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**Rotary International Convention**  
**14 June 2006**  
**Copenhagen, Denmark**

President Stenhammar, President-elect Wilkinson, and Rotarians from all over the world,

Thank you so much for the privilege to join you. Thank you so much for this warm welcome, so much for this chance to be at center stage. It is quite a place that you've made for your international convention, and it is extremely exciting to be here together with you. I've traveled a long way to be here because I wanted to come to say thank you, and I wanted to come to give you the greetings of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whom we all have the great honor to serve and work with as he helps to lead the world toward safety, security, and shared prosperity. There is no group in the world that does more, I think, than Rotary, in all its chapters all over the world, to show how men and women in their daily lives can contribute to making a safer world.

I have had such wonderful opportunities to celebrate with you at the United Nations the 100th anniversary of Rotary last year, as well as the 60th anniversary of the United Nations. Each time I am with you I am inspired, I'm charged up by what you do. And I know I'm coming for a charge-up today.

Your motto, your mission, "Service Above Self," is a lifesaver for the planet. And so is the way you put it into action. The way you demonstrate leadership, I think, is a vital message for all the world. Who is not inspired in any part of the world by your effort, PolioPlus, and what it has proven about how we can all contribute? Rotary stands fundamentally for the proposition that we all have a meaningful contribution to make. You led, in 1985, with the call to eradicate polio.

You led the world's institutions, because that is the way it is: The politicians do not lead, they follow. It's the people who lead. You pointed the way; you took on a huge goal; you said, "This can be done, this must be done;" and you've inspired leadership from all over the world. And we're that close to seeing your vision fulfilled.

You've already reduced by a factor of 1,000 the incidence of this killing and debilitating disease. I want you to know you can count on all the United Nations to help you see your vision through to success. We're going to get there soon.

I'm here to ask you for a favor. I'm here to ask you for your energy, your commitment, your guidance, your example, your wisdom, your proof of success in helping the world to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Ladies and gentlemen, these goals are our only route to peace on the planet. They were adopted by all the world's leaders in September 2000 at the U.N. Millennium Assembly, at a time of hope for the new

millennium. One of my close colleagues says he thinks it may be the only time in his lifetime that the world's governments – all of them – will agree on anything. Let's hope that's not the case, but they did agree on a bold vision, like your vision of eradicating polio.

They agreed on a bold vision, that we must make our new millennium a millennium of shared well-being as our only hope. And they took on, perhaps unusually, an actual timetable and set of milestones. They said that by the year of 2015, we should be making decisive progress against income poverty (that means people who don't have enough money to meet their most basic needs); against hunger; against disease; against mothers dying in childbirth (half a million this year will die in childbirth of readily preventable causes); and in reducing decisively the proportion of people who lack access to the most basic amenities, especially safe drinking water and sanitation. These are hardly amenities; these are life's necessities.

The world's leaders set a timetable, and they set some quantitative goals, and then they quickly got sidetracked. September 11 came, then the terrible conflict in Iraq, and the attention turned to violence, conflict, war and terror. In my personal view, not enough of the world's leaders yet understand that the real route to peace, to security, to the end of terror, is by helping everybody on the planet to achieve their basic needs and their hopes.

And I know that, coming here, I'm going to find like-minded people. You are leaders in your communities all over the world, from about 140 countries, representing Rotary clubs in nearly 170 countries of the world, more than a million people. You are therefore working for, representing, and helping billions of people around the world.

You've asked me to talk about water, health, and hunger. Those are the Millennium Development Goals, those are the routes to security, to peace, to well-being, to breaking the poverty trap. What I say in my book *The End of Poverty*, is that the Millennium Development Goals are not only achievable; we should regard them indeed as a halfway station, because we are the generation, the first generation in the history of the world, who can realistically say that we can end extreme poverty in our time.

