

Presentation of the 2027 Joint EAOM/AAOM Meeting in Athens, Greece

Dear colleagues and friends,

Please let me start by saying a huge thank you to all of you who made a dream come true. Special thanks to our American colleagues in AAOM who made this joint meeting a success and an unforgettable experience.

I think it was only fitting that the first joint meeting of such large scope and magnitude took place in the USA for many reasons. Not only because America has been in the forefront of Oral Medicine in the last century, and continues to do so in the 21st century as well, but also because this meeting was built on some traditional American values: those of inclusiveness, of opportunities to everybody, of a melting pot of people from all over the world who come together and work together towards a common goal, in our case oral health.

Equally fitting, I think, is the fact that the second meeting will take place in Athens, Greece in September of 2027. The exact dates and the venue will be announced very soon, but you can definitely keep September of 2027 in your calendar as the month that you have to visit Athens. I can reassure you that this will be a collective effort, where AAOM leadership and membership, as well as those of other Oral Medicine societies all over the world, will actively participate as equals. Every single detail of the meeting will be worked upon with the utmost diligence, commitment to excellence and respect for the traditions and needs of AAOM and other participating organizations.

But why Athens and why is it a fitting choice for such a joint and global event? I can provide you with multiple justifications, which hopefully may also serve as strong incentives to attend.

- 1) First, for **historical reasons**: When Europe wants to start a major initiative, it goes back to its ancient roots, e.g. the first Olympic Games of the new era took place in Athens in 1896. In our case:
 - a) Greece, Athens in particular: **The cradle of Democracy**. And Democracy stands for inclusiveness, for equal opportunities, for the chance that anybody can rise to any role that fits his desires and abilities, including leadership. And our Joint and soon Global Meetings represent exactly this: inclusiveness and opportunities for everybody in the world.

- b) Greece: **The origins of Medicine**, based on scientific evidence and humanitarian approach. It was in Athens, in Kos and elsewhere in Greece that Hippocrates treated his patients and taught his students. We, as doctors and dentists, still take the Hippocratic Oath today, so what a better place to reaffirm our commitment to providing health services of the highest quality to our patients than where Hippocrates and his students have been doing so for some millennia now.
- 2) Greece: **Natural beauty**. There are so many beautiful, amazing places to visit while you are in Greece that not even a lifetime will be enough. On the other hand, you cannot really go wrong whatever you choose to do while you are in Greece; apart from Athens itself, a modern city, a capital of the world with all top notch amenities and multiple places to visit and things to do, I strongly encourage you to take a few, or more than a few, extra days to visit our famous islands (such as Mykonos, Santorini, Rhodes, Crete, Corfu and so many others), magnificent ancient monuments (such as Delphi, Ancient Olympia, Vergina, Epidauros etc.), or even less known but equally beautiful mountains. As I said you cannot go wrong, but if you still need some advice you can ask any Greek you know, or even better Ross Kerr: he has visited most of them!
- 3) Greece: **A balanced, fun-loving approach to life**. Well, you are all familiar with Zorba the Greek, the iconic figure from Kazantzakis novel and of course the Hollywood movie. Although we can assure you that we do not dance all day long in Greece, we rather work very hard, when the time to relax and have fun arrives, we do it the right way! Whether it is food, music, dance and any other type of fun you love, it will be difficult to find a place to do it better than in Greece! Ok, Marcio Lopes, maybe in Brazil too! Again, for more details about fun in Greece, you can always ask Ross!
- 4) And finally Greece equals **uncomparable hospitality**. In Ancient Greece, they had 12 major gods and many others as well. One of them was Xenios Zeus, the god of hospitality, also called theoxenia. It was believed that human beings demonstrate their virtue by extending hospitality to a stranger, a foreigner (xenos), who turns out to be a disguised deity (theos). Although modern Greeks do not believe in Olympian gods any longer, at least most don't, we all believe in Xenios Zeus, in our sacred responsibility to treat our

guests as family members. So, if you visit Greece, you will be treated exactly as that: members of our own family.

And this word, **family**, brings me to the last point that I would like to make and since I may be the last person to speak, it may serve as a concluding remark too. Our global initiative it is not about us as persons, as individuals. It is about our **common commitment** to advance our science and our discipline for **the sake of our patients**. For the sake of those suffering from oral diseases all over the world and cannot find accurate diagnosis, treatment and health without our help. For those whose health, well being or even life itself is dependent on our specialized services.

To achieve such a major and noble feat, we should be all together, as a family. Strong and effective global oral medicine is not and should not be a personal ambition: no man or woman, not even a smaller or larger group of few talented and motivated leaders, not even a single country or a single continent, no matter how powerful they are, can make such wonders alone. Here, in Las Vegas, we all together felt part of a big family. And family's values include gratitude, respect, caring and, why not, love for each other.

We can consider this first real joint meeting as the offspring of our common family: We all proudly witnessed history in the making, or, to put it more sentimentally the birth of a healthy baby, a baby that collectively embodies our own individual values, hopes and commitment to our discipline. Let's call this baby **global oral medicine**. And let us all nourish it and see it grow into a healthy and strong, walking and speaking, toddler in two years from now in Athens. And, later on, in the years to come, let's keep working together to see it grow into a teenager and an adult that will continue, even when we will not be any longer around to see it, to justify our own lifelong efforts and to make reality our own vision of promoting oral health and well being through science, research, education and service **all over the globe**.

Professor Nikolaos G. Nikitakis

Chair of the 2027 EAOM/AAOM Joint Meeting in Athens, Greece