

# Drug-production is driven by market, not ethics, says Vatican official

VATICAN CITY - A top Vatican official lamented that producing urgently needed medicines is no longer driven by traditional medical ethics, but by money.

The lack of basic, life-saving medicines also means the world risks “a humanitarian and global health care disaster,” said Archbishop Zygmunt Zimowski, president of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Ministry.

In too many parts of the world, urgently needed pharmaceuticals are lacking, he said during a gathering of the International Congress of Catholic Pharmacists in Poznan, Poland. Vatican Radio reported his remarks Sept. 13.

“Often, for economic reasons, common diseases in developing countries are neglected because, even though they afflict and kill millions of people, they do not constitute a lucrative enough market,” Archbishop Zimowski said.

Although science is capable of developing medications, some of these needed drugs “won’t see the light of day because of exclusively economic reasons,” he said.

“The development of drugs is now no longer driven by traditional medical ethics, but by the logic of industry,” said the archbishop.

He made an urgent appeal that the poorest people in the world may have access to needed medicines. He said that because of the global economic crisis, health care for the ill in developing countries, especially for children, has been cut back even more, with tragic consequences.

Archbishop Zimowski also highlighted the problem of counterfeit or fake drugs, antibiotics and vaccines.

Fake or diluted drugs can result in prolonged illness or death or can lead to the

development of drug-resistant bacteria, he said.

The existence of counterfeit drugs “is highly elevated in developing countries,” he said.

He said the World Health Organization estimates that in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America more than 30 percent of all medicines are counterfeit, and that at least 50 percent of anti-malarial drugs sold in Africa are fake.