



Remarks by Dr. Joris Vandeputte, DVM
President of the International Alliance for Biological Standardization (IABS)
On the Occasion of the 65th Anniversary of the Alliance
Hôtel de Ville, Lyon France, February 26, 2020

Dr. Kepenekian, Representing Greater Lyon;
Madame Burillon, Representing the Mayor of Lyon;
Madame Professor Trillet-Lenoir, Member of the European Parliament;
Madame Françoise Grossetête, Honorary Member of the European Parliament;
Mr. Bernard Saugey, Honorary Senator;
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

My sincere thanks to you, Mayor of Lyon, for the welcome that you have extended to us and that reminds us all of the historic moment that took place in 1955, 65 years ago, when Mr. Edouard Herriot was President of the Council, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mayor of Lyon.

Mr. Mérieux, following my many years of service with the Group Mérieux, it is with no small amount of emotion that I would like to thank you for your unconditional support of this important event in honor of you father, Dr. Charles Mérieux. In 1955, Dr. Mérieux and President Herriot, both true visionaries, pulled together stakeholders and experts to reflect on the regulatory framework that was needed to ensure that everyone everywhere had access to safe and effective vaccines at a time when scientific research was advancing at a rapid pace. Let us not forget that at that time, vaccines were synonymous with innovation and new technologies. I will come back to this later.

Despite that fact that he speaks perfect French, I will continue in English for several minutes. We are so honored that this protocol evening will be closed by Professor Stanley Plotkin. Professor Plotkin, you are not only the global reference on vaccines, your close relationship to the founder of IABS carries on today with the Mérieux Family. Thank you so much for being with us tonight and having accepted to give the keynote talk tomorrow morning.

The extraordinary vision of Dr. Charles Mérieux has made the organization of this 65th Anniversary celebration that much easier! He understood before anyone else the need for international collaboration and acceptance of standardization which he wrote about in his book, *Virus Passion*.

65 years ago, President Herriot granted the use of these rooms for the first IABS Congress on the one condition that scientists from Russia were among the invited guests. Since then, over 150 conferences and congresses have been organized in this magnificent setting. The Conclusions of all these meetings have often served as the starting point for international

regulation of vaccines and other biological products. Since its creation in these rooms, IABS has collaborated with scientists and regulatory experts throughout the world. It was only natural, therefore, that the Mayor of Lyon recommend that this historic celebration take place where the important work of IABS started. I would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Mayor of Lyon for his support ever since I first spoke to him about this Anniversary celebration 3 years ago, I think it was, during a dinner at Biovision.

We would like to warmly thank Mr. Alain Mérieux for his support in the organization of this Anniversary event. Following in the footsteps of Dr. Charles Mérieux, your dedication, Mr. Mérieux, for improved health for everyone everywhere is an example for all who, as we at IABS, strive for dignity and access to good health for everyone in each and every corner of the planet.

As President of IABS, I am very proud to have this opportunity to thank these two strong pillars upon whom our organization was built.

Despite the perception that IABS might be mostly active in the Northern Hemisphere, North America and Europe in particular, we are putting enormous efforts on low- and middle-income countries, totally in line with the founder's vision. I would like to stress that in a globalized world with modern transportation, infectious diseases travel around the globe at the speed with which humans and animals, and animal products, are transported, let us say in 24 hours.

Therefore, we need biological products to fight epidemics as soon as possible, and in addition we need standardization to secure quality and safety of biologicals everywhere.

No borders between the two medicines, Sans frontières entre les deux médecines, we call it One Health today. COVID-19 reminds us once again that 70% of new infectious diseases in humans are of animal origin. Rabies is the ultimate example, where an integrated one health approach could save more than 60'000 lives a year - - this is only the official number - - if all existing tools were used; funding was organized; and political will was generated to adopt the plan elaborated by the OIE, WHO, FAO and GARC, the plan called "Eliminate Dog Mediated Rabies by 2030". There is no time to lose, please, most especially in this case, which brings to mind my friend Professor Peter Piot and his fantastic book about the discovery of the EBOLA virus and global need to fight diseases.

