

FDI President Dr. Tin Chun Wong, 16 October 2014:

Address to the conference of the Norwegian Dental Association

Det er fantastisk å være her!
Good morning and greetings
from FDI World Dental Federa-
tion!

It's always a pleasure to address some of FDI's oldest friends – and Norway has been a friend of FDI for over 70 years, holding its first FDI event in Oslo in 1953. At the time, it was called the 'Annual Session'; now it is renamed the 'Annual World Dental Congress'.

Today, I intend to focus on national/international collaboration, how it works for you, as a National Dental Association; how it works for us as your World Federation.

Norway has always been a strong and dependable partner in FDI work, and that remains true today: in particular, I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank Dr Harry-Sam Selikowitz for his exceptional dedication as Vice-Chair of the FDI Science Committee. This is especially so for the time he spends writing, editing and checking some of the key FDI Policy Statements.

FDI Policy Statements

Policy Statements are a good place to start this analysis because they are a key outcome of international discussion and debate. I imagine that if I went to the website of any one of our NDAs in high-income countries, I would be able to find your national Policy Statement in a specific area of dental medicine. It may even resemble, even if it is not identical to, an FDI Policy Statement. Why have two?

I think the principal answer is that disease knows no borders and, in a world of massive human migration, we all have something to learn from each other. That is because we are more and more likely to come upon oral conditions or diseases we have never seen before. In recent times, you only have to look at the speed with which an epidemic which started in Africa has



FDI's president, Dr. Tin Chun Wong, holdt en lang hilssningstale til NTFs landsmøte - og innledet på norsk med: Det er fantastisk å være her!

reached the shores of both Europe and the United States – and now, even to Norway. International awareness is extremely important.

FDI Policy Statements are the result of profound discussion between some of the best minds in international dentistry: they represent the best in international consensus. And they are a reliable resource in the face of the unfamiliar. They also demonstrate perhaps better than any other aspect of FDI work, national specialists coming together to speak with one voice. As such, they enhance the reputation of the profession at international level, within the World Health Organization and other agencies of the United Nations.

As Harry-Sam Selikowitz himself will attest, FDI Policy Statements, based

on member demand, cover an enormous range of subjects. In 2013, the focus was on noncommunicable diseases, oral health and the social determinants of health, and salivary diagnostics.

This year, we adopted Policy Statements on, among other things, perinatal and infant oral health, radiation safety in dentistry, and early detection of HIV and appropriate care of subjects with HIV infection/AIDS.

FDI and NCDs

Earlier, I used the word 'partner', and I think this describes better than anything the working relationship between FDI and its member NDAs. I cannot stress enough, FDI is a member organization: without its members, it can achieve little. Working together, we can

achieve a great deal. It provides a huge opportunity for networking and sharing information among its members, especially at the General Assembly, held during the FDI Annual World Dental Congress.

I can draw an example of that fruitful partnership from FDI's recent history. You no doubt recall our highly successful advocacy in 2011 to secure a reference to oral diseases in the United Nations Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases.

In that particular case, I can clearly distinguish between the essential roles played by FDI and by its NDAs. FDI was the 'short-cut' to which successive drafts of the Declaration were communicated in the build-up to the Conference. Sometimes this was through official channels, sometimes through less formal channels: access to the informal channels is one of the big advantages of having a strong working relationships with the UN and its agencies.

Once FDI was fully aware of the likely content of the Declaration, it was in a position to inform its NDAs and call upon them to lobby their national negotiators, i.e. the voting parties of UN Member States present at the conference, to ensure the continued reference to oral disease. It was very much an FDI-NDA team effort.

The NCD issue has proved useful politically as a means of drawing attention to the relationship between oral health and general health; it has also provided inspiration for many of FDI's ongoing international projects.

FDI Data Hub for global oral health

Take, for example, the newly-created FDI Data Hub for global oral health, a first-of-its-kind online database of oral health and related information. This project, funded through FDI's Vision 2020, is a direct response to the challenge of implementing the global monitoring requirements of the NCD Declaration. To do this, we need access to reliable sources of information that monitor trends and assess progress of health indicators. These are key to improving health outcomes and implementing national healthcare strategies and plans.

For FDI, this has meant an enormous effort to remedy the current situation where oral health data is frequently diffuse, incomplete and irrelevant. This 'live' evolving Data Hub seeks to fill critical gaps in oral health data, such as statistics and indicators. Its ambition is to become the most comprehensive source of all available oral health information.

The Data Hub will also include regular country-by-country updates where countries can compare and contrast performance and better understand the kind of policies that lead to better outcomes. We will, of course, need active input from our NDAs and I very much hope that we can count on our friends and colleagues in the Norwegian Dental Association to keep us up-to-date on your latest national statistics on oral health and related issues.

FDI and the Istanbul Declaration

One of the principal outcomes of the 2013 FDI Annual World Dental Congress was the Istanbul Declaration, which called upon FDI and its member associations to support a broadened scope of practice for dentists. Further, it called for a reinforced inter-professional collaborative approach in the development of global and national health policies.

Good interprofessional collaborative practice models may increase the contribution of dentists to the general health and quality of life of patients and the public and subsequently broaden the role of dentists in the general health arena.

To familiarize dentists with the broad context of collaborative practice and global trends, FDI has issued a report of case studies and models from around the world.

This report, funded by FDI Vision 2020, recognizes that there is no one-size-fits-all approach; rather, delivery of health services will depend on contextual factors and country needs: the report is therefore illustrative rather than prescriptive.

In my view, the FDI report on collaborative practice is essential reading for all dentists and I urge you to read it once it is published in the International Dental Journal.

Minamata Convention on Mercury

Another item of importance on FDI's international agenda is the Minamata Convention on Mercury, developed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). During the five-year negotiation period, FDI and its partners lobbied hard for a phase-down approach to dental amalgam, which would give dentists the right to continue using it, when clinically appropriate.

The other option, advocated by some governments, including Norway, was a phase-out, that is to say a total ban. I am, of course, aware that dental amalgam has been banned in Norway since 2008: this is a national choice and one that I greatly respect.

In line with FDI's wishes, the Minamata Convention on Mercury has adopted the phase-down approach. This is in exchange for commitments from the worldwide community of dentists and researchers in the field of prevention and control of oral Bearing in mind that the Convention watchdog will monitor progress on dental amalgam phase-down within five years of the Convention's ratification, FDI has developed implementation guidelines for National Dental Associations and their member dentists, with a focus on oral health advocacy and education, preventive dentistry and dental materials research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I hope I have been able to illustrate the crucial role that FDI is playing in ensuring that the voice of the Norwegian Dental Association and the voice of its member dentists is heard, appreciated and acted upon in international public affairs. That is our job.

I would like to add that FDI is a member organization: we could not carry out our important work without your support – which you have demonstrated time and time again over the years.

For this, I would like to thank you, personally and on behalf of FDI.