

Your Support from RI

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RI General Secretary

Good morning!

It's great to be here in San Diego at this International Assembly, meeting a new class of district governors and being part of the excitement and energy of planning a new Rotary year.

As many of you know, I took over as general secretary of Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation this past July 1st.

Although I'm still relatively new to the job, I'm not new to the values and ideals of Rotary.

The mottoes of Service Above Self and Doing Good in the World, The Four-Way Test, the focus on integrity, and the promotion of goodwill, peace, and understanding through the fellowship of business, professional, and community leaders — these are all ideas and concepts that I believe in and strongly support.

So, for me, serving as your general secretary is not only a fascinating job but an opportunity — together with my wife Marga — to be a part of a truly extraordinary organization.

Like President-elect Sakuji, I love a challenge.

And so as I complete my first six months on the job, I would like to take the opportunity to share with you some of what I've been doing, what's going on more generally at the Rotary Secretariat, and some of the things that we'll be working on together in the months and years ahead.

As you know, one of the important roles of the general secretary is to serve as a vehicle for institutional continuity, providing a bridge from administration to administration, and also between Rotary and other organizations and institutions.

So while this International Assembly is primarily focused on planning for the 2012-13 Rotary year, my focus is also on Rotary's future in the longer term:

Taking a broader look at our entire organization, seeing what we're doing right, what we could be doing better, and where we need to be open to change.

And so with this in mind, during the past six months I have undertaken what I have informally called a "listening tour," so that I can better understand the breadth and scope of Rotary and all that the Secretariat does for Rotarians around the world.

As you know, there are approximately 600 Rotary employees at Rotary World Headquarters in Evanston and approximately 200 in our seven international offices and our Information Services Development Center in Pune, India.

So clearly, there is a lot for me to learn.

And I must say, the more I travel around the Rotary world and the more I get to know Rotary, the more I am in awe of our organization — the more I am simply in awe of all that Rotary does.

What this organization — what you, its members and leaders — have been able to achieve over the past 107 years, is truly remarkable, and I am humbled and honored to have been chosen to serve as your general secretary.

However, having said that, I do see many issues that we will need to tackle if we are going to remain a relevant and vibrant organization in the future.

But for today, I'd like to suggest five priority areas that I feel are the most important to get Rotary on the best footing possible as it begins its second century.

And here I want to emphasize that when I talk about the priorities of Rotary International and our Rotary Foundation, I am talking about shared — *shared* — not *separate*, priorities.

For Rotary to move forward, we need to embrace a “One Rotary” approach in which Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation act as one seamless organization, with the same mission and the same goals.

And as your general secretary I can assure you that I am working very hard to instill the culture of One Rotary, or better yet simply Rotary, in the Secretariat and among the Rotary staff around the world.

So the five priorities.

The **first priority** will come as no surprise, since it's been Rotary's signature global initiative since 1985 — that is the eradication of polio.

Yesterday, we heard from Bruce Aylward of the World Health Organization and Jeff Raikes of the Gates Foundation about how the polio eradication campaign is progressing, and how close we are — “This Close” — to the finish line.

But getting close is not good enough.

We have to get the job done and we need to do it for three reasons.

First, to save hundreds of thousands of children from the suffering inflicted by this terrible disease.

Second, the economic argument: it is estimated that the eradication of polio will save the world between \$40 billion to \$50 billion in health care costs over the next 20 years — an enormous sum that can be deployed to address other major global issues.

And finally, we need to eradicate polio because success will set the stage for the world's

next big global health initiative.

So we **cannot** and **will not** fail.

Now, Jeff and Bruce also reminded us of something that we already know: that the global polio eradication effort would not be where it is today without Rotary.

The total eradication of a disease that's plagued humanity for millennia is something that's only happened once before with smallpox. We're making it happen for a second time, and we need to make sure that Rotary gets its due share of the credit.

This isn't just a matter of fairness — it's also a matter of our own future.

And so we are working hard in the Secretariat to develop a robust Rotary public relations campaign in the run up to the eradication of this terrible disease.

Because the more Rotary is seen as an organization capable of achieving great things, the more we're recognized for what we've done — the more we'll be able to attract the members, the volunteers, the donors, and the strategic partners that we need to grow and to do even more.

In short, our success in polio eradication will set the stage for the next global initiative that Rotary chooses to tackle, whatever that may be.

The **second priority** that I see for our organization is to “operationalize” the new Strategic Plan and to translate the plan into concrete initiatives, so that it becomes a living document and not simply words on paper.

As part of that effort we need to ensure that the Future Vision Plan — our new grant making process — is ready for launch on July 1, 2013.

Successful implementation of Future Vision will lead to projects and programs in the six areas of focus that are better designed and more sustainable and scalable, and that will lead to greater impact.

This, in turn, will increase our profile, reputation, and public image and will make Rotary more attractive to outside funding sources.

In short, Future Vision will bring considerable and tangible positive benefits to clubs and districts.

At the Secretariat, we've been listening carefully to the feedback of Future Vision pilot districts.

We are putting in place a robust training program around the world to ensure that both pilot and nonpilot districts are well prepared for the transition — and we are also working hard to improve the tools available on the website to make the launch as smooth as possible.

Our goal is to make applying for, and receiving, Foundation grants more efficient, more flexible, and more user friendly — so that Rotarians can spend more of their time and energy Doing Good in the World and less on bureaucracy and paperwork.