If we can cut hunger by half, and child mortality by two-thirds, and maternal mortality by three-fourths, and lack of access to water and sanitation by half by the year 2015, as the Millennium Development Goals say, we can eliminate these scourges by the year 2025. That must be our purpose, ladies and gentlemen, because the fact that we can do it is not only a motivation, it's not only a call to action. It is our existential necessity. If we can do it, how can we afford not to do it?

How can we believe that life will be valued on this planet if around two million children will die this year of malaria, a disease that is 100 percent treatable with a US\$1 dose of medicine? How can we believe that life will be valued, anywhere on the planet, if those two million children will not be protected from malaria, even though a bed net that can protect them from that disease costs just \$5, lasts five years, accommodates two children, and thereby requires an expense of just 50 cents per child per year for a disease that will

claim two million lives this year? How can any of us be safe if every child in a malaria zone is not also made safe by the protection of an insecticide-treated bed net? I don't believe any of us can be safe unless we are striving to make all of us safe. It is our calling, and it is our purpose, and it is your example of action, to try to convince world leaders and communities and businesses around the world that we can accomplish these great goals.

You are truly leaders, while too many of our politicians are wringing their hands saying, "We can't do this, we can't do that." They sometimes tell me, "How can we get the bed nets to the children? There's so much corruption." I say, "Well, how is it that Rotary International is bringing polio to its knees and eliminating that scourge?" Rotary didn't say, "Oh, we can't do this here, we can't do that there." It just did it.

And I have come to understand, ladies and gentlemen, that our biggest challenge is actually not the lack of caring, nor is it cynicism. It is, ironically, defeatism. Many of our leaders say we can't even get started because they're so afraid of what might happen, when you know that we must get started because that's how we will prove success.

Now what I want to tell you – and you know it better than I -- that what you're doing with regard to polio can be done with regard to unsafe water, with regard to hunger, with regard to other diseases. Your demonstrated leadership on the ground, practically putting the drops of polio vaccine into the mouths of children in all parts of the world, is the model of service to bring an end to extreme hunger, to bring an end to the millions of deaths from debilitating diseases, diarrheal disease, respiratory infection, malaria, other killers that are utterly preventable or treatable. It is the service solution, the practical, 'in the village' solution, that can ensure that there's safe drinking water in protected springs, in dug wells, in bore-holes, to ensure that everybody in this world at least has the decency and the life need of safe drinking water every day – and not on the 5- or 10- or 15-kilometer walks of the women and the children, often two or three times a day, in conditions that leave them bereft of hope and energy and opportunity.

My colleagues and I are working in villages all over Africa on an initiative called Millennium Villages, based on the ideas of Millennium Project which I direct for the secretary-general. We are working in villages that are committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. These are just like the villages that you are working in all over the world, because there isn't a village in the world that doesn't want to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. There isn't a village where the parents are not committed to the healthy upbringing of their children and to giving their children an education and a chance in the world's 21<sup>st</sup> century society.

We've found – and you know it – that in these Millennium Villages, that even within one year, it's possible to achieve what we call the Big Five. If poor farmers are given access to improved seed varieties and fertilizer, typically they can double or triple or quadruple their food output, even in a single growing season. And even in a single growing season, they can carry a community from extreme hunger, even famine, to a bumper crop, a

surplus, adequate food, school feeding programs, and income earned by selling the food on the market. That's number one.

We have found that, even within a single season – a matter of weeks – it is possible to get the scourge of malaria under control. We have said to the official donor agencies, “Stop trying to sell bed nets to people with no money.” It's as if Rotary were trying to sell polio vaccines. You wouldn't have gotten very far if you had told them, “Well, that's only 5 bucks.” But if you can believe it, that is what the richest countries in the world have been doing with bed nets. It's intolerable. We have the means to get a bed net to every child that needs one. And if the anti-malaria medicines are available and the bed nets are available, the incidence of malaria drops immediately and the mortality by perhaps 80 or 90 percent within weeks. That's number two.

