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President, Rotary International
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OPENING REMARKS

My dear friends – all of the members of the family of Rotary –

It is an honor for me to welcome you to the 95th Annual Rotary International Convention.

“Rotary kazoku to-she-te, koko Osaka-knee tsudo-woo koto-ga-decky, ooh-ray-shee-ku omoimas. “ (Translation: We are delighted to be in Osaka, together as the worldwide Family of Rotary.)

Every year, our convention is a time for all Rotarians to gather for a few days of reflection on our accomplishments during the past twelve months and our goals for the future. This year, we will also reflect upon the fact that we stand at the crossroads of two Rotary centuries. As we prepare to enter our Centennial Year, we express our gratitude for all that Rotary offers us. We take pride and joy in our achievements. We dare to commit to even greater ambitions.

At this convention, we ***Lend a Hand to Celebrate Rotary.***

Let us consider what we have come here to do. Here in Osaka, you will experience international Rotary fellowship to the fullest as you meet and make friends with Rotarians from clubs, districts and zones representing so many of the world’s cultures. You will learn more about Rotary and The Rotary Foundation and their many programs. You will have the opportunity to participate in discussions and exchange ideas.

In short, you will enjoy a life-affirming experience that awakens the spirit and challenges the intellect.

As Rotarians, we are fortunate to belong to an organization that gives us experiences such as this one. Already, we can feel the warmth and goodwill that permeates this great convention center – it is the spirit of The Family of Rotary.

To make the most of your Convention, I urge you to plan ahead. Read the Daily Bulletin, and make sure you are familiar with the Convention program and the locations of each event.

Be sure to attend all of the plenary sessions – they include world-class entertainment and feature speakers who will inspire you. These sessions will provide you with a broad perspective of Rotary’s accomplishments and goals.

Take advantage of the many discussion workshops. Each one has a single focus – and all of them will address issues important to all Rotarians – such as Health Concerns, Youth Exchange, PolioPlus and Humanitarian Grants, just to name a few. In these workshops, you will share your experiences and you will learn from others – so that everyone can return home with fresh ideas and new approaches for strengthening clubs and improving service.

And be sure to visit the Projects Exhibition – it will make you proud to see what Rotarians are doing to **Lend a Hand** in communities throughout our world. And seeing these successful projects will almost certainly spark ideas for projects that your own clubs and districts can carry out.

There is much to do, and much to see – and these busy days will pass swiftly – as surely as summer passes into fall, fall into winter and winter into spring.

As our time together unfolds – you will notice that the four seasons will serve as a motif during the four days of this year's convention. In Japan and in many other cultures through the world, the natural rhythms of the seasons are reflected in music, literature and the visual arts. Summer, fall, winter, spring – this annual cycle of growth, harvest, maturity and rebirth can also represent the cycles of our families, our work and our lives.

So let us begin this convention today in summer – bringing forth images of growth and sunshine – of warmth, playfulness and optimism.

The feelings of summer inspire us to delight in the spirit of Rotary fellowship. Enjoy reunions with old friends and take every opportunity to make new ones. The House of Friendship is a natural meeting place – and this year, our Japanese hosts have planned many delightful activities to promote international fellowship. Also, be sure to visit the Rotary Fellowship Exhibits, where you will discover new ways to meet Rotarians from all over the world who share your interests.

Since we have gathered here as part of the great extended family of Rotary, let us **Lend a Hand** to this Convention by infusing it with this family spirit. If this is not your first Convention, **Lend a Hand** to someone who is relatively new to Rotary. For those of you attending your first Convention – please be assured that you are valued in the Family of Rotary and do not hesitate to ask any of us to **Lend a Hand** to help you get the most out of this meeting.

Whether we are reaching out in fellowship or in service, when we **Lend a Hand**, we celebrate our shared humanity. In this way, one hand can become many and there is no limit to what the helping hands of Rotary can accomplish.

Thank you.