

Holy See Urges More Effort in AIDS Battle

Says World Community Could Do More

NEW YORK, MAY 22, 2007 (Zenit.org).- The Holy See says the price tag on the HIV/AIDS battle can seem overwhelming, but the cost is only a fraction of what the world community could easily provide.

Archbishop Celestino Migliore said that today at the U.N. general assembly meeting on the implementation of the declaration of commitment on HIV/AIDS.

"The fact that only 2 million of the 7.1 million people needing antiretroviral drugs receive them represents a sorrowful ratio," Archbishop Migliore said. "Quantifying the resources globally required is thought to be in the region of \$18 billion and \$22 billion for 2007 and 2008 respectively for low- or middle-income countries for HIV.

"These apparently large numbers actually represent only \$3 to \$4 per person on the planet.

"In aggregate, the numbers seem overwhelming, but taken in their proper context, person by person, they are really only a fraction of what we as a world community can and should do. All of us must clearly step up our efforts."

Archbishop Migliore cited the U.N. report's estimation of the four greatest challenges in the HIV/AIDS battle: "Caring for the 39.5 million people presently living with HIV; reducing the number of people dying annually from AIDS, which in 2006 was 2.9 million; preventing new infections, which currently run at some 4 million per year; and taking special care of young people, who accounted for 40% of new infections last year."

Worldwide network

The 54-year-old archbishop reiterated that the Holy See is active in responding to this disease, "through its ongoing support for a worldwide network of some 1,600 hospitals, 6,000 clinics, and 12,000 initiatives of a charitable and social nature in developing countries."

The U.N. report listed five recommendations; the Holy See's delegation focused on two of them.

"First, under the heading 'know your epidemic and intensify HIV prevention,' my delegation believes that providing information and opportunities for an education respectful of naturally based values is essential both in the development of scientific advancement and for personal prevention," Archbishop Migliore said.

He added: "Second, under the heading 'report progress on international

commitments,' it appears that, in this house, we oftentimes speak of transparency and collaboration with regard to our respective commitments.

"My delegation encourages all states to be more forthcoming in providing accurate numbers with respect to monitoring and evaluation, however difficult this may be. A factual understanding as to where the world community stands on this matter will serve us well as we attempt to address all the problems associated with HIV/AIDS and to care for all."

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