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As we all look ahead to this upcoming year, we have the opportunity to reflect on lessons learned from the past and imagine how we can collaborate to deliver better services in our profession through our ophthalmological societies.

The world now requires each ophthalmologist to act as an agent for social change, committed to collaborative leadership, with motivation and innovation for local and international entrepreneurship.

The Pan-American Association of Ophthalmology (PAAO) offers its membership very high-level educational activities, resources and opportunities such as the Pan American Congress, Pan-American Regional Courses, Resources for Educators, Webinars, PAAO Leadership Course, Training Programs for Ophthalmologists (Scholarships), and the opportunity of publishing scientific papers in the Journal Vision Pan-America. All these activities have been very successful and clearly demonstrate the PAAO's commitment to help ophthalmologists to assume responsibilities that result in a high local and global positive impact, in the public and private health system, collaborating for the present and future of our society.

PAAO's cooperation with the supranational institutions reflects accurately the Pan-American values and mission. There are 26 National Ophthalmological Societies and 20 Subspecialty Societies affiliated to the PAAO and we have collaborative projects with the Lions Club International Foundation. As we can see, the PAAO provides numerous services to benefit the community.

Through the Pan-American Ophthalmological Foundation (PAOF), we dream to do more with regard to supporting PAAO's noble mission. This can be made possible by changing paradigms and breaking down barriers that divide and building bridges between organizations, promoting intersectorial cooperation networks and combining efforts and knowledge among colleagues. Everyone can be agents for social change, contributing with leadership skills and innovation to improve patient care and the social and economic reality of our society.

We need to be encouraged in our capabilities, to learn how to avoid apathy and indifference, and to act in an exemplary way to improve our environment and to offer answers to our most urgent social problems. We need to extend our reach to our fellow colleagues to benefit other communities of the globe, and when feasible, to include them in our services.

With this perspective, PAAO and PAOF recently organized the Pan-American, NGOs and Service Clubs workshop “Collaborating For A Better Vision” during the World Congress of Ophthalmology (WOC 2016) in Guadalajara, Mexico. The participants were important supranational organizations such as Lions Clubs International Foundation, Rotary International, International Eye Foundation, ORBIS International, Helen Keller International and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO). Each presented their regional plans for Latin America and global action plans for the elimination of preventable blindness. These supranational institutions suggested how they could collaborate with PAAO's mission in education and prevention of blindness.

During the WOC2016 meeting, the PAOF Executive Committee conducted a meeting with the purpose of discussing its development highlights and to identify potential Pan-American leaders to be Ambassadors, representing the countries that need to be supported by the Pan-American’s mission. Please let us know how you would like to be collaborate supporting the Pan-American projects through donations to the PAOF.

What can we do better? Please send us suggestions of projects that you would support or that the Foundation could do in collaboration with supranational organizations. We welcome you to also recommend Pan-American Leaders to be an Ambassador of PAOF. Please write to Teresa Bradshaw at teresa.bradshaw@paao.org with your suggestions.

I would like to thank you because, as an Active Member of the PAAO, you are supportive of our mission and together we can all be agents for social change, providing a better vision worldwide for improved patient care and the elimination of preventable blindness.

Warm regards,

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President, Pan-American Ophthalmological Foundation