



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

AT INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP BANQUET

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Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen: good evening!

It is indeed a great pleasure and honor for me to have been invited to speak at tonight's banquet. I will be sharing with you some of my thoughts on Taiwan's NGOs and introducing the NGOs Affairs Committee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

First, I would like to thank everyone present tonight. The Rotary Club is a time-honored international non-governmental organization (INGO) with countless regional branches worldwide. To my knowledge, seven regional branches have been established in Taiwan, not to mention numerous local clubs spanning northern and southern Taiwan. These branches have been recognized as a positive and vibrant force for Rotary International because of their commitment to community service, especially to the economically disadvantaged and socially marginalized. From the 1980s onwards, Taiwanese Rotary clubs have played an important role in community-building. In recent years, their efforts have taken new approaches, like the promotion of youth participation in civic affairs and corporate social responsibility.

By looking closely at Taiwan's Rotary clubs, we also can gain insight into the development of our domestic NGOs as driven by internationalization and localization,

as well as the evolution of Taiwan's political and economic environment. Next, we will explore how Taiwan has joined global volunteer efforts. To further your understanding, I would like to take a little time to brief you on certain developments within Taiwan's NGO community.

(Briefing on Taiwan's NGO Development)

The development of Taiwan's NGOs and economy over the past couple decades have moved along parallel lines. Thus far the formation and growth of Taiwan's NGOs have been as dynamic as its economic transformation. There are now more than thirty thousand registered NGOs in Taiwan, including three thousand foundations. This equates to one NGO for every square kilometer of land in Taiwan.

The internationalization of Taiwan's volunteer efforts stems from the country's maturing democratic system and economy. Taiwan's role in foreign aid has evolved from that of recipient to that of provider. International volunteering was initiated by Taiwan's NGOs in the 1980s. Their efforts expanded during the 1990s to cover disaster relief, medical assistance and economic cooperation. They also added impetus to community development, human rights promotion and education and cultural exchange.

On September 21, 1999, an earthquake struck Taiwan,

forming a milestone in Taiwan's volunteer movement. This disaster claimed thousands of lives and left tens of thousands of others homeless and without a livelihood. It greatly impacted all of Taiwan's society, not just financially or materially but *psychologically*. At that time, our society was fortunate enough to receive material support and medical and rescue workers from all corners of the world. Within the first crucial 72 hours, about 700 volunteers from 20 countries had arrived at the earthquake-hit areas and reached out to these paralyzed communities. Victims of the quake were especially touched by the assistance from NGOs outside of Taiwan. Such altruism inspired the people of Taiwan to reciprocate by volunteering and offering increased assistance to people in need both at home and abroad. From then on, some internationally funded NGOs in Taiwan became local independent ones, a process you could consider a type of "localization." By the same token, some locally established NGOs adopted wider global perspectives and started to more closely resemble INGOs. The overall development of Taiwan's NGOs reveals a refreshing mix of local and global dynamics. These days Taiwanese NGOs strive to play a greater role in many important international



agendas, such as women's rights, environmental protection, humanitarian relief and human rights.

(Briefing on NGOs Affairs Committee)

The NGOs Affairs Committee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was launched in 2000 to serve as a medium that facilitates the international cooperation pursued by Taiwanese NGOs. The Committee hopes to help integrate resources, facilitate cooperation, support related activities and encourage international exchange. It also aims to encourage Taiwan's NGOs to enhance their capacities and become more international in nature. The Committee has fostered a cooperative partnership with local NGOs and worked to spur their global cooperation in such areas as disaster response and humanitarian relief. As the Vice-chairperson of the NGOs Affairs Committee, I sincerely hope that in the days to come we will see even more opportunities for exchange and collaboration between Taiwan's Rotary branches and those overseas.

This concludes my presentation. I hope that I have been able to shed some light for you on Taiwan's NGOs and INGOs. Thank you for your time.

