

Welcome Address by Professor Diarmuid Shanley to
The President of Ireland Mrs. Mary McAleese

A Uachtaráin,

Ba mhaith liom fíor cionn fáilte a chur romhat. Tá an-áthas orainn go léir go bhfuil tú in ár measc inniú.

President, I have been given the privilege of welcoming you to our Global Congress. We are greatly honoured and delighted that you have come to be with us. You have always been enormously supportive of such efforts as this initiative.

I don't know how much my colleagues from all over the world know about our President. One of you asked me 'How come Ireland produces such fantastic Presidents' So let me tell you just a few things about President McAleese. She is a law graduate of Trinity College Dublin and was a Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Queen's University, Belfast. She was Reid Professor of Criminal Law in Trinity College, Dublin. She was also a television journalist and held a wide range of leadership positions in Irish society working particularly in the area of ecumenism. She is from Northern Ireland and her pledge, when she came in as President of our country, was to build bridges; bridges that she has elegantly extended between cultures and socio-educational divides.

I have had the privilege of being seated at the President's table where people with divergent views, very different cultural backgrounds sat, and discussed and debated in a warm and embracing atmosphere that the President has the unique ability to create. She and her husband Martin have been role models for the young and old, the leaders, the privileged and the underprivileged in our country. They have both worked tirelessly before and during high office to support and comfort the less fortunate in our society and abroad. This makes it especially appropriate that the President should launch our Global Network.

We are very proud of the close ties the President and Dr. McAleese have to the Dublin Dental School and Hospital. Martin is a graduate of the Dublin Dental School and Hospital, the President's brother is also one of our distinguished graduates, and her daughter is starting Dentistry in Dublin this year. The President has always championed the causes of academic dentistry and graced the opening of our new dental school and hospital.

President there are so many other tributes I could pay but my priority was to articulate our sense of appreciation, admiration and great affection for you in my welcome and offer my colleagues a vignette of what you have accomplished as President of Ireland. I am greatly privileged to introduce you and Martin, who could be described in simple words as "good people". To have you as our President gives me a great sense of national pride as I invite you to address this Global Congress of 330 dental educators from 66 countries.