



# Presidential Address: SAFOG Inauguration (1st March 2013)

Good evening everybody

Prof Arulkumaran, President FIGO, Dr Kurian Joseph, President Elect AOFOG, Prof Sampaico, Secretary General AOFOG, Prof Seneviratne, immediate Past President of SAFOG, all other Past Presidents of SAFOG present here, Dr Rubina Sohail, Secretary General of SAFOG, all the distinguished SAFOG Council members, Presidents of National OBGY Societies affiliated to SAFOG, Vice President of RCOG, Prof Wendy Reid, Honorary Secretary, RCOG, Mr Ian Cook, Chairman of AICC RCOG Mr Pramathesh Das Mahapatra, Chairman of ICOG, Prof Konar, Dr Alka Sarswat, President AOGS and the honorable members of Agra OBGY society our host: colleagues from WHO, UNFPA, JHPIEGO, WDF, SAFOMS, AICC RCOG, ICOG, distinguished International and National Faculties and Delegates, Members of the Industry, Ladies and Gentlemen.



It is a dream come true. Way back in 1996, when our founder father and the first President Prof Rashid Latif Khan organized the first ever SAFOG Conference at Lahore—I was one of the delegates from India, along with great luminaries, like Prof Shirish Seth, Prof DK Tank, Prof NN Roychowdhury, Prof Rustom Soonawalla—to name a few. I have no clue, even today, why I was selected by Prof Rashid—as I was not the President of the FOGSI at that time. I am extremely grateful to you Prof Rashid, for giving me this unique opportunity, chance of a life time. I salute you sir.

Since then, I have seen SAFOG has grown and matured, traveling through Lahore, Dhaka, Colombo, Mumbai and Kathmandu, even twice in some of these great cities. But, it is a pity that we, as SAFOG, never officially met either at Thimphu or at Male—which are very much a part of SAFOG concept. It is time we should join our colleagues there—sooner than later—to exchange ideas and experiences on all aspects of women's health. This is our commitments.

This year, the theme of 9th SAFOG Conference is 'Women's Health in South Asia—Dreams to Reality'. This is also the year in which our SAFOG reached the age of 18 years—an adult by most laws. Let us all pray to allmighty for its good health. Let this adult move around to spread the knowledge of modern science in OBGY and the spirit of SAFOG—which is to care for the women's health. This brings me to the idea of having a theme subject during my tenure as the SAFOG's Chief Executive Servant (CES) for the next 2 years. I suggest the theme for next 2 years be—caring for women's health through current evidences. This is an idea and its executive nitty-gritty will be settled by the SAFOG council tomorrow. Swami Vivekanand, an young hyper-energetic philosopher monk from this land, once said—'Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life-think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea only, and just leave every other ideas alone. This is the way to success'. I do not claim success to my ideas but determined to work hard to make it a success. Let's take the challenge and try.

Dear Friends—we have a momentous task in our hand, i.e. to full fill our pledge to reach the magic figures of MDG5, by 2015, which is knocking at our doors. Sri Lanka has achieved it long time ago and all credits are due to the untiring efforts of our friends from Sri Lanka. Well done SLCOG. Now, this is our turn. Let us rise up to the occasion and initiate projects on 'Reducing MMR and Increasing CPR' by all the constituent member bodies of SAFOG. Our region being diverse in nature, we need to have different plans for different countries—but the goal remains the same.

Similarly, cancer of cervix is another big killer in our region, mainly because of lack of a regular screening and early therapeutic programs, in her own locality. We urge all the National OBGY societies to consider this issue. SAFOG will always offer its services.

During the last 2 years, we organized—SAFOG sessions—during the annual conferences of our constituent national societies. We are now looking forward to make these SAFOG sessions, a permanent feature in these events. We hope to get full support from all the national societies and, hopefully, can spread the new SAFOG theme during the next 2 years.

But the best session of SAFOG came through an untiring effort of our immediate Past President Prof Seneviratne, in receiving an invitation of a SAFOG session during the last FIGO congress at Rome. Thanks Harsha—we are grateful to you. But this great 'brain wave' of having a SAFOG session at FIGO, came from our Secretary General. Thanks Rubina.

We also profusely thank two other great men—who actually decided in our favor to utilize this global platform. One is Prof William Dunlop—the Chairman Scientific Committee of FIGO at Rome, and, Harsha, as SAFOG President, has thanked Bill officially. The other great man is our great friend and tonight's Chief Guest—Prof Sir Arulkumaran, President FIGO. Thank you very much Arul, for your kind support, not only to help SAFOG having this session at FIGO but also spending some quality time with us during the SAFOG Panel discussion on 'Maternal Health and its Economics in South Asia', inspite of your extremely busy schedule. We are grateful to you. I hope we get the similar opportunities at Vancouver, during FIGO 2015. We hope AOFOG will also consider inviting SAFOG in Bangkok, October, this year.

I know that SAFOG has a long way to go to fulfill the cherished dreams of our founder Maestros, i.e. to establish an organization whose main task will be to look after, at all the aspects of women's health in South Asia. Friends, let us take a vow to fulfill the dreams of our predecessors, for the sake of our women. I believe, we the people of South Asia have the knowledge and skill to offer the best support that our women need.

I end my talk quoting a part from a letter recently written to me by a young entrepreneur working in the women's health industry in India, for nearly 20 years.

'SAFOG being a leading ObGyn network has a unique capacity to influence and impact clinical practice as well policy. To accomplish this, SAFOG will have to 'own' the issue of women's health and position itself as an organization determined to catalyze resources and drive the region to attain the MDG and other important women's health issues. The mandate of SAFOG should be to get maternal health issues to the center of public health policy debates in all South Asian countries and raise corporate sector consciousness on the maternal health. This society should build international affiliations with development partners who are working on similar agenda.'

This letter has given me enough ideas to work for next 2 years. I desperately need everybody's help and guidance.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen.

Long Live SAFOG



**Alokendu Chatterjee**  
President, SAFOG