



The Right to Eye Health – Hyderabad Declaration

Over 1,600 delegates representing eye care professionals, researchers, governments, civil society and industry from all over the world gathered at the Hyderabad International Convention Centre from September 17-20 2012, to participate in the 9th General Assembly of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness. The Assembly's theme "*Eye Health: Everyone's Business*" addressed a key public health challenge of our time, the elimination of avoidable blindness and access to eye health services for all.

The 9th General Assembly requests international organisations, regional entities, governments, civil society and the private sector to work together in addressing the following key issues:

- 1. Eye Health must be addressed as part of primary health care and health systems**
- 2. An inclusive international development framework is required to address blindness and visual impairment adequately**
- 3. Investments in eye health infrastructure, human resources and initiatives are imperative to achieve access to eye health for all**
- 4. Investment in eye health and blindness prevention yields economic, health and social benefits**
- 5. Research is essential to address emerging eye health priorities and for learning effective approaches**
- 6. Building and broadening alliances for effective work on eye health, visual impairment and blindness**
- 7. Support for WHO Global Action Plan 2014-2019**

We trust that pursuing these issues in a comprehensive and consistent manner is a prerequisite for eye health services to be accessed by all people, especially those living in poverty.

We acknowledge:

1. That to successfully address eye health and the prevention of avoidable blindness, it is necessary for eye health to be integrated into primary health care systems.
2. That eye health is closely linked to many other global health issues including health systems financing, primary health care, non-communicable diseases, and neglected tropical diseases.
3. That continuous investment in Onchocerciasis programmes will lead to worldwide control and focal elimination of the disease with no new cases of blindness by 2020.
4. That poverty and social exclusion cause ignorance on eye health and create barriers for blind and visually impaired people to access eye health and rehabilitation services.
5. That vision loss is common, has a huge impact on the quality and length of life, but, unlike most other non-communicable diseases, the most prevalent eye conditions can essentially be corrected overnight; a pair of glasses is all that is needed to restore vision immediately from uncorrected refractive errors and cataract surgery restores vision the next day.
6. That the correction of vision loss is highly cost effective and that investing in blindness prevention delivers a strong return on investment in terms of the economic, health and social benefits to individuals, their families and communities.
7. That the global strategy outlined in 2020 InSight is to achieve the goal of eliminating blinding trachoma by 2020.
8. That the key to success in blindness prevention globally is a positive and close collaboration between WHO, IAPB, governments, professional bodies, civil society and the private sector at local, national, regional and global levels.

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We note:

1. That there are still considerable gaps in public health infrastructure and workforce to sustainably ensure access to eye health for all.
2. The growing global burden of diabetes and the dire need for annual eye examinations for those affected, and we support urgent research into technologically advanced options that provide the global health workforce with assistance to address this need.

We are further concerned that:

1. Persons with disabilities are deprived of participation in and access to, development programmes to achieve the MDGs despite respective provisions in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and recognise that this impacts on persons living with blindness and visual impairment.
2. The rights of persons with disabilities are not yet clearly recognized in the UN-led discussions on the post 2015 development agenda.

We commit to:

1. Evaluating the effectiveness of eye health interventions, increase our knowledge of the successful interventions, take cognisance of areas of improvement to remove barriers for access and to translate the learning into practice.
2. Support governments in implementing the WHO global action plan on national and regional levels.
3. We request international organisations and governments to prioritise and increase investment in eye health and blindness prevention as part of their health and development budgets.

We welcome the important work being done to develop the WHO Global Action Plan for Blindness Prevention 2014-2019, to accelerate progress to meet the goals of VISION 2020. We request all WHO member states to commit to data collection, thus supporting agreed global indicators to measure the global impact of efforts to eliminate avoidable blindness. We urge all WHO member states and NGO partners to get involved in developing the action plan, support the resolution at the 66th World Health Assembly in May 2013 relating to the adoption of the action plan, and commit to fully implement the plan once it is approved.

We urge the United Nations, governments, international organisations and regional entities to ensure that there is clear recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities in the post 2015 development agenda and in any new goals, targets and indicators that are developed through this process.

We urge governments to:

1. Ensure that eye health and blindness prevention are prioritized and included in national health policies and plans.
2. Focus on the preventive and the health promotion aspects of eye health care within community health and health service programmes.
3. Promote practices for implementing the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.
4. Rationalise the tariffs, duties and taxes imposed on eye health equipment, drugs and consumables.

We call on governments, professional bodies, civil society organisations and the private sector to:

1. Strengthen cooperation, and align and harmonise the interventions in eye health with national prevention of blindness plans, embedded in national health strategies.
2. Integrate eye health into primary health care by taking innovative approaches to strengthen local capacities and empowering communities to take ownership.
3. Accelerate training of human resources for eye health with emphasis on training eye care teams focused on meeting community needs, and to establish systems to ensure their long-term engagement in the health workforce.
4. Strengthen the existing public health infrastructure to provide eye health services sustainably, including public-private partnerships.
5. Join hands for completing the baseline mapping to understand the scope of the prevalence of Trachoma, and for scale-up of the full SAFE strategy in close coordination with the Neglected Tropical Diseases agenda.



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