

**Rotary International Gala  
Dinner**

**Remarks by H.E. Mrs  
Jeannette Kagame**

**Kigali, 1 March 2016**

President of Rotary International,  
Honourable ministers,  
Ami Gouverneur du District 9150,  
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,  
My fellow Rotarians,

**Good evening.**

It is my great pleasure to be with you on this special night, as we come together to celebrate the spirit of the Rotary International, as lived through this fourth Medicare mission, and the many other projects carried out every year, to attempt to make this world one we can be proud of.

**President Ravi and Mrs Vanathy,**

I wish to welcome you to Rwanda, a country with tales of the beauty of its people and landscape, and one particular legend that says that God spends his day elsewhere but always returns here to sleep. I hope this trip will be the kind that encourages you to keep coming back and discover more about this land, as you get a glimpse of –as you said it so well—the resilient hearts of our people, who day after day, endeavour to bring lasting solutions to our communities’ challenges.

## **My fellow Rotarians,**

All of us here tonight joined the Rotary at different times in our lives and with a diversity of experiences. Yet, however unique our respective path, what quickly bound us together, was what we Rotarians know as *the 4-way test*, starting with the very first essential question: 'Is it the **TRUTH?**'

Let us look back at our first encounters with the Rotary and we will see that some of us were approached at some point in our professional career, and invited to a fellowship gathering to understand the core of the Rotary's mission. Others, became members after going on a field trip in a remote area and seeing the concrete value in helping build a bridge, a school, or a health centre. Others still, grew up in families in which parents taught their children the importance of Rotary projects and the difference they made in the lives of the communities.

Regardless of when and how we decided to become part of this global family, we saw over time how the truthfulness of this humanitarian spirit, and validity of our actions, helped forge new partnerships between governmental and non-governmental entities, to realize significant projects for the community, like the building of the very first public library in Kigali in 2012, now known as the Rwanda Library Services.

## **Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,**

Twenty-two years ago, Rwanda experienced the worst failure of humankind towards its own, when over 1 million people were wiped out through a carefully planned extermination, because they were perceived to be different.

During those 100 days of the Genocide, we saw humanity at its lowest.

But in the aftermath, we had to delve deep within our souls for answers. Not only to try to get a grasp on what had happened, but also to work on rebuilding an entire nation, still suffering from so many wounds.

Fortunately, countless individuals rose up to the challenge.

From our government to the civil society, they worked hard to revive the flame of humanity and unity, and allow future generations to grow up in a fair society, by dismantling any form of discrimination, while uplifting all its members.

## **Honourable guests,**

I believe that our world is in dire need of more humane people, the kind that ask: “Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?” before determining their course of actions so that we always treat one another with respect, fairness and kindness. It will

allow us to see ourselves as part of a larger family, a brotherhood enriched by a diversity of origins and cultures.

**Esteemed guests,**

We all hold certain ideals to be essential to navigate this world we live in. One that I believe should be highly valued, is nurturing positive relationships across communities, and ask ourselves when establishing new bridges: Will it build **GOODWILL** and **BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?

Most of us here tonight, have witnessed how over the years, Rotarians of all backgrounds come together to fellowship and celebrate this humanitarian spirit, hence further solidifying this special bond that is so powerful beyond measure.

Looking back to its beginnings, it is safe to say that over its many very active years, the Rotary International has demonstrated that its motto of '*Service above self*' could bear ripe fruits by pulling resources to sustain health, education, economic, and infrastructure projects, and deliver on its promises to focusing energies on the common good.

**Honourable guests,**

The relevance of our work is also deeply embedded in addressing the following question in all our endeavours: “Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned?”

As demonstrated by the Polio Eradication Programme, which began 37 years ago, leading to the immunization of over 2.5 billion children worldwide, and keeping Rwanda free of wild polio cases since 2004, we see that with the right mobilisation efforts, comes the power to achieve the greater good for the greater number.

**Dear friends,**

There are many examples that speak to the true and fair nature of the Rotary International, and its ability to build goodwill, friendships, while being beneficial to all parties concerned.

So this evening, I would like to conclude my remarks by recognizing the committed individuals, from government and civil society, to the health professionals present here tonight, for helping this Medicare Mission return to Rwanda for a 4<sup>th</sup> time, after the promise made last year by the Past President of Rotary International, and I thank you for keeping your promise.

It is inspirational, to hear about the several hundreds of Rwandan patients who are benefiting from free and highly specialized services, that they would not have been able to access through other means.

It is my sincere belief that ultimately, compassion is what will leave this world in a better place than it was the day before, so let us continue to work together and inspire many more to join this noble cause of alleviating challenges seen in our communities.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish you a pleasant evening in the true spirit of Rotarian 'camaraderie'.