

## **Nuncio: Anti-drug policies need new, comprehensive approach**

Catholic News Service | Jun. 14, 2013  
Antigua, Guatemala

Archbishop Francis Chullikatt, the Vatican's permanent observer to the United Nations, discussed the Holy See's commitment to formulating a new, comprehensive approach to anti-drug policies in the Americas during a three-day session of the Organization of American States' General Assembly in Antigua.

Current policies surrounding drug abuse, addiction and related crimes must be transformed to hold perpetrators responsible and encourage individuals and communities to make better decisions, he said.

"The global illicit drug problem has become a multidimensional challenge demanding a comprehensive approach that will assist those victimized and those who victimize," he said in his address during the June 4-6 meeting.

Chullikatt emphasized the relationship between drug users, their families and the community, explaining that those who abuse drugs often need ample family support to overcome their addictions. Family support also can help individuals avoid drug addiction altogether.

"Studies on drug abuse consistently reinforce the conclusion that children with nurturing family environments inherit the skills and values needed to avoid the scourges of illicit drugs," he said. The prevention of drug abuse and addiction requires the cooperation of not only the drug users' families, he added, but also the larger community.

"When illicit drug abuse destroys the social fabric of families, it inevitably leads to the destabilization of broader society."

The archbishop said drug addicts must turn their lives around to become positive examples for younger generations and demonstrate how to overcome obstacles and protect human dignity.

Addressing the international impact of the drug problem, Chullikatt stressed the recognition of the value of every human being.

"This implies that, in discussing the drug trade and the broader agenda of the Organization of American States, we always place protection of human life at the center of our efforts," he said.

The Holy See strives to maintain and support human dignity and the natural moral order rather than "creating new categories of persons."

In the words of Pope Francis, Chullikatt said: "Dialogue between us should help to build bridges connecting all people, in such a way that everyone can see in the other not an enemy, not a rival, but a brother or sister to be welcomed and embraced."

These words must be put into action so that the OAS and its member-nations can become an instrument of

"fraternity between nations and peoples," he said.

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