Response to Fiscal Year 2016 Proposed Budget

By Dr. Kenneth H. Mayer, co-chair, IDSA Center for Global Health Policy

As clinicians and researchers involved in global HIV, TB and Ebola responses, we are deeply disappointed in the White House Fiscal Year 2016 budget proposal that once again overlooks the demonstrated challenges and opportunities this moment in global health presents. At a time when accelerated access to antiretroviral treatment for HIV, medical circumcision to prevent acquisition of the virus and greater access to diagnostics and treatment for tuberculosis could accomplish more than ever before, the President’s proposed budget allows no additional resources for critical responses. Proposing once again to flat fund the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the proposal instead limits opportunities to set and meet substantial, ambitious HIV and TB treatment and prevention targets to end these diseases as global threats. In addition, by proposing to spend even less on global tuberculosis responses than offered in the administration’s FY 15 budget, with a 19 percent – $45 million – cut to current tuberculosis funding, the White House fails to heed the lesson reinforced by the West Africa Ebola crisis over the last year, that infectious disease neglected anywhere poses perils everywhere.

As infectious disease physicians we commend the President’s proposal to double federal spending on measures to combat antibiotic resistance, while reminding the White House and Congress that combating the spread of drug-resistant tuberculosis remains an essential, but neglected part of endeavors to save lives and lower health care costs globally by ensuring that new medicines are developed and disseminated with necessary oversight.

We call upon Congress to recognize that while this country's investments in global health have yielded unprecedented progress in recent years, defeating HIV and Tuberculosis will require aggressive action. We urge Congress to exceed last year’s allocation to the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and to U.S. Tuberculosis programs, to honor our commitment to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and to avoid a sequestration of funds that will weaken efforts to make this a healthier and safer world.