



HOLY SEE

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**Statement by Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragán
President of the Pontifical Council
for Health Pastoral Care**

United Nations General Assembly

**High-level Meeting and comprehensive review
of the progress achieved in realizing the targets
set out in the Declaration of Commitment on
HIV/AIDS**

New York, 2 June 2006

Mr. President,

I have the honor of bringing the greetings of His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI to all who are engaged in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic in all corners of the world. The Pope is deeply concerned about the spread of the illness and guarantees both the continuity and the increase of the work that the Catholic Church does to stop this scourge.

Since the beginning, the Catholic Church has offered its contribution in the fight against the HIV virus and those suffering from AIDS on the medical, social and spiritual levels. In fact, 26.7% of the centers that treat people infected with HIV and affected by AIDS in the world are Catholic-based. Our work focuses on the training of health care professionals, as well as prevention, treatment, care and assistance. In all of these stages, we accompany the sick and their respective families.

Specifically, *Caritas Internationalis* is engaged in this important work in 102 countries. The Holy See has launched initiatives all around the world. We note our presence and action working against the pandemic in 62 countries: 28 in Africa, 9 in America, 6 in Asia, 16 in Europe and 3 in Oceania. Besides the local personnel, (both religious and laity), there are several international congregations and associations working in this sector: the Vincentians, *Caritas*, St. Egidio, Camillians, Hospitaller Brothers of St. John of God (Fatebenefratelli), Jesuits, Sisters of Mother Theresa, Bambino Gesù hospital and Catholic pharmacists, just to mention but a few. The action of the Holy See and of the Catholic Church in this regard is not introspective, but rather, its goal is to strongly promote and strengthen the required sense of ownership and responsibility that each country must develop in each phase of the answer to the pandemic.

Our major programs for training are addressed to health care professionals, priests, religious, youth, families, as well as to the sick people themselves. In prevention, we insist on formation and education towards proper behavior, so as to avoid the pandemic. We find that in the field of education and formation, the contributions of the family prove to be extremely helpful and efficacious. We do this through publications, conferences and the interpersonal sharing of experiences and skills. As for health care and assistance to the sick, we, among others, stress the formation of physicians and paramedics, of chaplains and volunteers. We fight the stigma, facilitate testing, counseling and reconciliation. We provide anti-retrovirals and drugs to stop the vertical transmission (mother to child), and also promote measures to stop the blood contagion. In the area of caring and accompaniment of the sick, we stress avoiding contagion, taking care of

orphans, widows and people with AIDS who are in prison. We are helping with the social reintegration of HIV positive people, and collaborate with Governments and other institutions both on the civil and ecumenical levels.

Regarding the economic aspects, the late Pope John Paul II established the Good Samaritan Foundation, to support the neediest people, especially those afflicted with AIDS. To date, we have facilitated the acquisition of antiretrovirals for centers in 18 countries: 13 in Africa, 3 in America and 2 in Asia. The funds given to these centers came from the contributions of Catholics in 19 countries, from America, Asia, Europe and some from Africa itself.

For further information on our work and commitment, we are providing a brief publication to this Assembly, which can be found in the places reserved for this purpose in this hall.

Thank you, Mr. President.