



## Response to Terrorism

Today I attended a memorial service for one of the victims of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attack. Like more than 5,000 other innocent victims, he was a son, brother, husband, and father, loved by the many who knew him. There was deep sadness, which in the past weeks has been numbing and overbearing. Prayers and words of consolation were recited in an attempt to move on, to move past grief.

On September 11<sup>th</sup> I arrived with my wife in Paris, France to attend the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress of the International Association of Pediatric Dentistry. There were almost 1,000 registrants from eighty different countries. From the opening ceremony to the scientific sessions, there were constant references to the shocking events that were unfolding. On the third day of the meeting, there were three minutes of silence throughout France and other parts of the world – silence during which we thought of the countless people who lost their lives and the countless families for whom life was forever changed. September 11<sup>th</sup> revealed the depths to which evil can descend, but it also illuminated the heights to which the human spirit can soar, as so many firefighters, police officers, and ordinary citizens who, in their zeal to help others, unknowingly raced to certain death. There was silence as we stood in disbelief and asked why, why such despicable evil should indiscriminately strike so many from all walks of life. In silence, we asked what to do in the face of such evil.

Terrorists abhor liberty, freedom, democracy, and modernity. In their fanaticism, they seek to destroy and silence diversity. They have no respect for human dignity. Our response to terrorists is to promote liberty, freedom, democracy, and diversity. As pediatric dentists, we respond by doing what we do best, promoting the health and well being of children – of all children, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, or race.

Our Academy has members from fifty nations. We are a diverse group representing many different cultures. Yet, we have one main goal, and that is to promote wellness and heal disease in children. Children are our future. When we help children, we contribute to the defeat of terrorism. To those who devalue life, we respond by extolling the value of each individual life.