



## RI PRESIDENT-NOMINEE'S ACCEPTANCE REMARKS

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14 June 2017

President John and Judy, President-elect Ian and Juliet, senior Rotary leaders, my family of Rotary!

I joined Rotary in 1978, and I will remain forever grateful to two people. First is my friend, doctor, and mentor, professor Charles Olweny, who invited me and made it his duty to persuade a reluctant and suspicious me to attend a Rotary club meeting. I finally went out of respect and was pleasantly surprised to discover that the club was full of people I already knew. This is the power of invitation and persistence.

Charles brought me into Rotary. But what made me want to remain a Rotarian were two successful Rotary projects, starting with a young Karimajong girl, Margaret Rose Illukol, from a remote northeastern part of Uganda. Margaret's entire face had been chewed up by a hyena when she was left sleeping alone in the thatched hut of her nomadic parents.

The Rotary Club of Kampala took up the case, and after wide press publicity, Australian Rotarians came ahead of American Rotarians and collected Margaret from Kampala and took her to Newcastle, Australia, where it took more than 20 complicated surgeries over several years for her face to be reconstructed. Margaret Rose not only survived, but went on ahead to become a registered nurse at the same hospital where she had been treated.

The second project, which the American Rotarians started after they arrived too late for Margaret, was what today is globally known as the Gift of Life. This started with successful open-heart surgeries for three children: Grace Agwaru, John Engole, and Robinah Nakabuye from Kampala. Thanks to Rotarian generosity, they are all well and alive. This is the power of Rotary projects, and for me it was impossible to remain indifferent after learning of these cases.

The second person I am grateful to is PDG Juli Adelus-Adeluyi of Lagos, Nigeria, who gave me confidence that I could become something. He came to me after I made a small presentation at Hiroji Mukasa's Presidential Conference in 1983 in Nairobi, looked straight at me and said, "Young man, you will one day be a district governor." Juli crossed my Rotary path again twice as an IA trainer in 1987, and as a substitute RI president's personal representative at my district conference in 1988.

Today, 39 years later, because someone invited me, and another one gave me confidence, I stand before you with great joy and utmost humility to accept the nomination as president of Rotary International for 2018-19.

Friends, I know that many Rotarians would qualify to lead this organization. But only

one person can do so at a time, and I am glad and humbled that I was selected to be that person for 2018-19. I was at the bus stop at the right time, and what you see here today is about *opportunity*.

This honor is shared by my family, country, and continent, knowing that I am only the second person ever to reach here from that old continent of 55 countries and 1 billion people. Africa has benefited in so many ways from this organization, and it is a continent of great Rotary potential for membership, projects, as well as contributions.

I pledge to look forward and backward to embrace changes, and flexibility to reinforce, rather than lose sight of, the fundamentals of our cherished value propositions. I will continue the culture of collaboration by the troika at the top echelon of our organization, and draw on the knowledge and experience of the past presidents who have done so much for Rotary. In addition, adherence to strategic planning will be entrenched for smooth annual successions and consistent direction. I look forward to strengthening growth, retention, and extension, as well as good governance, including evaluations.

Our organization has made landmark strides globally in polio eradication, health, water, literacy, and other concerns, and today we stand tall at the threshold of great possibilities. As a result, we should acknowledge and exploit Rotary's capacity and power to change the world, and I invite you all to join me to propel our Rotary ship into the orbit of relevance, visibility, and sustainability.

Rotary affords us an incredible potential to serve humanity. But truth must be told. In the process of doing good, we are the biggest beneficiaries, because our lives change. We become better people and enjoy that intrinsic satisfaction to which we cannot put a price. It is true that One Profits Most Who Serves Best. Accordingly, let us fold our sleeves and get ready to have fun in *Rotary Serving Humanity*, and *Rotary: Making a Difference*.

Long live Rotary! May it grow in stature and scope to do even more good in the world.