

SACBC CALLS FOR GREATER COOPERATION BETWEEN STATE AND CHURCH IN ASSISTING PEOPLE WITH HIV/AIDS (4/2/04)

“The Catholic Church calls on the South African Government to step up its response to AIDS in the country by delivering on its proposed anti-retroviral roll out, and to overcome all bureaucratic hurdles which are hindering the realization of initiatives promoted by civil society in the health sector”, said the Bishops in a statement issued at the end of their plenary assembly in Pretoria today.

It would be tragic for our nation if the people stricken by the pandemic had to be deprived of basic assistance and medical care because of red tape and even more so by point scoring.

The Catholic Church has projects in place to provide treatment to HIV/AIDS patients in 24 sites throughout the country, reaching some of South Africa’s most marginalized communities. The first 5 sites will be starting to operate in the next week.

Second only to the State, the Catholic Church is the largest provider of home based care for the sick, of palliative care for the dying, and of care and support for AIDS orphans. Yet, many Church projects are struggling financially, while every year media reports highlight huge amounts of Government funding that goes unspent.

Due to bureaucratic inefficiency and indifference many orphans who are entitled to maintenance grants and sick people who have the right to disability grants, do not get them.

The Catholic Church urges the relevant government departments to streamline application processes to ensure speedy delivery. On her side, the Catholic Church has programs in place to assist people in obtaining necessary documentation to access grants and is ready to offer her services to collaborate with the appropriate state authorities.

A solid partnership and collaboration between State and Church in this area is the only way of ensuring that this funding reaches those who need it most.