President's closing remarks
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2012-13 RI President

In Japanese, we have a saying: *Yoku manabi, yoku asobi.* It means: Study well, play well.

Here in Lisbon, we have had a wonderful few days. We have learned so much about Rotary. We have found new ideas, and new inspiration for our service. And we have taken the opportunity to enjoy each other's company, and this beautiful city.

This convention has been a perfect celebration of the Rotary year that will soon come to a close.

For me, 2012-13 has been an incredible journey, of learning and of growth. When I look back at this Rotary year, every day brought something new. Every day was special. And every day was wonderful.

Wherever I stepped off a plane — in Africa, Asia, North and South America, Europe, and Australia — I was met with a smile by people wearing a Rotary pin.

And I saw the way that Rotarians are making a difference, in every one of more than 34,000 communities we serve. Again and again, I have seen how Rotarians found a need, and found a way to meet it.

In Kenya, I saw Rotarians caring for some of the countless orphans left by AIDS and other diseases. The need is tremendous, and there are no resources to meet it. Rotary is rising to this challenge, wherever and however it can. Children who would have had to survive on the streets are being given a home, an education, and a future.

In Israel, I saw a project that brought children with heart defects to an Israeli hospital for lifesaving surgery, with no regard for nationality or religion. I met family after family — Jordanian, Egyptian, Lebanese, and Palestinian — who found that the people they thought were their enemy cared enough to save their children.

As I walked through that hospital, I saw so many mothers and fathers learning that they were not as different as they had thought. And I saw hope — for the families of these children and for a more peaceful tomorrow.

In New York, I took part in Rotary Day at the United Nations with about a thousand of my fellow Rotarians. It was only a few days after Hurricane Sandy had struck the city. In New York alone, two million people were left without power, 100,000 homes were destroyed, and many more homes, roads, and tunnels were flooded.

Rotary Day was held just as the recovery was beginning. All over the world, Rotarians

were sending help. Local Rotarians were doing their best to help as well, while they also coped with an overwhelming situation.

I had the chance to meet many of them. And as we talked together about what had happened, I saw how they had come to see Rotary in a different way. They said the same things that we said in Japan after the earthquake and tsunami two years ago.

All of us had seen disasters on television or in newspapers. But now, the homes that were destroyed were our homes. They were the homes of our friends and our neighbors. Now we understand what it is to need help — and to receive it from strangers who care.

In this Rotary year, I have seen how much Rotary can help. And I have seen how great is the need, in so many parts of the world.

In this year, I traveled for the first time to Africa and to India and to the places where millions of people live on $1 or $2 a day. For the first time, I saw what it means to be so desperately poor.

In India, I saw countless children, some very young, begging in the streets. It is not unusual, when a car stops, for groups of children to run to it and bang on the windows, begging for money.

There are so many people that it is hard to absorb the scale of the poverty. There are so many that it is hard to remember that each person is an individual.

One day, in Delhi, something happened that made me see just one.

I was in a car with other Rotarians, on my way to visit a project. The traffic was heavy, and our car could not move. Suddenly, looking out the window, I noticed a little girl, about five years old, walking between the cars. She stopped at the car in front of ours. I saw her reach up her hand to knock on the window. It did not open. She knocked again, and the driver opened the window a few centimeters. She dropped a coin into the girl's hand and then closed the window.

The traffic still did not move. I thought the girl would go to the next car, but she did not. Instead, she stood on her toes, looking into the car. She was so small that her nose only reached the bottom of the window. I could not hear what she said, but I saw her point her finger, to something inside the car.

This time, the window opened quickly, and the girl raised her cupped hands. Out of the window came a bottle of water, which the driver poured into the little girl's hands. She drank. And then, she raised her hands to be filled again. But instead of drinking, she moved her hands down — to let an even smaller child, whom I had not seen, have a drink as well.

The next day, passing through the same spot, I saw the same girl holding the same very young child on her lap. They sat on the edge of the roundabout. As we drove by again, I saw her face. It was covered with dirt. But her expression was busy and animated. She was drawing a picture with her finger, in the dust, for her baby sister.

In the middle of that terrible situation of hunger and danger and want, she was doing something so natural, and so ordinary. She was trying to make her baby sister smile.

As I looked at that little girl's face, in that moment, it seemed to change. I did not see the face of an Indian street child. I saw the face of my own granddaughter, Rio. I saw Rio sitting there, with her younger sister, Rui. I saw her sitting by the side of the road, dirty, hungry, and abandoned. I saw her holding Rui in her lap, drawing a picture for her, to make her smile.

I saw her, watching the cars go past, and waiting — waiting for the person who would stop and open a window, to drop a coin or pour a few sips of water.

Those two little girls were only two of so many millions. But they are no different from the two little girls who are so precious to me. They need me just as much.

They need us even more. When I saw those little girls, I knew, as I never had before, how important Rotary is.

I had seen so many Rotary projects in India. I had seen the orphanages, the clinics, and the schools. I had seen the children who had been given a home and a safe life. I had seen how much good Rotary had done. Here, I saw two little children who were waiting for Rotary to do more.

My friends, I tell you today that our Rotary service matters more than you can possibly imagine — if we take the time and the care to do what is needed, not what is easy for us; if we have the wisdom and the perspective to understand the difference that our work can make; if we have the vision to support our Rotary Foundation, so that it can be there to support the people who need us most.

This year, I have seen so many ways that Rotarians have built a better world.

And I have seen how much there is left for us to do — and why it is so very important that we work together to build a larger and more powerful Rotary — with more members, more active clubs, and a stronger Foundation.

My friends, I wish you the best as we end this Rotary year of *Peace Through Service*. And I wish you all the success in the new Rotary year as you *Engage Rotary, Change Lives*.

Thank you.