

**Speech to the New Zealand's
25th Anniversary Conference
Wellington Conventions Center – New Zealand
May 10, 2006**

As New Zealand and Sister Cities International reflect on the past 25 and 50 years respectively, we may also reflect on the fact that we have survived the changes of the world through and out of the cold war into an age of globalization. Globalization has changed the way all of us live in this world, including not only the way we do business but, in our increasing dependency on collaboration with each other. The overall mission our organization is to promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation – one individual, one community at a time. Throughout our years of experience we have become “Citizen Diplomats”. This has become the commonly used phrase to describe those activities that involve us in a wide range of international exchange programs. Citizen diplomacy can be addressed in three areas, (1) the power of person-to-person diplomacy, (2) the value of Security and diplomacy, and (3) how civic organizations, nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations can encourage and strengthen citizen diplomacy.

When I think about sister cities worldwide I think of an organization with one voice and many faces. It is through that one voice and many faces that we make a difference. As citizen diplomats we must project the message of President Eisenhower as he talked about what it means to be free in mind, body and spirit. He said, “In free countries, the agent may never become the master; if human rights and freedoms are to flourish, government must operate with its powers sharply defined and limited by the governed...but the dividing line between government's functions, on the one hand and the individual's rights, privileges and inescapable responsibilities never is completely fixed; never is static. It oscillates constantly in a middle area between centralized authority and individual liberty, as economic, social and political conditions that require more or less action by the government.” It is not the dictate of the many faces that make the difference, but in our actions through one voice that change will come.

Therefore is our responsibility as a citizen diplomacy organization to enhance peace. It is important that, more than putting an end to war, we want an end to the beginnings of all wars, an end to the brutal inhuman and thoroughly insane and impractical way of solving the differences between cultures. We must try to show through our deeds that if nations can overcome the mutual fear and distrust whose somber shadow is now thrown over the world, and could meet with confidence and good will to settle their possible differences, it would be easy to establish a lasting peace. It is important to realize that there can be no assured peace and tranquility for one nation unless it is achieved for all. If want, frustration, and a sense of injustice prevail among significant sections of this earth, no other section can completely be released from fear.

I stand before you today a person with fears, fears not for myself, but fears for my fellow man. This 25th anniversary furthers the dialogue, loosens the shackles of fear, and releases dogmas that have lead to false conclusions about our differences. What makes this world strong is the ability of mankind to understand that the differences are not what we should focus on but rather that we must harness those things we have in common toward our common enrichment and coexistence. Some in America have asked why we should try, that we are going to be disliked just because we are America and, there are those in the world who have concluded that America has taken on the position of savior of the world, and there are those from the Islamic countries who say that America and those who support America are the infidels who speak out of both sides of our mouths.

Therefore we in the western world must recognize and realize that we cannot change thousands of years of history and tradition nor should we try. In the Islamic world you must allow us in the west our areas of gray that area in which we rely and respond on faith (those areas that are not merely black or white or merely right or wrong)...areas that require a leap of faith, areas that sometimes has no explanation, the unknown, the area of gray. It is only through the learning of each others cultures and traditions; each other differences and similarities that change will come. From that understanding barriers of fear and misunderstanding are broken and coexistence begins.

President Eisenhower in his desire to create People-to-People and Sister Cities International he believed that peace had to be the cornerstone of all governments. He said that “The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities. It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 populations. It is two fine, fully equipped hospitals. It is some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people. This, I repeat, is the best way of life to be found on the road the world has been taking. This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.” He also pointed out five precepts that clearly mark how countries in general should approach world affairs:

- No people on earth can be held, as a people, to be enemy, for all humanity shares the common hunger for peace and fellowship and justice.
- No nation's security and well-being can be lastingly achieved in isolation but only in effective cooperation with fellow-nations.

- Any nation's right to form of government and an economic system of its own choosing is *inalienable*.
- Any nation's attempt to dictate to other nations their form of government is *indefensible*. And
- A nation's hope of lasting peace cannot be firmly based upon any race in armaments but rather upon just relations and honest understanding with all other nations.

