



Access to Medicine

for Children Living With HIV and HIV/TB Co-infection

I am taking the floor on behalf of the Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII and Caritas Internationalis - two international Catholic organizations directly involved in providing treatment and care for many people around the world.

We would like to thank the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights for having convened this consultation, the Government of Brazil and the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Anand Grover, for their leadership in this area, and all the panelists for their valuable inputs.

We would like to invite all participants to pay more attention to the needs of children during the course of their discussions about access to medicine, and specifically to include the urgent need of children living with HIV and with HIV-TB co-infection to gain access to child-friendly testing and treatment adapted for use in poor settings.

In addition we wish to note the important link between access to medicine and access to food and water. The lack of access to food and to safe drinking water presents major obstacles to both effective access to and use of medicines.

If we ask an African woman who lives in a slum why she or her children have no access to medicine, she will not talk about TRIPS or TRIPS-plus (even though these are indeed important issues). However, such a woman will tell you that, if forced to choose between food and medicine, she will choose food. And, even if she has access to food, she will find it necessary to spend her money for transportation in order to reach a distant clinic. Then, she will have to spend all day waiting to meet with a health care worker who, in the end, may simply give her a prescription to buy the medicine, which she cannot afford anyway.

Therefore, we urge you to consider access to medicine in the broader context of the social determinants of health and to bear in mind that human rights are inter-related and mutually reinforcing.