



Conference opening remarks Suzette Kox

Dear Speakers and Panelists, Industry Colleagues, Friends, and Participants,

- Good afternoon and welcome to Greece!
- I am Suzette Kox, the Secretary General of the International Generic and Biosimilar Medicines Association.
- It is my great pleasure and honor to welcome you all to the Joint Annual Conference of Medicines for Europe and IGBA here in Athens under the title **Goal 2030: Access For All**.
- I cannot tell you how thrilled I am to be able to meet all of you again in-person after so many virtual meetings over the past 20 months, it is, indeed, a great moment. No doubt, you are as happy as I am.
- We are very grateful to the Greek generic medicines association, the Panhellenic Union of Pharmaceutical Industries, for the tremendous support they have provided as hosts. We are also grateful to the members of the Conference Organizing Committee, who has put together an engaging and stimulating program. And let us not forget our dream conference team!

- A warm and special thanks to all our Speakers, Panelists and Chairs, for joining us here, in-person or virtually. You are the absolute backbone of our conference. We tremendously value your willingness to find time in your precious and busy schedules to share with us your expertise and ideas and to engage in partnership with us to discuss the most pertinent and pressing issue during this dreadful pandemic, namely worldwide patient access for all.
- My sincere gratitude also to our IGBA Founding Member, Medicines for Europe, for having partnered with IGBA for the organization of our joint annual conferences in Dubrovnik, Lisbon, Budapest, Warsaw and now Athens. As you all know, we regretfully had to cancel our annual gathering in 2020. But here we are, we made it this year, despite the very special circumstances. And I am very happy that you made it here too.
- We are also fortunate to have the support of a great cadre of sponsors, whom I hope you will get to meet during the conference.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected almost every facet of our private and professional lives. There is no doubt that the pandemic has highlighted the importance of good health, which is essential for individuals as well as for communities, to thrive. Global recovery efforts should now give us the unique opportunity to rethink, build and secure a future which addresses the inequalities in healthcare, while supporting sustainability.

Global, regional and national institutions, governments, the global scientific community, including of course the pharmaceutical industry, medicines regulators, and academic researchers, the healthcare and all service workers as well as the private sector have all stepped up in an unprecedented manner and worked, and continue to work, relentlessly to get this global health crisis under control.

What has been the global generic and biosimilar medicines industry response to COVID-19?

I would like to highlight first that **patient access is the *raison d'être* of our industry.**

- The global Generic, Value added and Biosimilar medicines industry is therefore an indispensable part of the global healthcare system, contributing to access to cost-effective quality-assured medicines and to significant health economic savings globally.
- Despite the many hurdles and under unprecedented stress, the generic medicines companies have clearly lived up to the challenges posed by the pandemic as it is an industry that is quick to adapt and agile in manufacturing scale-up. During the outbreak of COVID-19, this industry was providing most of the medicines needed in Intensive Care Units to ventilate critically ill COVID patients and was prompt to enter into licensing agreements on essential Covid related medicines.
- Our industry is also providing most of the quality medicines dispensed around the world, especially for increasingly prevalent chronic diseases, which were neglected during this health crisis. Our industry is therefore a strong contributor to health outcomes globally.
- Today, generic medicines represent 60-80% of all prescription volume sales in key markets globally, with penetrations in many countries at even higher levels (e.g., 90% in the U.S. 85% in Australia and Jordan and 97% in India).
- Furthermore, 400 biosimilars covering over 10 therapeutic classes have been approved in the IGBA membership's jurisdictions, paving the way for competition in the biologics space, hence increasing patient access to biologic treatments. Since the first approval of a biosimilar medicine in 2006, the total clinical experience with EU approved biosimilar medicines alone exceeds 2 billion patient treatment days.
- Furthermore, the generic, value added and biosimilar medicines industry is a key source of healthcare savings. It has become a cornerstone of healthcare systems around the world and makes profound economic contributions across regions.
- The generic and biosimilar medicines industry will continue to play this important role in the healthcare ecosystem, provided industry continues to invest, adapt, and innovate, and market and regulatory policies provide the

appropriate frameworks and support to the industry to maintain its contributions to the healthcare system and economies globally.

