

## Meet your IP

10 October, 09:00 – 10:30

Convention Hall

Dr. Jitsuhiro Yamada, International President 2015/16, Japan

### Welcome address by Dr. Westhoff

DIGNITY – HARMONY – HUMANITY

Dr Yamada joined the Minokamo Lions Club in 1985. He served in many different offices of the organisation, including District Governor and GLT Constitutional Area Vice Leader.

From 2005 to 2007, he served on the international board as a member of the Executive Committee and the Long Range Planning Committee and Vice Chairperson of Convention Committee. He also served as a board appointee for 2011/2012.

In recognition of his service to the association, President Yamada has received numerous awards, including the Humanitarian Partner Award, ten International President's Awards and an Ambassador of Good Will Award, the highest honour the association bestows upon its members. He is also a Progressive Melvin Jones Fellow.

Dr. Yamada: Good morning. I am delighted to be here and to welcome you all in this big room.

In Japan, we meet in rooms measuring 5x5 m for a traditional tea ceremony and to hold discussions, including important political meetings.

I believe the room we meet in today is just too large to make any political decisions.

On the screen, you see an origami crane, a Japanese symbol for peace and longevity.

In Japan, if a friend is sick in hospital, it is custom to make thousands of origami cranes and to bring them to the patient to wish for speedy recovery.

Cranes are also made to remember those who died.

And if you ever travelled to Japan, it is likely that you have seen cranes out of the aircraft window.

This picture also shows the actual bird. The smallest species of cranes in Japan has a wingspan of 1 metre. Asian cranes spend the summer in Mongolia where they lay their eggs and bring up their young before migrating across the mountains of the Himalayas to India where they spend their winter.

When crossing the mountain range, they have to fly at heights over 8000 metres, facing ferocious winds and temperatures as low as - 30°C. How can such a relatively small bird survive this journey?

The answer is teamwork and leadership. Cranes fly in a V formation. The leading bird at the tip of the V is most exposed to the air pressure, while the birds flying behind it benefit from reduced drag.

This technique has been widely adopted by humans, for instance in motorbike racing where racers drive close to the one in front. Birds flying behind their leader in the V formation save energy. When the leading bird becomes tired, another one comes to the front.

If the birds would fly in a straight line one behind the other, they would be unable to see what is ahead of them. All they could do is follow their leader blindly.

When it comes to the leadership of our organisation, we can learn a lot from these birds. Every year, we appoint a new president, and this has been the case for nearly 100 years. We never ask our members to follow their leader blindly. And the leader is answerable to the members. I personally have learned a lot from our beloved cranes, and have therefore chosen this extraordinary creature as my logo.

At the last workshop of the District Governors, I even showed them how to make an origami crane from paper. They all had to make one for me, and the birds are now decorating my office. I should tell you that it is actually very difficult to make an origami crane.

At this point Dr. Yamada throws a piece of cloth into the air that is miraculously transformed into an origami crane. I hope you found this entertaining, as we Lions also need to have a bit of fun. Here's a crane that you might give to your wife!

I now wish to talk about more serious matters. This is our Lions Club logo, and next year, we will have our 100th anniversary, and the celebrations will of course be huge.

This does however not mean that those in office in the 99th year since the establishment of the organisation are less important than their successors...

**About the Lions Club logo:** The two lions face in opposite directions, one looking back at the past and the other one looking forward to the future. In our 99th year, we should reflect on our past. We certainly have achieved a lot, but there might be things that are outdated or no longer relevant in the current social context. We need to have the courage to change our approach and to get rid of rituals and activities that are no longer useful. It wants to make sure that the golden lapel button will remain a strong symbol for all who will come after us to run our club for the next 100 years. Change needs courage. In the year of our 100th anniversary, we must have the courage to change. I have come to Augsburg to show my commitment to change.

And a lot is happening already at our headquarters, where I act as a Samurai Lion, threatening my co-workers from my office chair to make sure that they do a good job.

But joking aside. I would like to encourage you all to look forward and to tackle the challenges our organisation is facing.

My slogan is dignity, harmony and humanity, as I want to focus our effort on helping children. It hurts me to see children suffer, and I am sure you feel the same. Many diseases that cause suffering are actually curable. Today, lives are still lost because many sick children still have no access to medical care. It is terrible for a family to lose a child.

These families need support, through proper medical care, counselling and financial assistance.

The refugee crisis is a terrible problem.

Let us not forget that children are the same all over the world. Children born in an affluent part of the world are lucky. Children born in a poor country have no such luck, and through no fault of their own. That is why we Lions must help these children.

A child growing up in poverty is often trapped in a vicious cycle. Education is the only way out of this trap.

The Lions are doing a lot to help children to read and write, which are the first steps towards a better education.

