

Archbishop Migliore says efforts to stop AIDS must include value-based approach

UNITED NATIONS - People must be equipped “with more than knowledge, ability, technical competence and tools” to truly combat “the deeper causes” of AIDS and provide “loving care” to those who have it, the Vatican’s U.N. nuncio said.

Archbishop Celestino Migliore urged more attention and resources be dedicated to “a value-based approach grounded in the human dimension of sexuality, that is to say, a spiritual and human renewal that leads to a new way of behaving toward others.”

“The spread of AIDS can be stopped effectively, as has been affirmed also by public health experts, when this respect for the dignity of human nature and for its inherent moral law is included as an essential element in HIV prevention efforts,” he said.

The archbishop made the comments June 9 during a daylong review by the General Assembly of international efforts to fight AIDS and HIV. The world leaders were told that progress is being made, but that the epidemic continues to outpace global response.

Archbishop Migliore said the Vatican is also concerned about an apparent gap in available funding for antiretroviral treatment for the poor and marginalized groups.

He said health care providers associated with Catholic-run agencies in Uganda, South Africa, Haiti, Papua New Guinea and elsewhere have reported they are being told by international donors not to enroll new patients into current programs. These providers have also expressed concern “about further cutbacks even for those already receiving such treatment,” he said.

“The global community carries a serious responsibility to offer equitable and continuous access to such medications,” he said. “Failure to do so will not only cause

untold loss and suffering to those individuals and families directly affected by the disease but also will have grave public health, social, and economic consequences for the entire human family.”

“Particularly vulnerable,” he said, “are children living with HIV,” some of whom also have tuberculosis.

A report by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that was delivered during the review called for strengthening links between AIDS response and other development goals.

Ki-moon’s report said that the number of people in low-income and middle-income countries receiving antiretroviral treatment had jumped tenfold in five years to 4 million, and HIV infections decreasing 17 percent from 2001 to 2008. But the epidemic continued to outpace the response, it said, with five new infections reported for every two people receiving treatment.

In his remarks, Archbishop Migliore noted that the world’s heads of state and other government officials issued declarations in 2001 and 2006 committing themselves to “effective action in response to the global HIV spread.”

But the ongoing epidemic calls “into question our ability to fulfill such promises,” he said.

He called for an “honest evaluation of past approaches that may have been based more on ideology than on science and values,” and urged “action that respects human dignity and promotes the integral development of each and every person and of all society.”