2008 has been a year of change, unprecedented growth and accomplishment for the International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO). We sponsored the largest World Ophthalmology Congress ever, changed our official name, and significantly expanded our efforts to enhance ophthalmic education and improve access to eye care around the world.

World Ophthalmology Congress (WOC)
The 2008 World Ophthalmology Congress (WOC), June 28 – July 2 in Hong Kong, broke attendance records and set a new standard for future WOCs. The ICO organized the first World Ophthalmic Education Colloquium (WOEC), with more than 100 speakers in 18 symposia on educational initiatives around the world. Those talks and selected presentations from the 2008 WOC are available at ico.scientificabstracts.org.

The next WOC will be June 5 – 9, 2010 in Berlin, and development of the scientific program is well underway. In Hong Kong, the ICO selected Abu Dhabi as the site for the 2012 WOC, which will be hosted by the Middle East African Council of Ophthalmology (MEACO). Scheduled for February 16 – 20, 2012, it will be the first WOC in the Middle East and Africa. The Japanese Ophthalmological Society will host the 2014 WOC from March 28 – April 4 in Tokyo.

New Name: IFOS is now ICO
In Hong Kong, the “International Federation of Ophthalmological Societies (IFOS)” voted to change its name to the “International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO)” to end confusion about the two names. The former “Council” is now the “Board of Trustees” of the ICO, and former “IFOS Members” are now “Member Societies” of the ICO.

Collaboration
We continue to work closely with the four major supranational ophthalmologic societies: MEACO, the Asia-Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology (APAO), the European Society of Ophthalmology (SOE) and the Pan-American Association of Ophthalmology (PAAO). We reached agreements in 2008 to co-sponsor two supranational Congresses in the odd-numbered years when there is no WOC: with MEACO on March 26 – 30, 2009 in Bahrain and with the APAO in Sydney on March 21 – 24, 2011.

We also agreed to collaborate with the American Academy of Ophthalmology to make its extraordinary O.N.E. Network available to ophthalmologists in developing countries at no charge and to distribute 200 copies of the Academy’s Basic and Clinical Science Course to 61 residency programs in the developing world.

Training and Education Programs
Basic and Clinical Science Assessments and International Fellowships
The best-known programs of the ICO continued to make a major contribution to ophthalmic education worldwide in 2008. This year, 2049 candidates enrolled for the Assessments exams at 93 test centers in 61 countries. Since 2001, the Fellowship program has awarded more than 300 three-month Fellowships to help ophthalmologists from developing countries expand their knowledge of ophthalmology and contribute to enhancing eye care in their countries.

International Task Forces of the ICO Education Committee
These Task Forces are working to stimulate translation and adaptation of curricula they defined for training of ophthalmology residents, medical students, allied personnel and for CME. The residency curriculum has been translated into various languages and is becoming the basis for residency training in many countries.
Residency Program Directors Courses
The ICO worked with local hosts and co-sponsors to offer its popular Residency Program Directors Courses in Brazil in September, Slovenia in October and Ethiopia in December. The third Course involved most of those responsible for residency training in Sub-Saharan Africa. Three Program Directors Courses are being planned for 2009: in China, Colombia and Indonesia.

World Ophthalmology Residency Development (WORD)
The ICO is evaluating how to better use the Internet to make educational and leadership resources available worldwide and create online communities. One example is the new WORD, an online forum and resource center for enhancing residency education (www.icoword.org).

Regional Training Centers
With support from industry and foundations, the ICO is stimulating development of regional training centers, including projects in:
• Nigeria – Regional Catholic Mission Hospital network coordinated with University Eye Hospital, Ibadan.
• China – Peking University Eli Lilly Diabetic Eye Disease Center regional diabetic screening and eye care.
• Slovenia – Ophthalmology subspecialist training at University Eye Hospital, Ljublana.

Additional ICO Projects and Initiatives
There are now 20 ICO International Clinical Guidelines, most based on American Academy of Ophthalmology Benchmarks, but some covering diseases not seen in the U.S., including trachoma and leprosy.

The ICO organized a third World Ophthalmology Roundtable on Leadership Development (WORLD) for leaders of ophthalmologic societies and residency programs at the Hong Kong Congress. An offshoot of the WORLD program, the ICO/MEACO Advisory Leadership Group for Sub-Saharan Africa, met for the fourth time in October in Lagos. It is focused on helping younger ophthalmologists in the region obtain the knowledge, skills and experience needed to provide leadership for ophthalmology in the future.

We adopted a report on “Assessment and Rehabilitation of Vision-related Functioning” in Hong Kong that complements previous Standards Committee reports on visual standards and requirements for safe driving.

At the request of the ICO Advocacy Committee, 45 ophthalmologic societies have named “Advocates” to work with the ICO on efforts to increase support for eye care and prevention of blindness around the world. We continue to collaborate with the World Health Organization and International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness supporting implementation of the VISION 2020: The Right To Sight global initiative.

Finally, the ICO has appointed Ad Hoc Committees focused on uncorrected refractive error, world glaucoma, equipment for tertiary eye centers and ICD-11 and new Education Committee Task Forces on continuing medical education and emerging technologies for teaching and learning.

About the ICO
The ICO is building a World Alliance For Sight. We work with ophthalmologic societies and others to enhance ophthalmic education and improve access to the highest quality eye care in order to preserve and restore vision for the people of the world. For further information, please see the ICO website: www.icoph.org.

Many ICO programs are supported by generous contributions from industry and individuals to the International Council of Ophthalmology Foundation. To make a donation or to contact the ICO Foundation, visit www.icofoundation.org.