



*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

## **Opening Remarks**

**to the**

## **MEACO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

**Cairo, Egypt, 29 November –1 December 2007**

Your Royal Highness, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the Middle East African Council of Ophthalmology (MEACO) leadership development course, which has been organized by MEACO in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. I would like to convey to you the greetings of the Regional Director, Dr Hussein A. Gezairy, and apologize for his absence due to previous commitments.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to His Royal Highness Prince Abdulaziz bin Ahmed bin Abdulaziz, Chairman IMPACT/IAPB-EMR, for joining us here today and for his continuous support for the prevention of blindness. His Royal Highness is leading the Region in the field of ophthalmology and blindness prevention, and as Chairman of MEACO, has expanded that support beyond the Region. I would also like to thank Dr Akef Al Maghrabi, Founding President of Al Maghrabi Foundation for his presence here, and Dr Abdulaziz Al Rajhi for his strong leadership in the field of ophthalmology, and for bringing this course to the Region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The American Academy of Ophthalmology was the first institution to formally recognize the importance of the concept of leadership in ophthalmology, and organized a successful leadership development programme to address the issue. That programme has inspired other

societies like the Pan American Association of Ophthalmology, the European Society of Ophthalmology and, most recently, the Asia Pacific Society of Ophthalmology to develop such activities in the field of ophthalmology. The objective of the programme is to identify prospective leaders in ophthalmology from national and MEACO affiliated societies, and provide them with both orientation and skills development. Let me particularly welcome our colleagues from the American Academy of Ophthalmology and faculty members from other regions to the Regional Office.

Finally, I would like to offer my encouragement to the great initiative taken by the Sheikh Hamdan Foundation of the United Arab Emirates for the Prize recently offered in stem cell research in the field of medicine. The Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean will always encourage such initiatives. I would like to thank all the professional societies, as well as Hamdan Foundation, for supporting this initiative, along with MEACO.

Once again, I convey to you the greetings of the Regional Director and I wish you all success.