



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM  
DE IUSTITIA ET PACE

**Second Meeting of  
Directors of Pharmaceutical and Diagnostic Industries  
for children living with HIV:**

**Consultation on “Fast-Tracking Paediatric HIV Diagnosis and Treatment”  
(to improve access to early diagnosis and effective treatment)**

Casina Pio IV, 16-17 May 2016

***WELCOME***

Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson, President

Your Eminence John Cardinal Onaiyekan, Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria,

Dr. P.D. Parirenyatwa, Minister of Health of Zimbabwe.

Dr. Luiz Loures, Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS,

Dr Bernard Bossiky, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National AIDS Council, Democratic Republic of Congo,

Ms. Sandra Thurman, Chief Strategist, Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator, United States of America,

Dr. Gottfried Hirnschall, Director of the HIV/AIDS Programme of the World Health Organization,

Rev. Canon Flora Winfield, Representative of the Anglican Communion to the United Nations,

Representatives from the private sector, including pharmaceutical and diagnostics companies, people living with HIV,

Staff of World Health Organization and UNAIDS,

Representatives of religious and non-governmental organizations responding to HIV

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you in the name of the Holy Father. Pope Francis appreciates your important undertaking and extends his prayerful best wishes. On behalf of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, too, I welcome you to Casina Pio IV, the historic home of the Pontifical Academies.

The goal of this gathering is to follow-up on a previous meeting last 15 April, 2016, and to formulate concrete responses to the drama of poor access to medication and diagnostics of such

common, but prevalent diseases as child-HIV infection, Tuberculosis and Hepatitis. The pursuit of this goal, at this meeting, is well served by the active involvement of national governments, U.N. bodies, religious groups and leaders, the private sector, including pharmaceutical and diagnostics companies, and people living with HIV.

So, when the question is put simply as: Why are we gathered here today? The answer can also be simply put as: our **goal** is to improve access to HIV treatment for children, motivated particularly in this Jubilee year of Mercy to consider the plight of children not only with the intelligence of the market place, but also with the intelligence of the heart!

Jesus is reported by two of the evangelists to have said “Suffer the little children to come unto me” (Mt 19:14, Lk 18:16) – he did not say ‘let the children suffer’. In order to reduce the suffering of children due to AIDS, I believe this meeting should focus on three objectives or responses to three questions:

- 1) **WHY:** We should firmly state the **foundations** for this work – the underlying values, ethical imperatives and indeed spirituality that are the point of departure for faith-based organizations engaged in providing diagnosis and treatment for children living with HIV and in supporting their families and other caregivers.
- 2) **WHAT:** Our **task** is to create an ambitious fast-track road-map or strategy to scale up effective treatment for children living with HIV. This plan of action will be launched at the high-level meeting on ending AIDS, 8-10 June in New York. It will include a model project for broad collaboration in selected high-burden countries.
- 3) **WHO:** We must begin to form the coalition of partners, mirroring the inclusive representation of today’s meeting and seriously committed to following the map and implementing the strategy.

This meeting, as observed above, builds on your discussions last month on early diagnosis and treatment of children, so we expect real progress. You already want to collaborate on improving access to life-saving medicines for children threatened by the HIV virus. Now it is the moment to add practical and effective measures to those earlier commitments.

I hope especially for a focus on the seriously affected countries where little progress has been made to stop the transmission of the virus to children, and where national efforts have not sufficiently addressed the obstacles to accessing treatment in local communities.

This reflects the sad reality that health care is not a right for all. The testimonies of religious Sisters, Priests, and Brothers, and lay volunteers with whom I speak, confirm that health care is still a privilege only for a few who can afford it, in different parts of the world and especially in many regions of Africa. Access to health care, treatment, and medicines still remains a ‘dream’ for too many.<sup>1</sup> “Certain health issues, like the elimination of malaria and tuberculosis, treatment of so-called orphan diseases, and neglected sectors of tropical medicine, require urgent political attention, above and beyond all other commercial or political interests.”<sup>2</sup> How clearly this draws us back to

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<sup>1</sup> [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2016/may/documents/papa-francesco\\_20160507\\_medicina-africa-cuamm.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2016/may/documents/papa-francesco_20160507_medicina-africa-cuamm.html). Cf. too, Geneva consultation on Equitable Access to Healthcare .....

<sup>2</sup> [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco\\_20151126\\_kenya-unon.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco_20151126_kenya-unon.html)

our foundations: as Pope Francis said to the previous meeting, “*there is no human life that is qualitatively more significant than another.*”<sup>3</sup>

What is needed is sincere and open dialogue, with responsible cooperation on the part of all: political authorities, the scientific community, the business world and civil society. Positive examples are not lacking; they demonstrate that a genuine cooperation between politics, science and business can achieve significant results.<sup>4</sup>

Your coming together in this Academy of reflection and dialogue signifies your dedication to the wellbeing and the future of children who face the threat of a serious illness but still have the hope and the will to live. May your efforts make it possible for some of those children to grow to contribute to the advancement of science and of the common good, as you are doing at the present time. May God bless you, inspire you, and strengthen your resolve in your pilgrimage for the good of the human family.

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<sup>3</sup> Statement of 14 April 2016 for meeting on “The Encyclical Letter *Laudato si’* and other teachings of Pope Francis: An Ethical Basis for Efforts to Fast-Track a more effective Global AIDS Response

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*