

## **Jose M Gatell, Conference Co-Chair: Conference Opening Speech**

### **Welcome and Acknowledgements**

Royal Highness, Honorable Authorities:

On behalf of the IAS, and in close cooperation with UNAIDS and the four NGO co-organizers, a large group of dedicated staff from several countries have been working very hard during almost four years to organize the XIV International AIDS Conference (IAC). Barcelona was selected as the site for XIV IAC during the IAS presidential terms of David Cooper and Mark Wainberg. The choice of Barcelona was possible because the idea gained almost immediate support by all relevant public institutions from Catalonia and from Spain, by a private non profit foundation ("Fundació La Caixa") and because our Hospitals ("Hospital Clinic" and "Can Ruti") and our Universities (University of Barcelona and University Autònoma of Barcelona) allowed us to spend part of our time in the preparation of the Conference. Thanks a lot indeed to all of you for being here today and specially to HRH Princess Elena. Also thanks a lot to all Catalonian, Spanish and International leaders, that are already present today, or will participate in the Conference discussions during the forthcoming days.

Last but not least, the IAC represents a recognition of the organizational capability and of the hospitality and friendship of Barcelona but overall a recognition of the relevant contribution of the local Spanish scientific community and NGO's to the fight against AIDS.

### **Challenges**

Each of the previous IAC represented of a particular milestone in our fight against this epidemic. We will succeed if prevention and also a simple and affordable therapy for all affected people became the milestone for Barcelona.

From a technical point of view, prevention, simplification of therapy, new families of compounds 6 years after the introduction of the last one (the protease inhibitors), and very promising data on vaccines, at least on therapeutic vaccines, will also be widely covered during the Conference.

The second challenge is to boost the momentum reached in Durban in order to maintain AIDS as a top priority in the political agendas despite the complicate international situation. Many steps in the right direction have been done but much more remain to be done.

An additional challenge is being the first IAC in a Spanish speaking country. In addition of recognizing the dramatic situation in sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia or Eastern Europe, we have been specially sensitive towards the active participation of our Latin American friends and colleagues including the implementation of a broad coverage of simultaneous translation from English to Spanish.

### **Objectives**

We have succeeded in convincing all of you to come to Barcelona and we apologize to all of you who might have experienced some delays due to administrative procedures. Now, dear friends, the ball is in your court. Good science, increased commitment and quick and powerful action is what is needed to confront the pessimistic forecasts and estimates of the UNAIDS.

### **Statistics**

Thanks to all of you this will be the largest conference ever, in terms of number of delegates (more than 17.000) including many from sub-Saharan African countries, from South East Asia, from Central and South of America and from Eastern Europe. It will be the biggest ever in the number of abstracts, in the multidisciplinary approach in the comprehensiveness of the integrated Conference Program and in the magnitude of the scholarship program to mention just a few examples. Near 1500 delegates and journalists from the developing world have been awarded a scholarship.

However being the largest Conference ever is not enough. It is now up to you ladies and gentleman to make it the best ever. But, dear friends, the Conference is not an objective by itself. The real challenge is an effective and successful fight against the AIDS epidemic during the forthcoming months and years. Thanks for being in Barcelona and I hope you will enjoy your stay among us.

Welcome, Bienvenidos, Benvinguts to Barcelona.