

## ADDRESS

Michel F. Lechat, President  
International Leprosy Association

Your Royal Highness,

It is a great honor for the International Leprosy Association (ILA) and for all its members to have you among us today for the opening of this XIII International Leprosy Congress, cosponsored by WHO—the World Health Organization—and by ILEP—the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations. Your presence at this Congress, placed under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Beatrix, embodies the long-lasting interest of the entire people of The Netherlands for science, cooperation to development, and its preoccupation for the less-privileged people of this world.

Your Excellencies, Mr. Representative of the High Commissioner of the Queen; Mr. Representative of the Burgmeister Den Haag; Mrs. Veder-Smit, President of The Netherlands Leprosy Relief Association; Distinguished Guests, Friends and Colleagues,

Once every five years is not too much for a large International Leprosy Congress such as ours, in order to discuss new problems, new methods, new scientific breakthroughs, and to review their potential applications for getting rid of an old disease. There are surely other important health problems in today's world, and even novel diseases. Yet, priority does not mean exclusivity. Leprosy still affects many many millions of people and this is unacceptable, since for a large part, the knowledge is there, the therapy is there, and the unnecessary suffering is there.

I am sure that this Congress will represent a turning point in our determination to solve this challenge.

The venue of this ILA Congress in The Hague is particularly appropriate, due to the long interest of The Netherlands in tropical diseases, and the considerable involvement of this country for promoting development—and health—in the poor countries of the world. We are especially grateful to the Local Organizing Committee for its remarkable work in preparing this Congress, and also to The Netherlands Leprosy Relief Association, Nederlandse Stichting voer Leprabestrijding, for its most appreciated support. Ik bedank U alle heel hartelijk.

C'est également une grande satisfaction pour l'ILA de voir tant de participants, venus de tant de pays, et surtout des travailleurs du terrain. Cela, nous le devons pour une bonne part à des organisations et à des associations nationales ou internationales, officielles ou privées, mal connues ou mieux connues, qui ont contribué, de manière substantielle, à leur prise en charge. Je tiens ici à les en remercier, et tout particulièrement les associations de lutte contre la lèpre réunies au sein de l'ILEP.

A tous, to all, a todos y todas de tantos países, vecinos o lejanos, a todos los colegas que trabajan a varios niveles en la lucha contra la lepra, les deseo mucho éxito en este Congreso, que sea una experiencia productiva, estimulante, y también agradable en este hermoso país de Holanda.