Here in Lyon, let us remember that the close community between human and veterinary sciences at IFFA Mérieux, starting in the late forties, gave rise to decisive breakthroughs in both veterinary and human vaccinology. Yes, at IABS indeed, we have continued for 65 years in the same spirit: breaking down silos; bringing together all stakeholders, most preferably with different opinions, to forge consensus on science and regulations for a better health in the world.

The challenges ahead are enormous:

- To reduce the time to develop, produce and regulate biological products. We would like to make these products available more quickly to those who need them.
- To foster emerging health solutions. We would like to facilitate standardization of innovative products and international acceptance of them.

- To remember that where vaccines are delivered effectively, sustainable health systems are working. I believe that GAVI contributes to major progress here.
- To insist on information technology and the role data bases have on political decisions, including health.
- Last but not least, acceptance of good science and innovation by the public at large, at a time when unfortunately, it has become so difficult, for the non-specialist, to distinguish between real and fake information.

IABS, in the footsteps of its founder, and nurtured by the dynamic created by its founding congress here 65 years ago, takes up these challenges. It should be remembered that at that time also, it was about totally innovative technologies.

We organize various symposia on challenges such as: how to create adapted regulatory frameworks for totally new technologies, like platform technologies, for a quicker production of vaccines; the role of New Generation Sequencing in the life cycle of biologicals; the impact of data bases as recently requested by major regulatory authorities; and not later than tomorrow and Friday: **“New paths for sustainable solutions to tackle global and emerging infectious threats”**. Is COV-19 looking around the corner?

Now, a particular word to the Chair of the Scientific Committee, Dr. Mark Bonneville and his committee composed of the “crème de la crème” in global biology. To all of you, a very warm thank you.

When an anniversary is the moment to look back at how good we were, which, of course, is the case for IABS, I preferred that this one look to the future, like the founders did in 1955. Indeed, while preparing this speech, I re-read Dr. Charles Mérieux’s book about the future: “Le virus de la Découverte”.

To better address the challenges that lie ahead, we have set up affiliates in order to tackle the specific challenges of the great regions of the world. Today we have affiliates in the EU, IABS-EU, with headquarters in Lyon, not a surprise, and IABS-NA, covering the U.S., Canada and Mexico. We are working hard to look at the best way to set up affiliates in Asia, Africa and Latin-America. By the way, IABS-EU is now moving its office to the Biopole in Gerland, neighbor to WHO Lyon.

I am immensely pleased with the way IABS has evolved over the years. It is widely recognized by the main stakeholders in biologicals as a truly independent platform, where requests for discussions leading to proposals are more and more frequent. But we all know, and it’s no secret for this honorable audience, that success and longevity depend in large part on financial stability. Which, for IABS, means reaching out for support. To ensure the financial stability of IABS, we have decided today to start a fundraising initiative. Foundations, philanthropists, companies : we welcome your support. I would like to thank all those who have helped us along the way. Your support has made it possible for IABS to have a real impact on global health.

I am proud of a fantastic team: I like to thank very warmly my predecessor Dr. John Petricciani who unfortunately could not be present today. A warm thank to all the committee chairs. Thanks to your voluntary engagement, from 3 yearly meetings a couple of years ago, to 10 today, and even more high-quality symposia and conferences are being planned. Ladies and Gentlemen, you can imagine that during the last weeks, many found their way to IABS for support and input in the global fight against new COVID-19.

Tonight, a special thank goes to two persons for their exceptional work and support to IABS: first of all, we thank Ms. Abbie Charlet for her last 10 years total devotion to IABS. Abbie, the Board has the great pleasure to deliver you tonight the special IABS award.

Before giving the floor to Professor Stanley Plotkin for the final speech, I give the floor to Madame Burillon and Mr. Alain Mérieux for Special Recognition of Dr. Daniel Gaudry.

I now have the honor to give the floor to Professor Stanley Plotkin for the final speech of this evening before going for diner.
