

Preface

As the president of International Leprosy Association (ILA), which is in the process of making major changes of its structure and activities, in order to become more sensitive, relevant and capable of meeting the changing needs of global leprosy problems, I am happy to present the outcome of one recent innovative undertaking, this Report of the ILA Technical Forum, which was convened in Paris in late February, 2002.

As the introduction of this Report states, the ILA felt it imperative to organize such a Forum now, in order to respond to the need for clear and sound guidance for their activities, primarily in the area of leprosy control in the field, felt by leprosy workers, for whom the 7th Report of the WHO Expert Committee on Leprosy, published in 1998, was no longer adequate.

Before deciding to organize the Forum, we requested that WHO hold the 8th meeting of the Expert Committee soon, rather than waiting for another five years to maintain the usual 10-year interval. A negative response from WHO compelled us to organize our own meeting of experts in leprosy from different parts of the world, experts whose individual and collective expertise is fully comparable to that of any group of experts that WHO has convened in the past, or was capable of organizing now or in near future.

As stated in the Summary of the Report, we were particularly keen to obtain and summarize the available evidence, which would serve as the basis of the recommendations produced by this Forum, so that the recommendations would be both trustworthy and useful. In the search for, and the selection of the documentary evidence, the Forum received excellent and critically important support from INFOLEP in Amster-

dam, from the Department of Public Health of the University of Aberdeen Medical School in Aberdeen, Scotland. We are most grateful for this support.

The ILA is proud to publish the Summary of the Report of the Technical Forum in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese, and the full Report in English as a supplement to the March number of *International Journal of Leprosy* (IJL), its official organ. In addition to the subscribers to the IJL, all of the participants in the forthcoming XVth International Leprosy Congress, to be held in Brazil in August, 2002, will receive a copy at the time of registration.

I am most happy to acknowledge the decisions by *Leprosy Review*, *Indian Journal of Leprosy* and *Bulletin de l'ALFF*, to publish, along with their regular publications, the full Report of the Technical Forum, simultaneously with its publication in the IJL, thus ensuring the wide distribution that this Report deserves. In addition to publication of the full Report in English, *Leprosy Review* is publishing Spanish and Portuguese versions of the Summary of the Report, while *Bulletin de l'ALLF* is publishing the entire Report in French.

I wish also to extend our thanks to the ten member organizations of ILEP, who generously supported the Technical Forum financially, and I sincerely hope that the Report we have produced meets their expectations.

If this publication contributes to the strengthening and improvement of the multitude of leprosy activities undertaken in the world as we hoped, all of us involved in this undertaking will feel our effort, which was not inconsiderable, well rewarded.

—Dr. Yo Yuasa

President
International Leprosy Association