

**Good morning colleagues.**

On behalf of PREBIC Global, I would like to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to This year's PREBIC North America Meeting.

**What is both amazing and critical for the success of PREBIC is the commitment and effort of collaborative members, and this we hope continues well into the future.**

So Up front, I was to thank you for your participation in this meeting and for your future engagement with PREBIC.

**Here you will find collaboration, mentoring, feedback, and friendship.**

As you know, workshops to reduce preterm birth risk that became PREBIC in 2007, a not-for-profit research and education organization, began in 2003 with the mission of building interdisciplinary research capacity to understand, eliminate and mitigate the risk of preterm birth.

Since then, we have had yearly meetings, discussed important topics, and used the logic model approach to define and meet shared objectives and goal. A description of our early history has been published.

**Our annual Global summit and workshop in 2023 will mark 20 years of** this group's activities. Many who started these activities are still in this audience and several of you have been with us for over a decade. While I welcome the new generation of investigators in the field, and young investigators, *I offer my sincere thanks for the support of seniors whose efforts and support helped to build this organization.*

Through involvement in major projects such as the seminal report, "**Born Too Soon**", the publishing of several systematic reviews to fill knowledge gaps, white papers, primary research, and reviews, **we have established this group as thought leaders in the field.**

With Born too soon PREBIC championed the idea that we need to understand the parameters of preterm birth in developing countries particularly in Africa and Asia where most of the world's preterm birth occur.

We underlined the need for country, region, and even hospital specific data on preterm birth in the context of both the social and biological determinants of health.

From when I was an early investigator, I have valued and supported diversity in science through building research capacity, mentoring and collaboration. So, I was extremely pleased when, in 2017, PREBIC leadership put forth the idea of developing a Branch structure.

I saw this as a critical mechanism to bring different voices into the discussion of the problem of preterm birth. Further, this mechanism allows PREBIC to go to places where specific action is needed. While investigators in all branches delve into the mechanisms underlying preterm birth, toxic exposures, biomarkers and diagnostic methods, social determinants, clinical management

and the commercialization and implementation of treatment modalities, **each Branch can bring forth unique features relevant to its local environment.**

For example, structural racism is very much a driver of black-white-brown differences in preterm birth in North America and we still know very little about the quantification of structural racism or its biological correlates relevant to preterm birth. However, we have even less information about group or ethnic minority/majority differences in preterm birth in many parts of the world, and so what we find in north America may not be the whole picture.

**Thus, we must have input and engagement world-wide.**

**I would note now that having this Branch's meeting in the battleground state of TX uniquely sends the strong message to those worldwide who stand against women's rights, autonomy, and reproductive health both in and outside of pregnancy.**

On a practical level, the Branch structure is a mechanism for bringing investigators into the field of preterm birth research, for building relationships with local institutions and research groups, for the support and development of trainees and early-stage investigators, and for providing a platform and a space to grow leadership capacity.

In this PREBIC GLOBAL provides leadership consultation, infrastructure, integration between branches, working groups, and initiatives, in specific cases financial support, and a pathway for future development.

I am happy to say that I think the Branches have been enormously successful. Prior to the pandemic, they have hosted PREBIC GLOBAL meetings, held local in person meetings, have contributed to our young investigator programing, contributed to events such as the SRI satellite symposium and biomarker meetings, have succeeded in generating collaborative efforts, made connections with local governments, and reached out across countries within regions.

With the pandemic came a severe limitation to travel, and the Branches continued successfully by each sponsoring a highly successful webinars, the most recent of **which was the Africa/south America branch webinar on October 12 which had over 120 registrants.**

The Australasian branch has published proceedings of their meeting in a high-impact journal and is planning to have an in-person meeting soon. Moreover, the European branch has hosted a PREBIC GLOBAL virtual meeting as well as webinars. **Special thanks to Bo Jacobsson and Rachel Tribe, the leaders of the branch for coming here!**

Because PREBIC GLOBAL decided to not have an in-person meeting in 2022, the Board decided instead to provide significant financial support for each branch to have one in-person meeting as we transition to the next stage of the pandemic. This meeting is evidence of that support.

I believe that we are now witnessing the maturation of the Branch structure, and for that I am truly happy.

**There are developing plans for Branch-sponsored in-person meetings in Australia as prequel to the SRI meeting in Ghana and, in addition, we plan for an in- person PREBIC Europe/ PREBIC GLOBAL meeting April 24-26, 2023, in Dubrovnik, Croatia.**

**All of you here please strongly consider registering and participating in these meetings.**

**There is also a developing PREBIC GLOBAL Young investigator Division**—which I hope you will support—there are now plans for an Australasia-sponsored young investigator webinar for December 17<sup>th</sup>, and I hope the North America branch will also consider specific young investigator or trainee programming.

Finally, I wish you an extremely productive meeting, new ideas and pathways to do preterm birth research, and a renewed commitment to collaborative efforts as an engaged member of PPREBIC.