

84TH ROTARY DISTRICT 9200

CONFERENCE & ASSEMBLY

13 – 16 May 2009, UN Complex, Nairobi

Welcome Address By District Governor Kaushik Manek

His Excellency, The Vice President and Minister for Home Affairs, Hon Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka

Rotary International President's Personal Representative, who is also the Rotary International President-Nominee, Ray Klingensmith and your dear wife Judie

Rotary International Director, Gordon McNally

Rotary International Director, Sam Owor

Your Excellencies, High Commissioners and Ambassadors

Representatives of the United Nations and various UN organisations

District Governor Elect Tadesse Alemu

District Governor Nominee Stephen Mwanje

Past District Governors

District and Country Officers

Assistant Governors

Club Presidents and Club Presidents Elect

Rotaractors, Interactors, Inner Wheels,

Lion District Governor DK Shah and other Lions

Distinguished guests

My fellow Rotarians

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my sincere pleasure and honor to welcome you all to the 84th Rotary District Conference and Assembly. As I welcome you this morning, I do so with a sense of humility and respect, especially for those of you who have traveled from the remotest and farthest parts of our vast District covering five countries to be here today. I am overjoyed and elated to see that we have not just met but exceeded our target for Conference attendance.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am proud to be a member of this worldwide Rotary family of 1.2m men and women who have dedicated themselves to provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations and help build goodwill and peace in the world. Your Excellency, Hon Vice President, you are no stranger to Rotary and Rotary in this District is extremely privileged to have you grace this function for us, both on your behalf and on behalf of His Excellency President Mwai Kibaki. We are also most honored as a District to have none other than the Rotary International President Nominee Ray Klinginsmith to be the Rotary International President's Personal Representative to this Conference. For RI President DK Lee to nominate a Rotarian of Ray Kinginsmith's caliber and stature to represent him at this Conference is a measure of the importance given to our multi-country District and I am confident that we will benefit immensely from Rtn Ray's wisdom and Rotary experience throughout this Conference.

The venue for this District Conference is the United Nations complex. Rotary and the United Nations have a long history of working together and sharing similar visions for a more peaceful world. As many of you may be aware, Rotary played an important role at the time of the formation of the United Nations and holding the Conference at the UN Headquarters is an opportunity for us to rekindle the relationship in our District.

All in all, as District Governor I could not have asked for a more fitting start to this Conference. My Dear Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen, in the next four days, we have an opportunity to strengthen our understanding of Rotary and of Rotary's timeless principles of service and fellowship and to have a lot of fun too. All District Governor's have goals and themes for their Conferences. My unwritten goal for this Conference is to expand the boundaries of human love and friendship to make this world better a better place for us all. And to borrow from the words of Rotary's Founder, Paul Harris, we have four uninterrupted days "*to harness the great power of friendship to help do the world's work*".

This year Rotary International President D.K. Lee called upon Rotarians to focus on the most precious resource of our community: our children. He called upon us to '***Make Dreams Real***' for the world's children by putting a special emphasis on Children at Risk. This theme is so relevant for us in our part of the world. Ladies and Gentlemen, it is horrifying to note that each day, and I mean each day, some 30,000 children under the age of five die from preventable diseases and needless

causes. So many more die in our District from lack of access to clean water, poverty and malnutrition.

Your Excellency, Rotarians in our District have rallied to this call. I have been inspired and most humbled to see and feel first hand the exemplary work done by Rotarians in *Making Dreams Real* for our children through the many service projects to facilitate access to clean water, alleviate hunger, prevent malaria, immunise against polio and help children read and write and go to school. As District Governor, I have been taken aback not by the many and sometimes daunting challenges we face in our vast and diverse District, but by the special efforts, commitment and passion of individual Rotarians and clubs in every part of our District in giving our children a glimpse of a better future. Early last year, when Kenya was suffering from the post election crisis and violence, Rotarians were at the forefront of alleviating the suffering of the internally displaced persons by helping to provide shelter, food, medicines and blankets. With the current drought situation in Kenya, again Rotarians have been at the forefront of raising funds for famine relief and to date more than K Shs 5m has been contributed for famine relief by Rotarians and some of our partners. Even today, Your Excellency, we would like you to flag off a famine relief lorry. Borrowing from Walt Disney's theme, Rotarians in District 9200 have shown that 'If you can dream it, you can do it' and I am very proud of what Rotary has achieved over the past one year in our District.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have also taken the cue to partner with other service organizations and I am very pleased to say how closely we have worked with Lions Clubs in Kenya. I am pleased to announce that the Lions Eye Hospital in Loresho have offered to carry out for Rotary District 9200, one hundred cataract operations and four cornea grafts. Please join me in giving a round of applause.

We have accomplished great things, but there is a long way to go. We have a lot of work to do if we are to overcome extreme poverty, disease and hunger. One of Rotary International's key goals is the eradication of polio and since 1985 when Rotary adopted this as one of its key goals and has committed millions of dollars towards eradicating this tenacious disease. Recently, Rotary International has entered into a partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to raise over US\$555m to support immunisation campaigns in developing countries. With the recent emergence of polio cases in parts of East Africa, this initiative is so important for our District.

I am happy to report that after only six months into the current Rotary year, I was privileged to receive a personal letter from President D. K Lee congratulating our District for achieving the target of membership growth. Indeed I am delighted to announce that only yesterday, on the eve of this Conference, we received confirmation of the chartering of the Rotary Club of Maseno and there are several more clubs in the pipeline. We have also formed new Rotaract and Interact clubs for the youth and I am pleased to say a number of Rotary Community Corps or RCCS for the community based populations.

But for any service organization, our membership is our greatest asset. And we must strive to increase our membership. Ladies and Gentlemen, the other day I was watching a documentary on outer space with some views of our planet earth from space. Some of the pictures were shots taken at night and one could clearly make out North America, Europe and many parts of Asia, but Africa could not be seen at all other than some specks. The commentator pointed out that this was because of absence of night lights and electricity. What came to my mind though is that those specks of light are Rotarians who are beacons of hope, leadership and integrity in our continent. We must increase these beacons of light by having many, many, many more Rotarians. My challenge to our District is to set an ambitious goal of more than doubling our membership in the next three years and lay out a strategy for achieving this.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I could go on, but we have plenty of time over the three days to talk about how we can strengthen Rotary to enable us to do more and continue to make a difference to the lives of our people. I leave you with a quote I quite like *“Never doubt that a small group of dedicated committed people can change this world. Indeed it is the only thing that has”*.

May we continue to Make Dreams Real and May God Bless you all!