

21 January 2009

Dear Fellow Rotarians,

This is another historic day for Rotary. Our organization was honored today to host philanthropist Bill Gates, Jr. at Rotary's International Assembly in San Diego, California, USA.

Speaking to 2009-2010 district governors-elect, Bill Gates, Jr. congratulated Rotarians on the success of the partnership between Rotary International and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to raise funds for polio. To date, Rotarians have already committed more than US\$60 million toward the original US\$100 million Gates challenge grant awarded in November 2007.

In recognizing Rotary's impressive fundraising success and steadfast commitment to polio eradication, Gates announced today that his foundation has decided to increase its challenge grant by US\$255 million – for a total of US\$355 million. By accepting the increase, Rotary also accepts the challenge to raise an additional US\$100 million in matching funds by 30 June 2012 and drives the combined Rotary and Gates Foundation partnership's commitment to a total of US\$555 million.

All of the resulting US\$555 million will be spent in support of immunization activities carried out by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) in polio-affected countries. The initiative is spearheaded by Rotary, the World Health Organization (WHO), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and UNICEF.

In another welcomed development today, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) pledged £100 million (US\$150 million) and the German government is giving an additional €100 million (US\$130 million), both to the GPEI. Contributions from the U.K. and Germany are separate and will not count toward Rotary's match of the Gates Foundation challenge grant.

The infusion of funds is crucial if the world is to finally be rid of polio, a crippling, sometimes fatal disease that poses the highest risk to children. Although the initiative has reduced the number of polio cases by 99 percent over the past two decades, the wild poliovirus still persists in four countries -- Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan -- and imported cases from these endemic countries threaten other developing nations.

Your continued participation in this effort is crucial to making it a success. The Rotary International Board of Directors and the Trustees of The Rotary Foundation have unanimously agreed to accept this challenge grant to ensure the success of the PolioPlus program. Rotary and the Gates Foundation intend for their funding partnership to set an example for the rest of the world. We feel confident that this extraordinary partnership will serve as a catalyst for further donations from others to help us realize the dream of a polio-free world.

When Rotary entered the fight against polio in 1985, we promised every child a world free from the threat of polio. We are almost there. This funding agreement between Rotary and the Gates Foundation is a huge step forward, bringing us even closer to our goal. Success is our only option. Together we can *End Polio Now*. For more information, please visit www.rotary.org.

Dong-Kurn Lee

Rotary International, President 2008-09

Jonathan B. Majiyagbe, Chairman

The Rotary Foundation Trustees, RI