



## GENERAL SECRETARY'S SECRETARIAT UPDATE FOR THE 2016 ROTARY CONVENTION

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Korea  
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Good morning, everyone!

Annyeong hashimnikka!

It's a great pleasure to be here in Seoul, this vibrant center of culture, technology, and innovation.

And I would like to thank all our Korean Rotarians and our gracious hosts for putting on such a spectacular celebration. Kamsahamnida!

You know, Seoul is a perfect place to hold a Rotary Convention. Why? Because, among other things, Korea represents innovation. And innovation is what we need today at Rotary if we are to realize our full potential — in membership, Foundation giving, humanitarian service, public image, and attracting new generations.

Our founder Paul Harris knew this, and at the Rotary Convention almost a century ago, he said, "The Rotary of tomorrow cannot, must not, be the same as the Rotary of today."

And we don't need to look far to be inspired by the impact of innovation. We all know some of the symbols of Korea's success — its technology businesses, including two of the top five smartphone companies in the world.

Now, not many people outside Korea know that Samsung was launched in 1938 to sell groceries. Since then, it reinvented itself multiple times. It listened to its customer base, followed retail trends, took advantage of opportunities, and now is a top manufacturer of TVs, mobile phones, and kitchen appliances. And Rotary needs to continue to do the same.

So let me tell you what our great organization is doing to innovate and move forward.

Let's look at membership, because Rotary's strength is in its members. We've brought polio to its knees with 1.2 million members, but think what we could do by attracting and retaining even more members.

So, over the past few years, responding to your input, we have introduced a number of

new resources to help you achieve these goals. As President Ravi mentioned yesterday, the most recent is Rotary Global Rewards — which Ravi has done a tremendous job in bringing to fruition — and which provides Rotarians with discounts and special offers for a growing number of products and services around the world.

In the technology arena, we have introduced a redesigned website — Rotary.org, the window to our organization — which tells Rotary’s story in a clear and compelling way to potential members and donors. And more than 20,000 Rotary clubs have adopted Rotary Club Central to help set and track their annual goals for membership, service, and Foundation giving. And you will be seeing significant improvements and enhancements to Rotary Club Central and the website during the coming Rotary year.

Now, recognizing the importance of improving our public image, we recently completed a comprehensive brand strengthening initiative and rolled out a new visual identity, stronger messaging, and expanded media outreach.

As a result, recognition of Rotary’s work is increasing globally: We’ve received a tremendous amount of positive media coverage, ranging from Time Magazine, the New York Times, and Forbes to the BBC, Al Jazeera, CNN, and Sky News. And our End Polio Now campaign is a finalist for the Silver Anvil awards, known as the Oscars of public relations.

Rotary’s social media presence has also become much stronger. Let me give you just one recent example: Our live stream event for World Polio Day last October surpassed all our previous records for engagement on social media, with 145 million people reached through shared content on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

In fact, for any event, we need to also focus on telling our story to the general public. Just a few weeks ago on 30 April, nearly 9,000 Rotary members attended a Jubilee audience in St. Peter’s Square by invitation of Pope Francis. News coverage was significant, and included Vatican Radio and Voice of America Noticias.

And Rotary’s global engagement on social media for this event was off the charts. For example, one of the Rotary Facebook posts which included the message from Pope Francis about our efforts to end polio received 87,000 likes and reached 1.3 million people within 48 hours.

So our efforts are paying off. And Rotary is earning greater credit for the quality of our work and our impact.

We are also working hard to run an efficient and cost-effective organization. This past year, under President Ravi’s leadership, we put in place additional cost-cutting measures that resulted in more than \$1 million in savings.

In 2015, The Rotary Foundation earned a top rating of four stars from Charity Navigator, the premier evaluator in the United States for nonprofit organizations. The Foundation was also listed by CNBC as one of “The top 10 charities changing the world

in 2015” due to the impact of our “sustainable humanitarian projects” and, in particular, our PolioPlus program.

And now, finally, how are we supporting our organization’s efforts to improve communities worldwide?

We just completed the largest grant model evaluation Rotary has ever carried out, reflecting responses from almost 6,000 Rotarians in 154 countries. The results of this will determine what changes are needed for the model to deliver even more sustainable and high-impact projects to improve our communities.

Exciting improvements are also coming to our online grant application tool, again based on your feedback. In the next few months, you’ll see new features to make the grant process simpler and faster.

Working together we are increasing our capacity to achieve more. This past year we reached the highest contributions to The Rotary Foundation Annual Fund in our history, exceeding our goal of \$123 million. And the Endowment Fund’s current and projected net assets have already exceeded \$1 billion, ahead of our 2017 target.

So, I congratulate all the Rotary clubs for these accomplishments in attracting new members, surpassing our fundraising targets, and increasing global grant activity.

But despite the many achievements and advances, we cannot rest on our laurels. Over the past few years, many Rotarians have been asking important questions regarding our organization and its future.

What if every Rotary club implemented a clear strategic vision for its future?

What if we decided to put less emphasis on attendance and more on member engagement?

What if we thought differently about our club and district dues structures?

What if we took a hard look at some of our more hallowed traditions and provided those clubs that want it the flexibility to operate as they think best?

Well, as you have undoubtedly heard, the Council on Legislation, which met this past March, has given you the tools to be innovative at the club and district level and address these challenges. You now have the ability to adapt your service to the needs of a rapidly changing world.

From the beginning, Rotary was designed to reflect the needs of its members and its communities. And these needs and communities evolve.

So the Council has given you the tools for increased club flexibility; clubs now have more freedom in determining their meeting schedule; they can now adopt simplified and more inclusive criteria for membership.

Rotary has also been working hard to address an additional challenge: How can we offer an experience that is attractive to today's young professionals — a generation that is detached from traditional institutions but is also keen to embrace a cause, to make a difference? Can we find better ways to transition our Rotaractors to Rotarians?

Again the Council has responded: Rotaractors can now become members of Rotary clubs while they are still in Rotaract. This is vital, as currently, only 5 percent of Rotaractors join Rotary. Imagine what we could do with this huge source of passionate potential members that we are missing.

So as we continue to look forward, we need to ask ourselves, very simply, what kind of Rotary do we need to be? And what we hear from Rotarians from many parts of the world is that we need to be ready to adapt. After all, we have a great tradition in Rotary, but it's our tradition. We made it and we own it — it doesn't own us — and if it no longer serves its purpose, we can change it.

So we are asking all of you to continue to be voices for doing everything we can in Rotary, not just everything that's comfortable or easy or represents the way things have always been done.

Continue to be advocates for thoughtful, positive, and lasting change. Because you are the ones who have been a gift to the world, and you are the ones who will help Rotary serve humanity and realize its destiny in the coming years.

And we at the Rotary Secretariat will be there for you, in every way that we can.

I know that I speak for every one of us on the Rotary International staff when I say how proud — how proud — we feel to walk through the doors of One Rotary Center and of our international offices every morning, knowing that our work supports your work and that your work is changing the world for the better, day by day, community by community.

Thank you very much.

Kamsahamnida!