Dear EBCOG Friends and Colleagues,

It is always interesting to look back at the end of a year and see how far EBCOG has come and 2015 is no exception. It has, without question, been an exciting, busy and challenging year during which we have instituted some exciting initiatives and faced some hard decisions.

As you know, the European Congress in 2016 was due to take place in Istanbul. Unfortunately, because of an unexpected UN summit at the time of the Congress, which closed the area around the Congress Centre, we had to take the decision to move the Congress out of Istanbul. The Past President of EBCOG very kindly stepped in and agreed to host the Congress in Torino, with the kind support of the prestigious University of Torino. I am indebted to Prof Benedetto and the University of Torino for their help and support. I would also like to thank the Mayor of Torino who has very kindly offered to host us for a Welcome Cocktail and to arrange special rates for participants for public transport and reductions/benefits for the best museums.

We have a top quality scientific programme with HOTs and Master Classes and we are expecting an excellent event. Please join us in the beautiful city of Torino and be sure to tell all of your colleagues about the Congress. We really are counting on your support! The abstract submission deadline is February 15th 2016 and a record number of prizes will be awarded for the most outstanding free communications. I would like to thank the Chair of the Scientific Committee, Dr Rudi Campo and his colleague Dr Willem Ombelet for all their hard work developing the scientific programme and identifying high level speakers and chairs for the event.
We were all very sorry for the TSOG after all the efforts to organise and promote the Congress in Istanbul and I thank them for their ongoing support for the re-located Congress in Torino. As a gesture of thanks, the TSOG and EBCOG will run a Congress in Antalya in 2017. The event will be organised and managed by the TSOG but will have the full support of EBCOG.

I am excited to remind you that during the Congress in Torino, we will also be launching the EBCOG-EFOG Examination. This has involved a great deal of preparatory work and has been a long and complex process. However, we now have a great many EMQs, SBAs and MCQ questions which are being quality assessed as I write. Thanks to all of you who provided questions and to all the Leads for each part of the Knowledge Based Assessment element – Prof Johannes Bitzer, Prof Charles Savona Ventura and Dr Johanna Buechel and the OSCE Lead, Prof Diogo Ayres de Campos. I would also like to thank Dr Karen Rose for developing the Pre-Exam Course which will be run in January and all of my Officer colleagues for their unwavering support. Particular thanks are due to the Exam Director, Prof Ioannis Messinis, the Chair of the Exam Standing Committee, Dr Rolf Kirschner and the Senior Advisor, Dr Mourad Seif (now retired). We agreed in November that all those who have provided questions which have been accepted will be entitled to a number of CME points, which have yet to be determined. We have engaged the specialist company, Orzone, to assist us in developing and delivering the exam and I am extremely grateful to them and especially the CEO, Stefan Hallin, for their invaluable professional assistance, advice and expertise.

Once more visiting and accreditation is continuing to go well and a great many visits and re-visits have taken place in 2015. It has been my pleasure to accompany the Chair of the SCTR, Prof Juriy Wladimiroff during our two new country based initiatives (Italy and Poland). He continues tirelessly to organise and coordinate these visits and has done outstanding work with our Belgian, Italian and Polish colleagues to establish visiting systems in these countries. My profound thanks and congratulations go to Juriy for all his efforts.

On 7th August a delegation from EBCOG met in Copenhagen with representatives of the WHO- Europe. I would like to thank Prof Ruta Nadisauskiene for her help in setting up this meeting. As a result of the meeting, EBCOG approached FIGO which agreed that EBCOG should act as a representative of FIGO in WHO Regional Committee Meetings in order to help progress matters of great importance to the European region. As President of EBCOG, I sit on the FIGO Executive Board and always present a report, which will in future include the activities of the WHO Regional Committee. At the request of WHO, EBCOG agreed to discuss SRH, maternal mortality and child health with the European Commission with regard to prioritising
them as part of EU policy. I therefore met in September with Ms Isabel de la Mata, Principal Adviser Principal Advisor with a Special Interest in Health and Food Safety at the European Commission’s DG Santé. It was a very helpful and productive meeting and I have invited both the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Dr Vytenis Andriukaitis, and Ms de la Mata to join us, together with the President of FIGO and representatives of WHO and UNFPA, for the Presidential Session during the Congress in Torino. In addition, the Commission would like EBCOG to take a position on Violence against Women and Children and prepare a paper on FGM to present at the WHO discussion in January. Ms de la Mata also agreed to explore the possibility of having our two documents of Standards of Care on the Commission’s website as examples of “Good Practice”.

