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For Immediate Release

Campaign Sight First II Recognized by World Leaders

Campaign SightFirst II, Lions Clubs International's worldwide effort to raise at least US\$150 million for blindness prevention programs, has attracted the attention of heads of state and world leaders around the globe. The leaders are taking note of the campaign's potential to affect the future of entire nations and regions by saving as many as 37 million from preventable blindness

Manmohan Singh, prime minister of India and political leader of the world's largest democracy, wrote to Lions' International President Dr. Ashok Mehta about the impact that Lions and the SightFirst program has already had in his nation.

I am glad to know that Lions Clubs International is engaged in Campaign SightFirst II to prevent and reduce blindness across the globe.

The dedicated efforts of Lions Clubs International to control and eliminate blindness has extended much needed medical and other facilities to peoples across the national boundaries to get back their vision. Its activities in this direction are manifested by its landmark SightFirst Programme and have benefited millions of people to prevent blindness. The continuation of such activities in the form of Campaign SightFirst II has the challenging goal of fighting blindness and making it a thing of the past.

I wish the Campaign all success.

John Howard, prime minister of Australia, recalled Lions' long history of service to the blind and great success in preventing vision loss around the world.

I welcome the opportunity to endorse the efforts of Lions Clubs International and the millions of Lions members in reversing and preventing blindness through Campaign SightFirst II.

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Lions Clubs have a long history of service to millions of vision-impaired people. The Sight First programme has been extremely successful in restoring sight, preventing vision loss and improving eye-care services and education. Campaign SightFirst II promises to continue this success. I am particularly pleased to see Australians involved in tackling such an important international problem.

Lions Clubs International and Lions members play an important role in the global community by encouraging good citizenship and fostering understanding. The philanthropic work of Lions members is most certainly an example of what I call the “social coalition” – the idea that everyone has a role to play in contributing to social well being.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all those associated with the campaign and wish you all the best for your fund-raising efforts.

Other world leaders who have voiced their support for Campaign SightFirst II include Dr. Jan Peter Balkenende, prime minister of the Netherlands; Michael Jeffery, governor general of Australia and Donald Tsang, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China.

The campaign has also received statements of support from media celebrities including Walter Cronkite, former television journalist, and Dr. Mehmet Oz, a noted heart surgeon and author of the best selling book, *You: The Owner’s Manual*.

Lions Clubs International is the world's largest service club organization with more than 1.3 million members in nearly 46,000 clubs in 197 countries and geographic areas. In addition to its efforts toward conquering blindness, the organization has made a strong commitment to community service and helping youth throughout the world. To learn more about Campaign SightFirst II and the SightFirst program, visit www.Lions-CSFII.org.

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