

## ADDRESS OF WELCOME

Mrs. E. Veder-Smit, President of the Board  
The Netherlands Leprosy Relief Association

Your Royal Highness, Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you here at the XIII International Leprosy Congress. The Netherlands Leprosy Relief Association considers it to be a highlight in its existence, that the International Leprosy Association decided to organize its five-yearly Congress in The Netherlands, and that so many of you have come from all over the world to attend this Congress and to render it an inspiring event in the history of leprosy relief. We hope your stay in The Netherlands will be satisfactory, and we shall do our utmost to ensure that you have a pleasant time.

We are extremely grateful to Her Majesty the Queen for her readiness to be patroness of this Congress, and to His Royal Highness, Prince Claus, for being present at the opening today. From experience, we in Holland all know how involved they both are in the battle against leprosy and how supportive they are toward our work here, as well as in the endemic countries. Also, the spontaneous cooperation, offered by the members of the Committee of Recommendation, we consider to be essential for the success of this Congress.

We are well aware, Minister Bukman, of your interest in nongovernmental organizations in the field of development cooperation; we greatly appreciate your support and your readiness to address the Congress.

To you, Professor Lechat, as President of the International Leprosy Association, I would like to say that the cooperation with you and your Association has always been very constructive and pleasant. We wish you and all your members a highly successful Congress.

The fact that the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have been willing to cosponsor the Congress is undoubtedly a great asset. We are extremely

pleased with the fruitful cooperation between all the international organizations concerned with leprosy relief. We especially welcome the chairman of ILEP, Mr. Kober, and Dr. Noordeen, Chief of the WHO Leprosy Unit.

A speech of welcome ought to be brief, and I shall not cut away the grass from under the feet of the following speakers. Let me therefore confine myself to some brief remarks concerning two subjects.

Over a thousand people have come to the Congress. In one way or another, all of them are involved in the fight against leprosy. They try to keep up, improve, and extend their task. Sometimes this task must seem hopeless to them. There are new patients every day, and it might look as though leprosy will never be stamped out on this planet.

I would like to stress the opposite. We are progressing and, in fact, the disease is curable. With great fervor, science is helping us to find the best methods for prevention, detection, and treatment of the disease, new and better medicines, and possibly a vaccine. This Congress in itself is proof of our being backed up by science.

The Netherlands Leprosy Relief Association (NSL) has allocated over 10% of its budget for scientific research. Almost 200,000 annual contributors enable the NSL to support 55 projects on three continents, many of which are conducted over a longer period of time and in cooperation with other leprosy relief associations.

I am happy to be able to inform you today that during this Congress, in the presence of the Chinese Ambassador, NSL will sign an agreement with China for a period of 4½ years. The amount of \$550,000 involved, mainly for drugs and equipment, will be used for leprosy relief in the province of Sichuan, in addition to our cooperation project in the northern provinces of China.

Finally, I would like to point out that leprosy relief and the scientific research involved can never be successful without co-

operation. We shall never reach our goal if we do not aim at total achievement and efface ourselves. Together we should take care not to get entangled in matters of organization and management. The main issue is still the encounter between human beings. Many leprosy patients set an example with their acceptance, their worldly wisdom, and their cheerfulness. We must always bear their problems in mind when dealing with the issue.

The international cooperation between the

endemic countries and the supporting countries, between peoples of different cultures and with various histories and possibilities is, in fact, a miracle. Is it not a miracle that there are 76 different nationalities gathered here in aid of one cause? And that this has been happening for several decades?

I sincerely hope that the cool Dutch climate will not prevent you from feeling warmth in your hearts. This is my greatest wish.