But we won't achieve our goal of a successful Future Vision rollout without the full support and engagement of you, the district governors-elect, and of the district governors-nominee who will follow you on July 1, 2013.

You are where the rubber hits the road and I would ask that each of you make Future Vision a top priority during your year as governor because, after polio, Future Vision is the most important initiative that our organization has undertaken in the past 20 years — and it has to work.

Our **third priority** is to find a credible method for determining the total value of all of the service projects that our 34,000 clubs undertake each year.

We know how much funding passes through The Rotary Foundation — approximately \$100 million per year excluding polio — but we have no idea of the total value of all of the money raised, in-kind contributions made, and volunteer hours spent by clubs worldwide on service projects.

If we were to find a credible way of calculating that number, I am sure that it would be huge — in the billions — and, if so, would place us among the top humanitarian organizations in the world.

Having a credible number would also enhance our reputation, help with membership, and make us more attractive to potential strategic partners.

So as part of this attempt to capture this data, we are in the process of developing a new tool called Rotary Club Central, which we hope to roll out sometime next summer.

This will be an online resource for clubs that will help them maintain and preserve an institutional memory of past activities, set and track strategic goals and initiatives, increase their global impact in key performance areas, and allow the reporting of the global, collective impact of club, district, and zone activities.

It will also help us to share knowledge across our organization, and share what we do with the non-Rotary public, so that the rest of the world will better recognize Rotary's impact.

This brings me to our **fourth priority**, which is membership.

In some parts of the world Rotary is growing, in others we are treading water, and in others we are seeing a decline in membership.

Given that Rotary is a truly global organization, where one size does not fit all, I am encouraged that the Rotary International Board has launched an initiative to develop three-year regional membership plans that are tailored to specific regional needs and challenges.

As part of this effort, we need to focus on making Rotary more appealing and relevant to younger members, particularly in those regions of the world where our membership is getting progressively older.

We also need to make better use of social media, start identifying ourselves with youth organizations, look at expanding e-clubs, and give clubs greater flexibility with respect to attendance requirements.

Looking at the big picture, I think every 100 years or so it benefits an organization to step back and take a serious look at itself and its brand.

Now some of you may be thinking *brand* is synonymous with a logo or some kind of short-lived public relations or marketing exercise.

But that's not what we are talking about.

In reality, brand is an enduring and fundamental concept that gets right to the very core of an organization.

It answers the questions of who we are, what we stand for, and where we are headed.

It's about the strength and impact of an organization.

And it is on this larger level that Rotary faces a serious challenge.

Our own public image surveys show that people know our name but they do not know much about us.

In a media-saturated environment where we compete not only with traditional nonprofits but also with for-profit companies bent on philanthropy, we cannot afford to be anything but best in class in every dimension.

Recently we engaged the services of Siegel+Gale, an international agency with a track record of success helping large global nonprofits achieve better results.

Over the next two years we will be working closely with Siegel+Gale to develop and implement a revitalization strategy.

Right now their team is completing a robust research program that will provide a fresh global perspective of our brand, our membership, core strengths, competition, and even our operating philosophy.

Ultimately, I believe, this process will more than revitalize a brand.

It will revitalize Rotary — ensuring that Rotary is recognized the world over for what it does.

And make no mistake: what Rotary does is nothing short of amazing.

I also believe that our Rotary.org website needs serious improvement, and we are aggressively working to revamp the website, particularly with a view to improving its functionality and making it more user friendly.

Finally, we are in the process of developing a comprehensive social media strategy and recruiting a new chief communications officer.

Our **fifth priority**, in my view, is to bring Rotary more fully into the ranks of the major players in the world of global humanitarian assistance and development.

There is currently a spirited debate occurring on how best to solve the world's great humanitarian and development issues.

And in this debate it is becoming increasingly apparent that private-sector-led growth, and public-private partnerships, are keys to long-term, sustainable solutions for many developing countries.

And here we have Rotary, with its incredible platform of 1.2 million engaged, active, and motivated members, drawn from the business and professional networks of tens of thousands of communities.

In short, a private-sector platform that is unmatched in the world today.

And so the broader philosophical question I ask is: what role will Rotary play in this great debate?

How will we utilize our platform to contribute to this debate on both an operational and philosophical level?

We should be sitting at the table of this discussion — but often we're not.

One of the main reasons, again, is that we simply have not achieved the necessary level of awareness of what Rotary is, how it operates, and what it does.

As I mentioned earlier: we're accomplishing a tremendous amount, but we're not recognized for what we do.

And this represents a major obstacle in bringing our organization forward, and it's something we need to address in a significant way.

As your general secretary, I have a tremendous responsibility for the future of Rotary.

I also have a tremendous sense of optimism.

Addressing these five priorities, **as well as many others**, will strengthen our great organization and have a significant, positive impact down to the level of the club and individual Rotarian.

In addition, my team — the talented and dedicated Rotary professional staff — stands ready to help you, the district governors-elect, achieve your goals.

And in order to do this, we need to better connect Rotarians with the Secretariat, to increase awareness as to what the Secretariat can offer, and to make sure that the Secretariat is an effective, efficient, and useful resource for the clubs, so that the clubs are able to grow and carry out the mission of Rotary.

Rotary is an organization with an incredible history, and there is no question that its best years are yet to come.

As I did at the convention in New Orleans, I re-pledge to you today that I will invest every ounce of my energy to ensure that the Rotary flame burns ever brighter, so that working together we can continue to make the world a better place — for our families and friends, for our communities and countries, and for future generations to come.

Thank you very much.