Our collaboration with UNFPA continues to be excellent and I would like to thank Dr Mourad Seif for brokering our introductions and also Dr Tamar Khomasuridze and Dr Teymur Seyidov for their great support and collaboration. I am delighted that through the funding granted to EBCOG from the UNFPA and the efforts of Juriy and the Russian Society of Ob/Gyn, the documents on Standards of Care have now been translated into Russian. In addition the EBCOG UNFPA Scholarship has been launched and the successful candidate for 2015 selected. This is an annual Award of the value of 4,000 Euros as a contribution towards the expenses of visiting a specialised centre which offers knowledge and skills to advance quality improvement in sexual and reproductive health in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Region. Dr Lela Shengelia, from Georgia, was the candidate selected and will undertake her placement in Edinburgh shortly and report back on her experiences at the Congress in Torino. Two more scholarships will be awarded in 2016 and these initiatives are set to continue for the next five years and EBCOG looks forward to helping UNFPA with its SRH activities. A joint paper (UNFPA and EBCOG) has been submitted to “Entre Nous”, The WHO European Magazine for Sexual and Reproductive Health on “Improving Standards of Care in Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare in the EECA Region”. I am now working with Professor Johannes Bitzer on a programme for Bachelor and Master Class on SRH which has been requested by UNFPE–EECA Region.

We have also agreed that the European Journal will be the Official Journal of EBCOG and they will publish our position papers with commentaries from leading experts. Special Discount rates are currently being discussed for new EFOG-EBCOG and also for EBCOG members. My thanks to Prof Allan Templeton for his work coordinating the writing and peer review of these papers which are all available on our web site. More are in the pipeline so please keep checking the website. In addition, the EBCOG/DPSG document on GDM screening has been accepted and published in the high impact publication “Diabetologia”. Many thanks to Prof André Van Assche for coordinating this.
The Work on European Reference Networks is advancing and we are working with the European Commission and the European Association of Urology to progress this. Prof Andre Van Assche attended meeting at EU on 1st July and a second meeting was held in Lisbon in October, with Prof Ioannis Messinis representing EBCOG.

Prof Michael Seckl, the Director of the Charing Cross GTD service is now in touch with the President and President-Elect of ESGO (Rare Gynaecological Cancers and GTD) and the European Association of Urology (EAU) is bidding for an ERN on rare urogynaecological conditions. EAU will include urinary fistulas in their ERN application and EBCOG will be a signatory. My thanks to Ioannis and André for their support in this work!

I would also like to congratulate Prof Fedde Scheele and Dr Angelique Goverde for their great success in successfully applying for an Erasmus Grant from the European Commission to develop the new EBCOG curriculum. The project officially started in September 2015 and will last until August 2018. Fedde has added Dr Jessica van der Aa to the team; she is a medical doctor and currently a PhD student and will be coordinating the project. The main objective of this project is to create a high quality pan-European Obstetric and Gynaecology training curriculum to improve and harmonise the health care of women throughout Europe. There is a real need for this, to allow the free movement of specialists across Europe and therefore to create comparable skills and training to ensure patient safety. Labour mobility for obstetricians and gynaecologists throughout Europe is stimulated by transnational education. The curriculum will replace the existing EBCIG curriculum and eventually become the basis of the EBCOG exam. This is a great achievement and I wish Fedde, Angelique, Jessica and everyone involved in the project every success.

I am also very happy to report that we have made contact with Dr Jennifer Zeitlin, the leader of Europeristat and will be attending the next Board meeting in Paris in April 2016.

I am keen that the efforts of all those who contribute to EBCOG and Women’s Health be recognised and so I am delighted that Council recently agreed with the proposal to award Honorary Fellowships. Honorary Fellowships are the highest honour that EBCOG can award and will be considered under three separate groups: 1: Past-Presidents of EBCOG; 2: Individuals who have made a significant contribution to the work of EBCOG and 3: Individuals of international repute in the field. Council agreed that the following Fellowships should be awarded in Torino:

**Group 1:** Prof Chiara Benedetto
**Group 2:** Dr Rolf Kirschner and Prof Ziva Novak Antolic
**Group 3)** Prof Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran and Prof Gamal Serour
As usual, the subspecialist and scientific societies have contributed enormously to our work and our collaboration grows ever better and closer. I would like to thank them all for their support for EBCOG and our activities. Together we really do achieve more. I would also like to thank the Past-President of ENTOG, Dr Maud Van de Venne, for all her work and to wish Dr Anna Aabakke every success for her Presidency. ENTOG has moved its 2016 exchange to Torino and I am sure it will be a great success and well attended. At its Council meeting in Utrecht, ENTOG agreed that its 2017 meeting will be held in the beautiful city of Ljubljana and of course the 2017 meeting will be in the same venue as EBCOG as usual.

I would like to end by thanking you all for your efforts and support. I would particularly like to thank the Officers, Executive Committee and Council members who attended the Council meeting in November under the very trying circumstances of the Brussels lockdown. It is not often our meetings are accompanied by armed soldiers in the hotel!

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a very happy, healthy and prosperous 2016 and I look forward to all that we will achieve together next year.

Best wishes,

Dr Tahir Mahmood
President of EBCOG