The Congress is political in the sense that the latest orientation of oral health policy is also on display with the launch of the much-anticipated FDI Global Caries Initiative (GCI) website, which brings together individuals and groups from around the world to exchange, communicate and share knowledge on caries management and the development of a new preventive paradigm.

The GCI prevention paradigm dovetails with FDI’s most recent concerted effort in public and oral health in the field of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). FDI has long advocated that oral health should be integrated into a common risk factor strategy with other NCDs, in particular cardiovascular and respiratory disease, diabetes and cancer. This principle is now, thanks in part to FDI, enshrined in public policy in the United Nations Political Declaration on NCDs, which calls for an approach based on control and prevention.

The Congress is visionary because it is a focal point for two days before, the World Dental Parliament, meeting here in Hong Kong, saw the launch of and debate on FDI’s Vision 2020, a roadmap for the coming decade in dental medicine. This document, developed by a specially-created constituted task team in collaboration with our members, is, as its preface proclaims, inspirational and aspirational.

Vision 2020 contains a strategic approach to five key identified areas: meeting the increasing need and demand for oral health care; expanding the role of oral health-care professionals; shaping a responsive educational model; mitigating the impact of socio-economic dynamics; and fostering fundamental research and translational technology. It is a blueprint for adapting and changing the dental profession to a world in constant evolution.

The opening sentences contain principles with which all delegates attending this FDI congress no doubt agree: “Oral health is an essential component of good health, and good oral health is a fundamental human right. The role of the dental profession is to help the population and decision-makers to achieve health through good oral health.”

On this opening day of the FDI Hong Kong 2012, I would like to bid you all welcome and express the hope that you will have a profitable, informative and an enjoyable stay during the ... congress of the century!