We must realize that every weapon or warship made and every rocket launched in itself is a theft from those who are hungry or cold and unclothed. When this world spends money on arms it is spending the sweat of its laborers, the magnificent minds of its scientists and the aspirations and hopes of its children. President Eisenhower thought that this created a cloud that threatens war caused humanity to be hanging from a cross of iron. He said, "I think that people want peace so much that one of these days' governments had better get out of the way and let them have it."

It was his dream that "Citizen Diplomacy" become the commonly used phrase to describe those activities of our organization in a wide range of international exchange programs. Examples include youth exchange, international visitor leadership exchange, professional and technical exchanges, educational and cultural exchanges, and organizational and institutional exchanges. It is important that we understand what is at stake when we say that we are "citizen diplomats."

I said at the international conference of Sister Cities in Spokane that we are at a time history when it is necessary for us to dare to RISK, for if we do not dare to risk, we as a people will cease to grow and are instead just breaking even in our lives. What does it mean to "dare to RISK?" We dare to risk if we change leadership. We dare to risk if there is change in the way we traditionally think, we dare to risk when we extend our hand in friendship to cultures that differ from our own. In fact, it's fair to say that we dare to risk when we embrace any change at all. Someone wrote that "to laugh is to risk appearing the fool; to weep is to risk appearing sentimental; to reach out for another is to risk involvement; to expose feelings is to risk your own true self. The persons who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing, and is nothing. For if you avoid suffering and sorrow, you cannot learn, you cannot feel, you cannot change, you cannot grow, you cannot love, and you cannot live...only a person who risks is truly free." This is our time ladies and gentlemen, our time as an organization to risk, as we talk about peace; we can have no better representative than ourselves, we the people, empowered to act on our own behalf and the world's interest as citizen diplomats.

We are living in a time of globalization where it is possible for us to push a button and literally be on the other side of the world in a matter of seconds. Terrorism has taken center stage in our consciousness and continues daily to rear its ugly head. No religion teaches this kind of hatred. Instead they teach that we are one in the eyes of GOD and no one or anything can defile that concept not matter how many bombs are exploded or how many lives are lost. Truth in the course of time will always prevail. All religions even though they differ, are united in their proclamation that nothing lives in this world but truth. Gandhi said, "The seeker of truth should be more humble than the dust. The world crushes, the dust under the feet, but he who seeks the truth should be so humble so that even the dust could crush you. It is only at that time and not before then will we be able to glean the truth."

As we move further into the 21st century let us as seekers of peace remember that it is not enough just to end aggression and war we must also seek an end to those factors that begin wars. In order for us to end terrorism we must approach our brethren without suspicion, mistrust, and fear, for a person who is unwilling to reach out in trust knows that he himself cannot be trusted. Gandhi also said that, "to trust is a virtue. It is weakness that begets distrust."

As citizen diplomats we help to forge peace in the world. I read quite a while ago that there were five great enemies to peace and liberty that lives within each of us: avarice, ambition, envy, anger, and pride. If those enemies were to be banished, we should infallibly enjoy perpetual peace and liberty. It is important that we try to reconcile our differences, with other cultures and nations, but if we cannot, we should at least help to make the world safe. I think that each of us here today as citizen diplomats can agree that peace is the overwhelming concern of mankind therefore we must be willing to put together our energies and intelligence and consider how the ethical insights of each nation can be transformed into a preamble of peace for all nations.

As I take my seat I want to leave you with some thoughts of President Kennedy who believed that where nature makes natural allies of us all, beneficial relations can result even with those with whom we deeply disagree." Kennedy believed that this must someday be the basis of world peace and world law. He summed it up quite simply; "Never have these nations of the world had so much to lose or so much to gain."

Together we shall save our planet or together we shall perish in its flames. Save it we can and save it we must, and then shall we earn the eternal thanks of mankind and as peacemakers, the eternal blessings of God."

Page 5

Therefore as you embark upon your next 25 years remember that Sister Cities New Zealand and Sister Cities International carry the flame to ignite the torch that will shine brightly in the dim corridors that darken the halls between us and the rest of the world. We are an organization of many faces with one voice, one voice for justice, one voice for equality, and one voice for peace.