

## GREATER INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN HEALTHCARE SECTOR

VATICAN CITY, 15 JUL 2009 (VIS) - On 9 July Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi C.S., Holy See permanent observer to the United Nations and Specialised Institutions in Geneva, addressed the High-Level Segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In his English-language address, made public yesterday afternoon, Archbishop Tomasi expressed the view that "the financial and economic crisis that greed and lack of ethical responsibility have brought about" has been further exacerbated by the influenza virus A-H1N1 "already recognised at pandemic proportion with a future impact that cannot be projected with much certainty, and by the global food security crisis that endangers the lives of millions of people, particularly the world's poorest, many of whom already suffer from acute and chronic malnutrition".

"The Holy See delegation notes with deep concern predictions by the World Bank that during 2009 an additional 53 to 65 million people will be trapped in extreme poverty, and that the number of people chronically hungry will exceed one billion, 800 million of whom live in rural areas".

After then highlighting the importance of overcoming "the temptation to reduce public services for a short-term benefit against the long-term human cost", the archbishop indicated that "aid for development should be maintained and even increased as a critical factor in renewing the economy and leading us out of the crisis".

He went on: "Another key obstacle to achieving the internationally articulated goals in public health is to address the inequalities that exist both between countries and within countries, and between racial and ethnic groups. Tragically, women continue in many regions to receive poorer quality healthcare".

"The Catholic Church", noted the permanent observer, "sponsors 5,378 hospitals, 18,088 health clinics, **15,448 homes** for the elderly and disabled, and other health care programmes throughout the world, but especially in the most isolated and marginalized areas". Yet "faith-based organisations do not

receive an equitable share of the resources designated to support global, national and local health initiatives", he said.

"The mere quantitative tracking of aid flows and the multiplication of global health initiatives alone may not be sufficient to assure 'Health for All'. Access to primary health care and affordable life-saving drugs is vital to improving global health. ... In an increasingly interdependent world, even sickness and viruses have no boundaries, and therefore, greater global co-operation becomes not only a practical necessity, but more importantly, an ethical imperative of solidarity.

"However, we must be guided by the best healthcare tradition that respects and promotes the right to life from conception until natural death for all regardless of race, disability, nationality, religion, sex and socio-economic status".

The Holy See delegation believes "an ethical approach to development is needed which implies a new model of global development centred on the human person rather than profit, and inclusive of the needs and aspirations of the entire human family".

DELSS/ECOSOC/GENEVA:TOMASI VIS 090715 (480)