

**ROTARY INTERNATIONAL  
ROTARY DISTRICT 9200**

**KEY NOTE ADDRESS TO THE DISTRICT ROTARACT ASSEMBLY  
16<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2006, ALLIANCE SAFARI HOTEL, MOMBASA**

**PROFESSIONALISM**

PDG Hatim;

DRR Njeri;

My young colleagues and friends the Rotaractors;

Since we arrived here, PDG Hatim and I have been competing for the attention of DRR Njeri. Unfortunately for me, PDG Hatim is using underhand methods: I have my wedding on as I always do, but PDG Hatim has none.

I must thank you for this opportunity to interact with you. When I look at you, I see the future of Rotary and service in our district. Most of the current Rotarians, like me, joined Rotary in their late thirties and forties, and indeed fifties – generally too late for Rotary to make a major change in them: Rotary has to accept what it gets. You on the other hand are growing up with Rotary, the ideals, the principle of service, and the internationalism. Rotary will be that much stronger when you become Rotarians.

The challenge we then face as Rotarians, and the challenge which you face, is actually developing with these ideals and principles so that they are second nature to all Rotaractors. Rotaract is a transitional stage where you all get the opportunity to be full and responsible professionals. The theme of my address is therefore Professionalism – not as a stand alone subject, but as the basis for strengthening Rotaract and subsequently Rotary and service in our District.

I want to ask Rotaractors to go back to the basics, so that this transitional stage can achieve its objectives.

Rotaract Clubs are not Rotary Clubs. I have seen Rotaract clubs impose dues that are comparable to dues in Rotary clubs, creating barriers for young professionals. I have seen mandatory contributions to club projects. I have seen Rotaractors who think Rotaract is a permanent home, who only leave Rotaract reluctantly. Who would, for example want to stay in a university or other tertiary institution beyond the minimum number of years? Those who do not want to leave Rotaract create elitist groups in clubs that then create invisible barriers for potential younger members.

Let us now get to Professionalism.

I will look at professionalism based on five pillars – some of which are universally accepted; one or two of which are made important by our environment and attitudes.

*First* is technical development – being fully competent as a teacher, an engineer, a lawyer, a nurse so that you are able to deliver services competently. It is the challenge, responsibility, and duty of every Rotaractor to put focus on the technical side of professionalism. Rotaract clubs offer the opportunity of professional exposure to contemporaries, and, through working with Rotary clubs, to established professionals. We need to take full advantage of this opportunity.

*Second* is the issue of ethics, defining the norms of behaviour and conduct in the society and in one's profession. All of us have that inner voice that tells us when we are straying from what is acceptable. We just have to learn to listen to it. We all have good and evil in some measure as part of our internal composition. Development of ethical behaviour is building up the good side so that it can, at least much more often than not, determine what we do and how we behave.

*Third* is leadership. Rotaract provides a multitude of opportunities to learn and practice leadership. It is an environment where one cannot use commands, orders, or coercion. It is an environment where one must hone all the leadership skills in order to be effective. We should take on honorary leadership opportunities in the clubs and society. Such skills help us both in service and in our careers.

*Fourth* is societal or community responsibility. Giving service to the community, especially to those in the community who are disadvantaged in one way or another, is one of the most rewarding ways to spend time. Rotaract encourages Rotaractors to give such service – not through cash contributions from their pockets, but through hands on involvement. Where cash is required, Rotaractors are encouraged to carry out fund-raising activities that combine fellowship and fun with the achievement of the objectives.

A *fifth* dimension of professionalism is time management. When dealing with time, we should leave statements like “hakuna matata” to the films. Time is one of the most wasted resources in our communities and, unfortunately, many of our young people are growing up with this relaxed attitude to time. Time is irreplaceable. Being punctual and working within agreed timelines is part of the professionalism that Rotaractors need to acquire. It is rude to call a meeting and be late, to invite a guest and not be ready for them, to have an appointment and miss it – all very often without exceptional reason.