- We will debate all these angles in the various sessions of the conference:
- During the **first session**, panellists will be asked to reflect on the measures and actions taken to address the challenges posed by the pandemic, the collective effort for the benefit of patients and the way forward on how to rebuild resilient health systems for the future.
- In the second **session**, speakers will reflect on the status of the off-patent industry and the challenges posed to healthcare systems by the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery. More specifically, through discussion we will look at their vision of the future of the industry and what barriers to that future have to be overcome by companies and policymakers. A modern off-patent industry will be central for the next decade as healthcare systems struggle to find means to address not only an aging population, but also the increased prevalence of chronic diseases and the rising cost of breakthrough innovation.
- In **session 3**, the views of various manufacturers and the European Commission will be addressed, aiming to discuss what measures and policies will support the competitiveness of manufacturing and the resilience of supply chains. Industry speakers will highlight the developments and investments in medicines manufacturing technologies, such as green manufacturing, digital, process technology, automation and how the pharmaceutical industry is working to secure supply for European patients.
- **Session 4** will be looking at creating smart procurement practices and how to ensure long-term competition and pricing and reimbursement policies that can respond effectively to market dynamics. These will be central to create healthy competition and guarantee patient access to medicines,

increasing the number of manufacturers supplying medicines and thereby reducing the risk of medicine shortages.

- **Session 5** will showcase the crucial role of the UN institutions and highlight the need for increased regulatory collaboration and for frameworks allowing regulatory reliance, harmonisation and single global development. We will also discuss permanent commitments on trade in essential medicines as well as the impact of trade agreements on markets for generics and biosimilars. The panellists will explore the steps taken so far and debate on how best to strengthen international frameworks to make medicines available to patients in times of crisis as well as in the future.
- On Friday, **Session 6** will discuss the Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe and the EU's Beating Cancer Plan, providing an invaluable opportunity to address equity challenges within the EU. We will also discuss rebuilding more resilient health systems that serve European patients and contribute to a healthier and more unified European Union.
- In our final **session**, panellists will be asked to showcase good practices and actions taken to address societal challenges, both during the pandemic and beyond. They will reflect on how these contribute to improving patient health, how the impact on the environment is being reduced and how they are supporting national economies.
- In a nutshell, during the conference and moving forward, we need to identify opportunities for further international effort, collaboration, cooperation and partnerships. We need to address structural transformation, ambitious reforms, smart policy interventions, solidarity, alignment, harmonization and reliance. Furthermore, we must put patients first, build bridges, remove old and newly established barriers. We must modernize, innovate, be more inclusive, responsive, open, flexible, agile, and resilient. Finally, we must **be ready to adapt, and to take every opportunity to change for the common**

good. It will enable a more efficient and effective global response to the current and future public health emergencies.

- Before I close, I would also like to share with you the best wishes and regrets of my international IGBA colleagues who were unable to travel to Athens. I would also like to convey a **personal message** from our IGBA Chair, Sudarshan Jain:

“We are having the biggest humanitarian challenge impacting economically , socially and health outcomes. This has brought healthcare to the center stage . Patient has been at the center of all we do. IGBA is committed to patient care and member associations work relentlessly with all stakeholders for consistent availability of medicines. I would have loved to be present however varied country policies came in the way. We still have to work in a globally coordinated way to move forward. Let Science and geopolitical consideration work together to fight Covid-19 around the world and get the lives and livelihood areas managed in an integrated way.”

- Before coming to a final close , I would like to remind you all, and especially our moderators, to keep strictly to our time schedule and not let any session overrun. I sincerely hope you will enjoy the next three days of exciting and challenging debate and networking. Thank you very much indeed for your participation.
- I would now like to introduce you to the President ad-interim of Medicines for Europe: Rebecca Guntern.
- Thank you