

**Remarks by Ambassador Harry K. Thomas, Jr.**  
**Rotary International District 3830 –**  
**Launch of On-to-New Orleans 2011 Annual Rotary International Convention**  
**November 5, 2010**  
**AIM Conference Center (SGV Hall), Makati City**

*Magandang gabi sa lahat ng Rotaryo ng Distrito 3830!* I am delighted to be with you tonight to celebrate the good works of Rotary through fellowship and friendship in service.

Thank you, District Governor Ed Alvarez, Dr. Joji Tan, President Louie Panganiban, and the Rotary Club of Makati Dasmariñas for this invitation. I'm happy to share some personal insights on New Orleans, and help launch your 2011 Rotary International Annual Convention.

I understand that the Rotary motto is "Service above Self," and I salute your many volunteer contributions to combat illiteracy, provide access to safe drinking water, and promote global health. Rotary is a model for active citizenship and selfless charity.

I am happy that, once again, Rotary International has chosen the United States, and most importantly, the city of New Orleans, Louisiana, as the host city for your next annual convention in May 2011.

The Crescent City, as New Orleans is known, has so much to offer. It is a wonderful place to live, and five years after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, the city is, to a great extent, thriving again. The people of New Orleans are fiercely proud of their city and its tradition, and you should be proud of the more than \$19 million in donations and grants contributed by Rotary International to help them get back on their feet.

Business is back

Five years ago, New Orleans was drowned out, burned out, and limping from day to day. Today, business is back, it's diverse, and it's booming. Manufacturing, media, energy, logistics and distribution are just a few of the rapidly growing sectors. Agriculture, petroleum, coal, chemicals, and food are already top exports in the state of Louisiana.

Due to Louisiana's strategic location on the Gulf of Mexico and the Mississippi River, and its network of inland waterways, it has the potential to serve as an international transportation hub and distribution center for the American South, the Midwest, and beyond. As the global economy continues to expand, Louisiana's worldwide merchandise exports increased by 33 percent in value to \$10 billion during the first quarter of 2010 compared to the first three months of 2009, according to the World Trade Center of New Orleans. Total U.S. exports rose 20 percent in the first quarter of 2010, with Louisiana placing 8<sup>th</sup> among all U.S. states.

To support long-term economic growth, President Obama launched the National Export Initiative (NEI) in his 2010 State of the Union Address and set the ambitious goal of doubling U.S. exports over the next five years to support two million additional jobs. Exports create jobs, and increasing American exports is critical to rebuilding the economy. New Orleans and the State of Louisiana are strong partners in this national effort. My team in the Embassy's

Commercial, Agricultural, Economic, Consular, and Public Affairs Sections are ready to assist you in your continued efforts to engage in business, economic and tourism exchange between the Philippines and the United States.

### The Crescent City: Past and Present

New Orleans remains a fountain of vibrant culture, rich traditions, and incredible cuisine. History, circumstance, and ethnic diversity have combined to create an environment of excitement and entertainment. Two of New Orleans' largest ethnic groups, the Creoles and the Cajuns, are descendants of French settlers who arrived in the 1700s when Louisiana was still a French colony. Did you know that the first Fil-Ams settled in Louisiana in the 1700s?

New Orleans is a melting pot of great music, and is home to renowned musicians like Louis Armstrong, Lenny Kravitz and Harry Connick, Jr. From the Mardi Gras Mambo to the Pizzazz of Latin Jazz, culture thrives in New Orleans. It is a radiant and resilient city unlike any other.

Your international convention has chosen the theme, "Let the Good Times Roll, Again," and with the variety of great entertainment offered in New Orleans, you'll be rocking and rolling from the moment you step off the plane. New Orleans is back. Let the Good Times Roll, or as the Cajuns say, "Laissez Le Bons Temps Rouler!"

*Ikinagagalak ko na makasama kayo sa gabing ito. Maraming salamat at mabuhay ang Rotaryo!*