As we use Rotaract as an opportunity to both develop our professionalism and to give service, let us not forget the essential environment of “*Fellowship through service*”. Let us not forget especially that in Rotaract, we are supposed to achieve all this in an environment of *fun*. Rotaractors are young people. You are all full of energy. Your hormones are very active. You need fun and activity outlets that direct that energy to the good of society, not your detriment and the detriment of those close to you.

Yes, Rotaract is certainly the future of Rotary in our District, and yet we face many challenges. Those of you who know me will know that I speak straight: I do not evade issues. More importantly, the challenges I am going to highlight, and they are by no means exhaustive, are those I have heard raised by you Rotaractors as issues of concern. I am just the loudspeaker. What are our current challenges as Rotaractors?

We have unprofessional management of both club and district funds. I recall a recent passionate email, by Rotaractor Elizabeth if I remember the name correctly, raising this same concern to her colleagues and the Rotaract leadership in Uganda. We need to address this. Let us practice good stewardship, not just of club funds, but any funds entrusted to our care in both professional and community life.

Many of our Rotaract clubs are behaving like Rotary clubs, and sometimes exclusive social clubs, with cliques tearing the clubs apart. We need to address this. I have already mentioned those Rotaractors who overstay in clubs, the “Lurira mu nnyana”. These become a problem. There is no reason why one should stay in Rotaract for five, eight years. Our current Governor Hamid, and some of the past Rotary International Presidents, became Rotarians before they were twenty five years old. Please be ready to move on when ready – do not stay in the club too long, becoming a problem and a barrier to the younger Rotaractors who have just started working.

The beggar mentality is a creeping malady. My late beloved mother taught me pride – pride in what we had, however little, and never to be a beggar. Please develop this pride. We should not expect Rotarians to fund our personal activities. We should not go to conferences to seek support for conference fees and institutional fees and personal financial support. You know, and I know, that it is only a very small minority doing this, but the reputation they create for us covers all of Rotaract. You also know, and I know that even some Rotarians have also done this: this is unfortunate, and we always address it in no uncertain terms when we learn about it. Please do the same.

Again, as I have said, Rotaract has become too expensive because we want to show images beyond our means. This is sometimes caused by those working Rotaractors who overstay in Rotaract. They are relatively wealthy, they are the leaders, and they have become insensitive to the hardships they impose on younger colleagues. We need to change this.

The challenge we face is the revival of Rotaract in our District by going back to basics. Rotaract has boomed before, and, with your commitment, will boom again. All Rotaractors will become exemplary, in their clubs, in their communities.

Here I must recognise and thank PDG Hatim Karimjee who has kindly agreed to be the Rotaract/RYLA officer during the coming Rotary year. PDG Hatim has been District Rotary Foundation Chair for four years. In that time, he turned our District around, from implementing grants totalling less than \$200,000 or so per year to more than \$4m this year. He enjoys working with young people. Please work with him as a partner in turning Rotaract around.

I know we have a challenge in making the Rotary clubs more welcoming and more aware of the benefits of having younger members. This is an issue we shall address as Rotarians so that you have no hesitation about your being welcome as Rotarians in your own right. I know we have also, as Rotarians, failed to give the required guidance to Rotaractors – again, we shall address this as Rotarians.

Incoming RI President Bill Boyd has challenged us, challenged you, to Lead the Way. Do not wait for your President or your board to bring positive change. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, “Be the change you want to see in the World”.

Lead the way in creating professionalism among the Rotaractors in you club, and unhesitatingly speaking up when you things are not right.

Lead the way in making your club strong and taking Rotaract back to the basics, so that our clubs can be vibrant, give service, all in an environment of fun and professionalism.

Lead the way so that the future of Rotary and service in our District is secured through you.

Thank you for your time, and thank you for listening to me.

DGE Tusu