Race against time

AIDS is becoming beyond doubt a major health problem for some developed and developing countries. Because there are no medical solutions available, it has also raised serious social problems. Researchers have therefore a heavy responsibility and, as one among the first to be involved in unravelling the viral origin of this epidemic, I am acutely aware of this responsibility.

The aims of AIDS research are, of course, to find efficient treatment to cure AIDS patients or to eradicate HIV infection in seropositive persons, and to find a vaccine. But if there are already some hopes of progress in these fields, I feel strongly that more fundamental research is still needed before we arrive at the right solutions. Viruses of the type to which the causative agent of AIDS belongs are old, almost perfect biological objects for survival. The more we study them, the more we are surprised by the many ways in which they act. Fighting against such viruses calls for hard and skilled work, and perhaps the deployment of new concepts as well. International collaboration in this field is also absolutely necessary. No doubt we will win the race against this new epidemic, but nobody as yet can predict when and how.

Professor Luc Montagnier
Chief of the Viral Oncology unit, Pasteur Institute, Paris