



The First Indian Congress on Alternatives to the Use of Animals in Research, Testing & Education

29th-31st January 2007

Sri Ramachandra Medical College & Research Institute, Chennai, India

Opening Messages

I am happy that I-CARE, Sri Ramachandra University and IIBAT, Chennai, have joined hands in organizing the "First Indian Congress on Alternatives to the Use of Animals in Research, Testing and Education". I am overwhelmed at the national and international participation and support the congress has received to realise it in India.

Perusing the scientific programme, it is heartening to note that the organising committee has focused especially on the "First R" – that is absolute "Replacement" of the use of animals in experimentation.

I hope that in presenting the current developments in the "in vitro techniques" and the latest and best non-animal pedagogical tools at the workshop sessions, the Congress will go beyond the event itself

Honoured organisers and guests, I am delighted that the efforts for the benefit of experimental animals are now also becoming recognised in an official form in your country. The continuing evolution, the recognition that all life has the same origin and that therefore all living beings are connected with each other and are dependent on each other, demands appropriate behaviour from humankind.

Taking increased responsibility also means taking on the duty to protect our fellow sentient beings, which cannot help themselves, and to respect and treat them accordingly. I wish us all that our fellow beings are at last officially granted a better status – they should no longer be objects. Instead they should be subjects with the right to respect

India has a bright future. The enormous growth potential of the sub-continent will lead to an enormous boom in biomedical research. This carries the risk of an enormous increase in animal experiments. However, that is *not* unavoidable.

Certainly, the teachings of a peaceful coexistence of humans with animals need not be exported from Europe to India. On the contrary, we have learnt – or should have learnt – this from India. But instead we, especially in Europe and the US, have claimed the "right of the strongest" to catch, confine and breed animals and to let them suffer, all for our medical progress and our practically unlimited thirst for knowledge. But rights also include duties. Whether for ethical-religious reasons, by pure humanity or to make better science: we are bound by duty to lay aside the instrument of past centuries – the scientific animal experiment. We *must* find a better way and we *can* find a better way.

Sadly, we will not be able to change these scientific traditions from one day to the next, probably also not from one decade to the next. The pseudoculture of animal experiments has done too much to shape

and bring into being the science of alternatives in every school, college and laboratory in our country.

I wish all the students and scientists at the Congress the ability to open their minds and hearts and see that science based on morality and compassion can achieve far more for the good of humanity. I wish the Congress all success.

Maneka Gandhi
Member of Parliament, Government of India
Chairperson, People for Animals, India

and care. I grew up with many species of animals and learnt early on to value their intrinsic worth.

This was seminal to my life's ambition and gave the impulse to create the Foundation together with Professor Zbinden. I myself could do no more. I had to leave the practical work to the scientists. I thank especially you, Mrs Gandhi, and you, Dr. Pereira, and all participants with whom I feel connected by our common endeavours.

Hildegard Doerenkamp
Foundress of the Doerenkamp-Zbinden Foundation
Zurich, Switzerland

our world of science. So we are deeply grateful for the "3R" concept of Russell and Burch, which allows a step by step exit. This concept has opened up the laboratories where animal protectionists once could only demonstrate in front of the closed gates of the universities.

Now that India belongs to the nations with the strongest growth, we appeal to the Indian scientists to remember their cultural roots and to forego degrading animals to measuring instruments, as the European and American traditions have done in the past century.

It was Mahatma Gandhi from whom we learnt: "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

To honour the late Mahatma Gandhi and the now sadly both late scientists Bill Russel and Rex Burch, I ask you for a minute of silence.

Franz P. Gruber
President Doerenkamp-Zbinden Foundation
Zurich, Switzerland