I am very grateful for the nomination from my own professional organisation, the Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists, and to all the other Member Organisations who have nominated me as a candidate for the election of President of WCPT for the term 2019-2023.

It has been a great joy and privilege to serve as the President of WCPT since 2015 and to have had the opportunity to work with a talented and committed group of people – the WCPT Board, staff of the Secretariat, and the wider global physiotherapy community of volunteers.

I attended my very first international physiotherapy meeting twenty years ago in September 1998, at the meeting where the Standing Liaison Committee of Physiotherapists in the European Union joined with WCPT-Europe to become the European Region of WCPT. Since then, I have been an active participant in and an ardent supporter of global physiotherapy. I truly believe in the WCPT strategic priority of creating a global community where every physiotherapist feels connected.

I have sought to be an open, accessible, accountable and engaged President promoting physiotherapy to the wider external stakeholder community. In addition, I have also worked with the next generation of physiotherapists, through my lectures and talks for students and early career physiotherapists, to encourage active participation in their local, national and global professional community.

I believe in change & innovation. When I sought election in 2015, I said I would ‘look in, look out and look to the future’. In ‘looking in’, I have led the board and staff in the development of an ambitious strategic plan – which involved unprecedented global consultation and participation. This is now being delivered on target and on budget. I brokered the very first large development grant from USAID which WCPT received in collaboration with Humanity & Inclusion (HI) to work with the physiotherapy communities in West Africa. Tangible results from the project are four new provisional member organisations in the region as well as further such development funding from HI and the World Health Organization (WHO) for work in Vietnam and Tajikistan. Key to enabling us to successfully apply for such funding has been the development of robust financial management systems which arose out of one of the first proposals I brought to the WCPT Board in June 2015 – the establishment of a Finance Committee.

‘Looking out’ has required a change in culture in WCPT – we have consulted widely on all aspects of our developments - and I have always articulated the message that we are ‘better together’. Along with our CEO, I have worked intentionally to build relationships in WHO to ensure that WCPT is seen as a key partner and technical adviser for WHO’s work. I worked with three other colleagues from international organisations [Global Alliance for Musculoskeletal Health, International Society of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation & Rehabilitation International] to establish the Global Rehabilitation Alliance and I was elected Vice-President at the foundation meeting in May 2018.

I strive to continuously create connections and raise the profile of WCPT. Ensuring that the WCPT database of experts – now the DOVES database – became an outward facing service to member organisations was a key goal of mine and I also have tirelessly used my network to connect physiotherapists globally in the development and growth of the profession. I proposed a Regional Summit where the Chairs of WCPT Regions formally met together with the WCPT Board for the first time in the history of WCPT and I also initiated WCPT Board meetings to take place outside London to
ensure greater engagement with our Member Organisations and Regions, which also proved cost-effective.

To the future: the WCPT governance review will ensure that we are an organisation that is an exemplar of best practice for an international professional, non-governmental organisation and a key participant in global civil society. I fully support this review. The Member Organisations will have a chance to shape the way the organisation works in the future to enable it to be strong and sustainable. The final approval of proposals will take place at the General Meeting in May 2019.

I am seeking a second term as President to continue the transformative work that has been taking place in WCPT. My plan is to continue the inward and outward reflection as I look to the future.

We have achieved a great deal in the past three years since our last General Meeting but we have much to do if we are to continue to grow.

Key areas I see for further development are:
1. Ensuring that all Member Organisations feel connected and engaged with WCPT, including areas where challenges currently exist.
2. The extension of the current governance review to our Regions, Subgroups and Networks.
3. A Summit with our Subgroups and Networks to ensure that WCPT understands, supports and promotes the requirements of our global communities of knowledge. If changes are required to create even better organisational structures, then I believe we should embrace those changes.
4. Increasing our influence in and contribution to the global health community with the ultimate goal of improving health for all. This will involve continue work with WHO, HI and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). As well as leveraging our participation in the Global Rehabilitation Alliance and its constituent members including the International Council of Nurses, World Federation of Occupational Therapists, International Society of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation and other international partners.
5. Seeking additional funding and exploring opportunities for philanthropy for development and innovation projects for the global physiotherapy community.
6. Continuing to ensure our governance and operations enable us to have, and evaluate, value, reach and impact.

I will continue to lead & facilitate discussion about the key questions and conversations we need to have to ensure the future of our profession.

I look forward to having an opportunity to discuss these proposals with you between now and May 2019 to listen and hear how you would like to see WCPT move the global physiotherapy community forward together.

Dr. Emma K. Stokes MISCP
September 2018.