We have found that within a year, any village, if it's given a helping hand, can build a clinic; a clinic that will have antibiotics, oral rehydration solution, access to information for the community about stopping the spread of diseases like AIDS, awareness of sexual reproductive health, so that mothers, half a million, are not dying in childbirth every year the most tragic and wasted deaths. When we started the Millennium Villages, we were asked by the villagers, “Help us build a clinic.” I thought that would be a project that would take a great deal of time and effort. I was initially skeptical. You know what they said? “Just give us a little bit of cement and corrugated iron roof and some wire, and we'll do the rest.” So we did that – just like you've done. The materials cost about \$5,000. Since then, a beautiful, five-room clinic in Sauri, Kenya, went up. It now sees around 200 patients a day, and it's a lifesaver for a village of more than 5,000 people. It's astounding what can be done. Why? Because the villagers do it themselves. They're looking for that helping hand. They're not looking for a handout. That's number three.

We have found that in one year, it's possible to bring safe drinking water to every village. Many places where I have worked in recent years have no safe drinking water at the start. Mothers are walking miles to get to a dirty water spot, where you wouldn't even dream of taking a sip, and that's where they get water for their children every day. And to boot, they walk five or six hours, often an hour there and back, three times a day, for that water. But you know, a protected spring is something that a community can put up in a few days if it has the cement and a couple of the pipes to do it. And a bore-hole can be dug, and protected water sites can be arranged, so that women are not be so burdened in the villages. The village water supply, therefore, can be made safe within the year, and the community will do it if we give the tools to do it. That's number four.

And finally, ladies and gentlemen, for the same reason, it's possible to ensure that every child in the village is in a school before the end of the first year. Many rural areas and impoverished regions don't have their children in school. Often only 20 percent, maybe 40 percent, of the school-age children are actually going to school. We know there are perhaps 150 - 200 million young children not attending primary school. The schools are too far. They have no facilities. The children get nothing to eat for hours, so they can't even sit there and learn. Yet we have found that within a year, it's possible to put up the schools with the community doing the building. Again, it's a matter of cement, some

bricks, and a corrugated roof, and beautiful schools can go up with the community's own work.

And once the farmers are doubling or tripling or quadrupling their crop yields, then the local community can give a school feeding program, a midday meal, to every child in the community. And I'll tell you, in the villages in Kenya where this started a few years ago, the school went from ranking around 170<sup>th</sup> out of some 200 district schools on the national 8<sup>th</sup> grade examination, to a rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> best in the district. As the headmistress observed, the students had been too hungry to be able to learn. And now, with this school feeding program that reaches all the children, 100 percent of the children are attending, and they are learning, and the school is at the top of the district rankings. Every community can have well-performing schools, and this can be accomplished even within a year. That's number 5.

The total cost of these basic investments, we've learned, is around \$50 per villager per year from our project. This sum is then combined with contributions from the government, other NGOs, and the community itself. This small sum is not only something that the rich world can afford. The truth is that we can not afford to fail. This \$50 per person per year from outside help is a road out of disaster, out of death, out of suffering, out of violence, out of conflict, out of the seedbeds of terror and the transmission of disease, for the whole world. If we want global security, we'd better help to achieve the Big Five.

Now, Rotary has proved that this can be done on a worldwide scale. Millennium Villages everywhere, achieving the Millennium Development Goals, is not only a dream, but a reality that is within reach, with Rotary's leadership. You are the world's leaders while so many others just carry fancy titles. So I want us to act. I take inspiration from you. You are achieving dramatic successes through voluntary action, through Service Above Self. You are adopting practical means to end suffering and help put people on a path of security and dignity, and thereby to give dignity and security to all of us as well. That's the indivisibility of the world.

I want to say to you, in closing, the world needs you – urgently. We have both the greatest chances for progress and the greatest risks that we've ever faced. In other words, there is no certainty in the world, only choice. You have chosen so wonderfully; you are leading by your choice. I want Rotarians all over the world to know: Please count on me to support your leadership. We count on you. Thank you so much for what you do.

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