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Thank you for inviting me. Today is the first time I take the floor at IPC as President of The International Pharmaceutical Federation, FIP.

I am deeply honored to be here, and to be working with all of you to advance our shared goal of serving patients and people and ensuring them healthy and productive lives wherever they live.

Congratulations to Indian pharmacists for your strong involvement in FIP. Your work has led to the election of Mr. Prafull Sheth as a Vice-President of the FIP. I am pleased and honored to serve and work with Mr. Sheth in the FIP Bureau.

Perhaps it is best to begin by answering the question: What is FIP?

FIP is a global Federation of 120 organizations, in over 80 countries, representing and serving over 1 million pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists. Through its projects and initiatives, FIP actively works towards advancing pharmacy and pharmaceutical science, improving the long-term effectiveness of patient care based on science. Our objective is to improve healthcare and how it is delivered. Our close ties to the World Health Organization as an NGO, and FIP's membership in World Health Professions' Alliance allow FIP and its member organizations, which includes IPA, to contribute to policies guiding healthcare worldwide.

The key priorities for FIP are: setting standards, human resources for health, sensitizing pharmacists against HIV/AIDS, counterfeit medicines and tobacco and, above all, assuring patient safety. The activities of FIP are broad in both idea and action. We are equally committed to ensuring the universal growth of the profession, considering individual country needs, while implementing a universal vision of health and wellness.

2. Let me now address India's achievements and challenges in the pharmaceutical industry, in healthcare policy, and in pharmacy practices.

India has moved significantly towards self-reliance in development and manufacturing of medicines. Today India is a global player. Yet the downstream processes of distribution, retailing, and dispensing, which are in pharmacists' domain, are not adequately professionalized. This limits the mainstreaming of pharmacy practice and its impact on healthcare. Pharmacists must play a full and integral part in strengthening the health of India.

The successes achieved by Indian Pharma have forced the global majors to take note of the vast intellectual potential in India. This has opened doors for strategic alliances. India's achievements in GMP, GLP and GCP and Generic Products Approval procedures have demonstrated the ingenuity & business acumen of its Pharma Leaders, and India continues to make further improvements enhancing its competitive edge.

India is about to win the challenge of improving its population health, particularly through successful mass vaccination campaign and patient education. With the Indian Population touching 1.05 billion and growing, I believe the need for Pharmacists is expected to increase to 15,000,000 by 2010. India faces a serious and impending shortage of trained individuals in all sectors of the pharmaceutical profession.

India has ambitious plans to achieve major healthcare goals by 2015, including 'Zero' level growth of HIV/AIDS. Worldwide, we all face the risks of major pandemics such as SARS and Avian flu. Stemming HIV/AIDS and TB will require people to change their behavior. Pharmacists can and must play a major role in changing such behavior and improving hygiene.

In my view, India must also set the following priorities:

- Upgrading pharmacy curriculum at all levels, Diploma through Post-graduate
- A compulsory continuing education for all pharmacists
- Accreditation of all retail pharmacy outlets, something not now in practice.

It is against this backdrop that FIP seeks the cooperation of both industry and government in setting standards: from industry to pharmacy outlets; for the required professional education of all pharmaceutical professionals in India.

Professional Education to me translates to more highly qualified and capable pharmacists. Unless the skill and knowledge of the clinical pharmacists are fully developed and utilized, advancements in Pharma industry and research will essentially be suboptimised.

FIP can work with India to further these initiatives. While FIP urges governments to establish rules, pharmacists must also be prepared to follow them and to provide education on health and the appropriate use of medicines.

An example of how FIP can work with IPA through FIP's SEAR Pharm Forum would be the implementation of The Good Pharmacy Practice Project based on the FIP-WHO Joint Statement on GPP. This program, which has already had significant success, trains pharmacists in developing regions in better patient care, communication, and professional ethics.

India has succeeded in building a high-level Pharma Industry; it must now build a high-level Health System that includes and integrates pharmacy and pharmacists, as full partners. Pharmacists themselves must be engaged in and support national health policies. To ensure overall quality of health of the population, Pharma Industry and Pharmacy Professional Leaders must ensure that the distribution, delivery and dispensing of medicines advance equally and pharmacists are fully utilized both in urban and remote areas. This is the most cost-effective approach to National Health.

Pharmacists must be persons of integrity with an attitude of caring, and service. This is especially important in developing areas where patients generally see more of a pharmacist than a physician. The importance of pharmaceutical care, cognitive services as well as a proper role in disease management cannot be emphasized enough. Patients must believe and trust pharmacists, and Pharmacy education must produce professionals worthy of such trust and respect.

Counterfeit (spurious) medicines can frighten patients and divert them from the controlled market. A charter should be developed between Indian pharma companies and Indian pharmacists to show that India is fighting against counterfeit/spurious medicines and supporting the Government of India in its enforcement efforts.

It is imperative India address the dire situation facing its healthcare workforce. There are simply not enough trained workers to adequately treat the Indian population. I never forget this country, where I was born and educated. I received my D.Pharm, B.Pharm and M.Pharm from the University of Saugar, Madhya Pradesh. India is a country where many dear friends and members of my family live. I applaud the achievements of the IPA, its members, and the Indian pharma industry. I share your desire to further improve access and optimal use of quality medicine, and promote better science, practice, and global healthcare policy.

We are not alone in this quest for improvement. As an organization of fellow professionals, FIP is present to give Indian pharmacists the tools to improve access to medicines and to provide pharmacy services. We want to elevate ourselves as more than just researchers or scientists. Indian pharmacists must be effective and respected care-givers, secure and accomplished in their own knowledge and skills. FIP is the pharmacists' global face and voice, making the pharmaceutical profession visible and respected worldwide. Fully one-half of the FIP membership is in developing countries. These pharmacists carry the heaviest burden, facing inadequate infrastructure and limited resources with which to resolve public health issues.

FIP is committed to addressing these disparities and is an important source of inspiration for those seeking to strengthen and advance the profession. Communication, networking, and the opportunity for professional advancement are achieved through a wide array of FIP initiatives, including the annual FIP Congresses, which next year will take place in Beijing, China. We see ourselves as the global world of pharmacists supporting Indian Pharmacists and Pharmaceutical Scientists, their Practices and Standards, their Employment and Effectiveness, their Reputation and Achievements.

FIP also represents Indian Pharmacists to the world. In that, I share collective and personal pride.

But ultimately our focus must be on those whose interest and well being we serve: patients and their right to access responsible, informed, affordable quality health care. We must ensure people everywhere have such access. Borders cannot be the determinants of who receives quality health care and who does not. This is our obligation not only as healthcare professionals; but as members of the human family worldwide.

My role as President of FIP is to represent pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists worldwide. What we do in India affects not only India, but the world. We must be leaders in health care at all levels. In this age of SARS, TB, and HIV, we face challenges without borders. Such challenges can only be addressed if we work together – locally, regionally, and globally. The health of all of us, depends on each of us – as students, as professionals, as associations, and as nations.

I am delighted to see that this congress will focus on critical topics: such as role and responsibilities of pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientist in health care, Develop strategies for human health and build resources to allay the growing concern regarding the critical need for human resources.

I would like to extend sincere and best wishes for the utmost success of this momentous event in the pharmaceutical community and my hope is that the next three days are most productive and rewarding time for all participants.