

Dear Governor,
Dear First Lady of President of Republic Turkey,
Dear President of Rotary International,
Dear Chairman,
Dear Rotarian friends,

As RI director and Board liaison for this event, it is a real honor for me to be among you here in Istanbul to introduce this presidential celebration on Literacy, meeting called by RI president Glenn Estess.

Literacy is a priority for Rotary International, and its top priority in the field of education.

Rotary International's traditional values of solidarity, justice and equity make it impossible for our organization not to be involved in this fight against literacy.

It is a dantean battle, as the gap continues to grow between those who receive the gift of education and those who do not.

It is an unfair battle with ideology and power spreading throughout the world, along with ambiguity and unilateralism.

Because this fight for Literacy, my friends, is a combat for equal access and mutual understanding across borders. And this is our cause!

Illiteracy prevents from fully living. To some extent, you just endure life, surrounded by shadows; veritable victim of a condition that does not allow to live life's most important moments, like reading a book to a child.

A Turkish writer, Saït Faik Abasiyanik, wrote: "Nature teaches man to swim by sinking his boat". But if it is true that men can rise to the occasion through inner strength, it is unfortunately not the case with illiteracy.

We are not talking here about instincts but about knowledge acquisition.

It is Rotary International's obligation to bring all of its expertise in this field and to obtain the support of large organizations of the civil society like UNESCO.

In my opinion, Rotary International renews with its highest goals through this fight.

By getting involved, we recognize every man and woman's right to know, to communicate and to act for the good of an entire community. Let's not forget that any time we develop human potential we are one step closer to a more equal society.

In Turkey, Rotarians are very involved as we all know and will discover during this conference. We should also mention their work in Germany and in France where they facilitate integration of migrant populations, and especially women.

Today, when one third of the world population cannot read or write, our second century of service must start with a new social goal: education for all.

There is no shortage of methods, but they all rely on people getting involved. And this is what we do best as Rotarians. In this fight more than any other, cooperating with others will also be essential.

Rotarians are ready to step up. Because Rotarians are especially moved by words like those, written by the French poet Paul Verlaine: "Come, nothing more profits the soul than to make a soul less sad!"

So, my friends, giving hope is our duty.

Thank you.

Dear friends, it is my privilege to introduce our International president Glenn ESTESS.

I am not going to bore you with titles - You will find them in the documentation you received – but there are 2 things I want to tell you in the name of the Board:

First, having served at all levels of the organization, Glenn Estess knows Rotary inside out.

And more importantly, fully aware of Rotarians' expectations, he is committed to lead Rotarians and Rotary to a bright future in our second century of service.

My friends, let me introduce the president of Rotary International, Glenn Estess