTDs).

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