I therefore urge you to continue funding our literacy programmes.

I have initiated a new initiative called "Dignity for Children".

I challenge all Lions to join me in this endeavour. We want to reach 100 million people who need our support. To date, we have already achieved a third of our goals under this initiative.

### **Centennial Service Challenge**

It is our aim to make life better for 100 million disadvantaged people all over the world. Who knows, by our 100th anniversary, we might even have reached 200 million people!

Please help me to achieve this goal.

This is the Peace Poster that has won this year's first prize. It was painted by a 13 year old girl from China, and I think it is a great piece of art, showing people and symbols from all over the world. The Peace Poster Contest is a well-established competition by the Lions Club, promoting intercultural exchange and accord among children from all over the globe.

I sometimes wonder whether Lions members have the same deep commitment to intercultural harmony as we see it in the painting and drawings of our young Peace Poster contestants.

Our clubs in Japan are very active, but sometimes we lack ideas for new undertakings. During my visit here, I have come across some ideas and activities that I wish to propose to the Lions in Japan.

Supporting local communities and projects is obviously a worthwhile task. Equally important are however our activities at a global level, in cooperation with our District Governors.

The Ask One Campaign was launched last year. And don't forget: all this should start at home.

I think that we will gain even greater recognition for our work, if we do it together with our families, Leos included of course. We can extend our membership by asking our families to join the Lions Club. The greater our membership, the more we can do and the further we can reach. I also urge you to recruit more women to join the Lions. Just yesterday, we had a meeting at which we discussed a proposal to introduce a 50/50 gender quota for our clubs. While there are few regions where women make up the majority of our members, the share of women European clubs is still

relatively low. I think however that women would be attracted by our commitment to service. In the run-up to our centennial celebrations, I ask you to take action to increase the number of female members in our local clubs.

Please help us make the Lions Club stronger, so that we can do more for others.

Whenever I am visiting an area, I always ask to meet the club presidents, as I want to talk to them about our service activities. A good programme of services is vital for the recognition of our work within the wider community and our future.

Rather than going out there recruiting members, we want people to come to us, asking us how they can join us.

I want you to know that I am really enjoying my time here in Augsburg, and thank you all for your warm welcome.

Mr. Wirfs: Thank you for sharing your ideas with us.

Some issues you have raised might be new to us in Europe.

Dr. Trigona, Italy: I am a doctor like yourself, and want to help everybody who needs help.

Yesterday, we presented a project for refugees that can be easily implemented.

For the last two years, we have been providing basic healthcare services for refugees.

Along the coast of Italy, we have established centres where refugees can get medical care.

M. Castellani, Italy: You talk about change. Could you tell us where you feel we need to change?

Dr. Yamada: We live in a world of rapid change. I therefore think we should look at the services we are currently offering, to see what is still relevant and what is not.

International Director from Norway: As a Lion, I served in Lebanon. There, about a third of the people are refugees, and I am deeply concerned about their welfare. What do you think about this crisis?

I think that the current refugee crisis is a really serious issue. We must use this European Forum to find out how to respond to it.

Mr. Fabiano, Italy; PID: It is our mission to promote cooperation among all who live around the Mediterranean Sea. We take the refugee crisis very seriously and want to do something. In March, we will meet in Malta to discuss the issue and we urge you to come and join us there. The event focuses on the refugee crisis and steps we can take to strengthen cooperation between peoples.

We would like to tackle the problem at its roots.

Dr. Yamada: I intend to travel to Malta and to attend your meeting.

Susanna Brillano, Italy: My question also concerns refugees. What can we do to strengthen the rights of asylum seekers in Europe?

Many are still turned back as you know.

Dr. Yamada: This is a very difficult and sensitive issue. I will soon attend a meeting in Turkey and will be briefed by the ONHCR. At the moment, I cannot tell you more.

Person from Turkey: I worked for the ONHCR, and we initiated a project involving both Lions and the ONHCR, aimed at supporting people who became victims of traffickers.

Dr. Yamada: In addition to what we will discuss in Turkey, I can tell you that we plan other activities that are related to this problem. At our next conference in New York, gender equality and human trafficking will be among the most pressing topics.

P. Verneur: As a member of the Mediterranean working group, I also wish to invite you to our conference in Malta.

The Lions should act as ambassadors for refugees towards the wider public.

Dr. Yamada: I want to engage in all discussions regarding refugees. I am sure we will find ways to help.

Dr. Westhoff: Thank you, Dr. Yamada for joining us in Augsburg. I wish to apologise again for the oversight at yesterday's opening ceremonies where the flags of Cyprus, Turkey and Greece were not flown. Luckily, we are not involved in politics...

Minutes by: Dr. B. Conrady-Walz

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