

Carlo Ravizza
Rotary Foundation trustee chair

Good morning, family of Rotary and guests,

Now it is a magic moment because we are celebrating you. We are celebrating you because you are the Foundation. Because of your generosity. Because of your achievements. Because of you — your giving has made miracles possible. Because you changed despair to hope, you changed hope into a better future. Because without your Foundation, Rotary International could not be today the worldwide, highly recognized volunteer organization able to partner with governmental and UN agencies, creating a model of bringing the private sector together with the public sector in order to solve social and health issues, such as the battle against polio.

To reach this point, a dream, a vision was necessary: the one of Arch Klumph, RI president in 1917-18. A vision to start an endowment in order to fund and extend service to communities. Only in 1947, following the death of Paul Harris, did this turn into effective action, and our success story initiated in the spirit of world understanding and peace:

- Educational programs, such as scholarships and Group Study Exchange, giving non-Rotarian professionals an opportunity to experience different cultural approaches in foreign countries
- Humanitarian grants, partnering on an international basis, clubs working together for projects to enhance the quality of life
- In 1979, 3-H Grants — Health, Hunger and Humanity, the program that made possible our polio campaign

All great achievements, all success stories.

But in 1985, another unbelievable, unprecedented, unique success story started: Polio 2005, later called PolioPlus. The plus was added because of fighting against five other childhood infectious diseases: measles, tuberculosis, diphtheria, whooping cough, and tetanus. Not an easy start to become effective because it took time to convince the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland, that the idea of vaccinating all the children of the world against polio was feasible.

At this point, allow me a personal touch. In 1985-86, I was RI vice president, and the Council on Legislation was just meeting here in Chicago. The Board of Directors decided to assign me as the presenter of the resolution on Polio 2005. I could never dream that after 20 years, today, as an 80-years-young fellow, I would be here to tell you the end of the story: the story of a world free of polio.

Because of you, five million children can walk today that otherwise would be victim of this crippling disease. Listen to five million voices saying: Thank you, Rotarians. We are happy, we can walk, we can play, we can learn, we can grow, we can dream of a great future.

You must be proud, because we are not only defeating polio but also distributing vitamin A. We are defeating other childhood diseases. But much more: With our over 150 surveillance laboratories created in all endemic areas by our partner, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, we control also other new epidemic diseases, such as ebola, dengue hemorrhagic fever, and many more. Thank you, once more, for the lives you have saved. Polio is not the success of one man; it is the success story because of your enthusiasm, your perseverance, your engagement to make it happen.

At this point, let us remember that all battles have victims. Over the years, we lost a total of 18 volunteers in different accidents during the transport of vaccine in the cold chain. Now, our thoughts must go to their families.

PolioPlus is the most visible global success story, but we have another 100,000 success stories to tell through the years by our clubs. But successes sometimes have a short memory. We have to look in our next century for more success opportunities.

Foundations are become increasingly more major actors in the civil society. In a recent high-level international forum, the importance in the future of the role of foundations has been greatly supported. I quote: "Foundations are placed in a better position than most other institutions to provide input for innovative problem solving to remedy social shortcomings and to make important contributions to the formation and development of open society."

Let us look also for a moment at the United Nations Millennium Development Goals:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary education.
3. Promote gender equality and empower women.
4. Reduce child mortality.
5. Improve maternal health.
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.
7. Ensure environmental sustainability.
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

Your Board of Trustees, 15 highly qualified members originating from 12 different countries, as an international body should, has demonstrated the capacity to catch up with challenges and opportunities. I am firmly convinced that with your greatly needed support, your Foundation will be again on the forefront in the next century and again a spearheading partner for a new adventure, as we were so visionary and successful with Polio 2005.

Your Trustees in their fiduciary assignment faced unusual challenges this year. Until 1983, The Rotary Foundation was only a committee of Rotary International. As more and more money flowed into the Foundation, the Board of RI took the wise decision to create a separate corporate entity for the Foundation with a board charged with fiduciary responsibility to administer your donations.

After 20 years, your Trustees took a decision to start a broader approach in order to increase the cost effectiveness of programs, to increase the efficiency of the working process in order to fulfill, if possible, the request for shorter approval time for grants and reduce what appears to outsiders as a bureaucratic attitude but is sometimes necessary to the increasing need of stewardship and oversight of all money awarded.

The Trustees approved recently with the concurrence of the RI Board to have a standing Stewardship Committee. I can and must assure you that you can trust your Trustees that every cent given to us is spent correctly out in the field. This is our daily priority number one.

In addition to this management issue, we faced the tsunami disaster. The day after, a special fund was created in the Foundation named Solidarity for South Asia. Solidarity is an extremely important word for us; it means Service Above Self in action. It means to lend a hand with your heart. It turns despair into hope. Concentrate now your thoughts for a moment, and think what

solidarity means for yourself. As of today, we have reached US\$5 million, and they [the funds] are currently being spent in recovery operations in the disaster area.

To remain number one in helping mankind and being a leading force, the Trustees, after careful consideration, decided to start studies for the future vision of your Foundation through a new ad hoc committee that means to prepare the bases for the challenges and opportunities of the new century of our organization.

I feel that you all are ready to be actors in a Foundation able to raise to higher levels and to increase with visible actions the image of Rotary International. I share with my colleague Trustees a thank-you for your confidence in our ability to act. On our side, we rely on you. It is your Foundation.

Personally, as I have always done, my special gratitude goes to the many Rotarians — I call them the silent Rotarians — the ones who are working silently to do good, not asking for any type of recognition, in the spirit of Service Above Self.

Rotary family, let us start from here with the firm will to do more for those in need through your Foundation. Let us look and believe in a bright future of world understanding and peace. Let us start immediately, after celebrating our great past, to act for our future with consistency, credibility, and continuity.

Thank you.