



DURBAN DECLARATION ON REFRACTIVE ERROR & SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

Preamble

Over 650 delegates representing eye care professionals, researchers, governments, civil society and industry from all over the world gathered at the Durban International Convention Center, from March 14 -16 2007, to attend the first World Congress on Refractive Error and Service Development. The congress addressed a key public health challenge of our time, Uncorrected Refractive Error (the need for an eye examination and a pair of glasses), the leading cause of avoidable blindness and vision impairment across the world.

The meeting was hosted by the International Center for Eyecare Education (ICEE) with representation from the World Health Organisation (WHO), International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), the World Council of Optometry (WCO), the International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO), the major international eye care non governmental organizations, government, universities, institutions, eye care professionals and industry.

WE THE DELEGATES RECOGNISE THAT:

- 153 million people in the world have impaired distance vision because of Uncorrected Refractive Error;
- Many millions more people over the age of 45 years have impaired near vision (presbyopia) due to Uncorrected Refractive Error;
- Persons with blindness and vision impairment are entitled to the same basic human rights as are enshrined in all national and international standards, declarations and conventions;
- Uncorrected Refractive Error drives children and adults further into poverty by limiting their opportunities to education, employment, and seriously impacts their quality of life and productivity;
- The link between poverty and visual impairment due to Uncorrected Refractive Error places a heavy economic burden on individuals, their families and communities;
- The paucity of services, personnel, training institutions, affordable glasses especially in the developing countries are the main contributing factors to Uncorrected Refractive Error.

WE FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGE THAT:

- WHO/IAPB launched the global initiative VISION 2020: the *Right to Sight*, to eliminate avoidable blindness and vision impairment;
- Prioritisation of Uncorrected Refractive Error as the major cause of avoidable blindness and impaired vision has come about through broad consultation of national and international alliances;
- Member states of the World Health Assembly in 2003 and 2006 passed resolutions WHA56.26 and WHA59.25 making blindness prevention a priority.

WE DECLARE THAT:

- We fully support the Global Initiative for the Elimination of Avoidable Blindness and Vision Impairment, VISION 2020: *The Right to Sight*.
- We will work together in developing comprehensive eye and health care services for the correction of refractive errors and provision of high quality and affordable glasses.
- We will prioritize communities, countries and regions in greatest need and school age children and adults above 45 years, especially women.

WE FURTHER COMMIT:

- To increase global awareness of the magnitude of the unmet need for refractive error services among the professions, the health, private and corporate sectors, and governments and communities;
- To work towards collaboration between all professions and formation of partnerships and alliances to achieve the goal of elimination of blindness and vision impairment due to Uncorrected Refractive Errors;
- To advocate for the policies, services and resources required to address the issue of Uncorrected Refractive Errors;
- To advocate for the inclusion of vision services within health insurance schemes;
- To invest in the training and equipping of the essential eye care teams and their development to meet the needs of the underserved population;
- To encourage research to generate the evidence base for decision making, monitoring indicators, evaluation and appropriate service delivery models;
- To support the establishment of global procurement and distribution systems for making high quality affordable glasses available to communities in need;
- To support major initiatives for raising funds for the development and provision of refractive error services;
- To fast track eye care delivery programmes through the use of national consultation groups or task forces;
- To disseminate information on best practice by many means including the holding of periodic world congresses.

WE CALL UPON

The governments, professional bodies, manufacturers and suppliers, international organizations and civil society to:

1. Make refractive services a priority.
2. Support the development and deployment of the appropriate human resources, infrastructure and technology for the effective delivery of refractive services within the public sector.
3. Rationalise the tariffs, duties and taxes imposed on spectacles, equipment for refraction and optical lab equipment.
4. Support and facilitate organizations working towards the elimination of avoidable blindness.

WE REAFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT TO:

1. Advocate about the burden of Uncorrected Refractive Error to key policy and decision makers in order to enhance the allocation of resources.
2. Improve the knowledge base and strengthen the organizational and institutional capacities of key stakeholders to implement initiatives aimed at promoting refractive error services.
3. Document and promote best practice in service delivery at local, national and international levels to key stakeholders.
4. Promote service delivery being in line with strategic needs, social norms and the economic system of the society.
5. Promote research in the prevalence of refractive error, the barriers to its correction and the most appropriate service delivery models.
6. Encourage closer co-ordination between government ministries, departments, civil society and consumer groups for purposes of undertaking campaigns to promote VISION 2020.
7. Undertake planning workshops on Refractive Error with key stakeholders.
8. Coordinate with eye care training institutions and programmes in Optometry, Ophthalmology and other relevant health personnel, to develop guidelines for socially and economically viable training programs and promote competency-based models.