

# Diplomacy Day at Seattle Rotary

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“Where diplomacy ends, war begins,” quoted **Canadian General Consul Brandon Lee** as Diplomacy Day was celebrated at Seattle 4. The words are Adolf Hitler’s and a dire warning to pursue diplomacy to all ends before resorting to immensely more costly, in every way, acts of war.



As our club celebrated and thanked representatives from 13 countries for their diplomatic service, President Mark noted that as the Olympics are viewed worldwide, it is a particularly fitting time to recognize and celebrate our global connections and achievements of athletes around the world.

Our club’s Diplomacy Task Force premiered a video of our diplomatic corps Rotary members: Brandon Lee, Canadian Consul General; **Lee Hyung-jong**, South Korean Consul General; **Yochiro Yamada**, Japan Consul General; **Vincent Yao**, Taiwan Director General; and **Roberto Dondisch**, Mexico Consul General. Each described the critical importance of diplomacy as a channel for people to get to know and understand one another and better the world.

**David Woodward** introduced three new members to our club from the diplomatic corps. Each has extraordinary education, accomplishments, and has been posted around the world on behalf of their countries. Please see the introductions in the Totem email.



Deputy Mayor for External Relations, Shefali Ranganathan, on behalf of Mayor Durkin, welcomed and thanked the members of the diplomatic corps for helping to build the good relationships that are essential to Seattle’s economy. Among all cities in the US, Seattle ranks 4th in international exports.



Former Rotary President **Paul Ishii**, posed questions to Yochiro Yamada, Consul General of Japan and Vincent Yao, Director General of Taiwan. He asked them about their perceptions on the trend in the West towards isolation. Yamada said that rather than isolationism, this is more like populism, and did not see this as a growing trend. He noted that Japan has free trade agreements with the EU and that being open is the way to do business. Yao

said that in diplomatic circles words do matter and that he is watching leadership closely. Indo-Pacific is now a term used to recognize the importance of strengthening economics and security between the US and East Asian countries. Economics and security cannot be separated he said. Current US leadership is sending confusing signals and missing the lynchpin between economy and security.

Paul asked them to define “fair trade” and Yamada said it should mean a level playing field and common rules applicable to big powers and small players. Yao said that the US administration believes that having a trade surplus means the US is winning, and the goal then is to reduce the trade deficit. Whether this is correct is debatable he said, but economic openness benefits all. He added that revisions are needed to current trade agreement.

Finally, in response to a question about continuing investments by Asia in the US, Yamada said that for business to continue making large investments, trustworthiness is important. Business looks out seven years for stability as reflected in rules and regulations, trustworthiness and transparency. Stability is very important and US national interest relies on Japanese trade. Yao said that trading relationships are important to US and Asia partners.



Past President **Bill Center** closed the meeting with an impassioned plea for diplomacy before ever resorting to war. He quoted Condoleezza Rice who said, “Multilateral diplomacy is hard. It’s slower, it’s tougher, it’s a bigger slog. I’ve learned that sometimes the things you’d most like to do something about, you really have difficulty unless the international community really mobilizes.”

**Anna Liotta** gave the opening inspiration reminding us to be grateful for the work of diplomacy at international levels, and personally as we each take opportunities to reach out to others. Violinist Allion Salvador accompanied by pianist Angelo Rondello opened the meeting with a lyrical, somber, subtle piece, perhaps reflective of the work of diplomacy.