

Welcoming Remarks by Kenneth Martin  
President  
International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP)

It is a pleasure for me as President of ILEP (the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations) to be present in this forum today. ILEP was formed 27 years ago, and is a unique association of nongovernmental organizations committed to the fight against leprosy. The Federation has been in the forefront of progress. The years since its formation in 1966 have encompassed great change, from care in isolated leprosaria, through to the development of effective control programs and the introduction of multidrug therapy (MDT) and vaccine trials. ILEP member organizations have responded positively to new challenges and grasped every new possibility for improved treatment, and we continue to work for the eradication of the disease as well as the cure of individuals. We are greatly encouraged by the progress made in recent years and continue to strive toward our ILEP goal of MDT for all by the year 2000.

It is our view that the excitement and enthusiasm of what has been achieved should not blind us to the challenges which still confront us in our fight against leprosy. It is fundamental that the implementation of MDT remains the priority, and ILEP is totally committed to this task. Having said

that, we are compelled to remind ourselves and everyone engaged in the fight against leprosy that the distribution of MDT is not our only job.

Millions of men, women and children remain affected by the results of their leprosy, and the challenge they present will not disappear at the stroke of midnight on 31 December 1999. Prevention of disability, physical and social rehabilitation and the on-going care for those deeply scarred by this disease are most definitely a matter for concern by ILEP associations. By all means let us congratulate ourselves on the progress made; it has been remarkable and worthy of praise. But to underestimate the task remaining would be folly and create a residual problem for succeeding generations.

ILEP supports this Congress and congratulates ILA on the excellent preparations made and the welcome given to all delegates.

It is my hope that these next days spent together at this Congress will be of real benefit to every single person attending and that we may all be challenged and stimulated in our united wish to see leprosy finally and convincingly eradicated.

Thank you.