



FROM THE DESK OF THE DISTRICT GOVERNOR 11/2011-12

HELLO MY FELLOW ROTARIANS,

The UN - Rotary Day was celebrated for the first time in Rotary District 3310 in collaboration with the United Nations Association of Singapore (UNAS) on the 5 November 2011 followed by a very elegant banquet event attended by about 150 guests from both the diplomatic communities based in Singapore and Rotarians.

The Guest of Honor was the French Ambassador to Singapore, His Excellency Mr Olivier Caron. Also in attendance were the Swiss Ambassador, the Thai Ambassador, Senior Representatives from the Israeli, Malaysian, Pakistani, Australian, Indian and several other embassies based in Singapore.

I was invited to deliver a speech at this prestigious gathering and below is the full text of my speech.

UNITED NATIONS – ROTARY DAY, SINGAPORE 5 NOVEMBER 2011





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Rotary is a worldwide organization of more than 1.2 million business, professional, and community leaders. Rotarians, provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and help build goodwill and peace in the world through its fellowship of business, professional, and community leaders.

We believe that through a **commitment to Service Above Self**, we would be able to change the world, one step at a time.

Rotary and the United Nations have a long history of working together and sharing similar visions for a more peaceful world. Each year at Rotary-UN Day, more than 1300 Rotarians including many Rotary International Directors, Foundation Trustees, past Senior Leaders, and guests come together at UN Headquarters in New York to:

- promote **broader awareness** of the **humanitarian goals** shared by the two organizations among Rotarians and the general public;
- create awareness for the various social and environmental needs in our region;
- build social capital, encourage volunteerism and philanthropy so more could be done to support education, provide job training, supply clean water, combat hunger, improve health and sanitation, and eradicate preventable diseases.

During World War II, many clubs were forced to disband, while others stepped up their service efforts to provide emergency relief to victims of the war. In 1942, looking ahead to the postwar era, Rotarians called for a conference to promote international educational and cultural exchanges. That event was a precursor to UNESCO. In 1945, 49 Rotarians went to San Francisco to help draft the UN Charter. Rotary and the UN have been close partners ever since.

The UN-Rotary Day also serves to commemorate one of the most successful partnerships in global health - ***The Global Polio Eradication Initiative*** spearheaded by **Rotary** and **UNICEF** with the **World Health Organization** and the **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** which has rid the world of **99%** of the highly infectious and debilitating disease *and* spared an estimated 5 million children from a lifetime of paralysis *and* extreme poverty.

This is a testament on the importance of cross-sector collaborations and of what we can achieve together in accelerating progress on the Millennium Development Goals.

We train our youths – our Interactors and Rotaractors to be responsible leaders and citizens through Rotary Youth Leadership Award or RYLA. The activities are designed



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around Rotary's 5 Core Values, namely: Service, Fellowship, Diversity, Integrity, and Leadership.

Just as the United Nations programs contribute directly or indirectly to the prevention of conflicts and **promote peace on earth**, Rotary advances world understanding, goodwill, and peace through the improvement of health, the support of education, and the alleviation of poverty through our service to humanity.

THE ROTARY FOUNDATION (TRF) supports the efforts of RI to achieve world understanding and peace through international humanitarian, educational, and cultural exchange programs. Funding is solely from voluntary contributions by Rotarians and friends who share the vision of a better world.

The three major initiatives of TRF are Polio Eradication, Humanitarian Grants Programs and Educational Programs.

For **PolioPlus**, Rotary has received US\$355 million in challenge grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Rotary has committed to raising US\$200 million by 30 June, 2012. This represents another US\$555 million toward polio eradication.

Humanitarian Grants are used to support projects that improve health, alleviate hunger, or promote human development.

TRF is today one of the world's largest privately funded international scholarships programs. Known as Ambassadorial **scholarships**, more than 40,000 men and women from 100 nations have studied abroad under its auspices. In addition, there are 110 Rotary Peace Fellowships available, annually, at professional development certificate (3 month course) and master's degree level (15 to 24 month course) for International Studies in peace and conflict resolution.

ROTARY AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS) Rotary's projects are often *parallel to UN efforts* to reduce poverty, improve health, encourage literacy and promote sustainable development and environment.

Our Rotary International District 3310 comprises of 3 countries, namely, Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei. The territories of Malaysia consist of Melaka and Johor in Peninsular Malaya and Sarawak, Sabah and Labuan in Borneo. There are 62 Rotary Clubs in our District 3310 and 22 Clubs in Singapore. In total, we have around 1,800 Rotarians.



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In advancing the Mission of Rotary, Rotarians advances the Millennium Development Goals both at home and abroad. Through clean water projects in Cambodia, a social enterprise in the Philippines, mobile clinics in Sarawak, an environmental seminar and a walk to end polio in Sabah, a child sexual abuse prevention training program in Johor, an age friendly workforce conference in Singapore, and an orphanage in West Timor amongst others, Rotary is certainly on the right track in accelerating progress on the Millennium Development Goals.

While Rotary and other organizations have made significant progress in accelerating progress on the Millennium Development Goals; there is still much to be done to achieve them in our region by the target date of 2015. However, through the hard work of the United Nations and its partner organizations, and through the hard work of volunteers throughout the world, it is possible within our children's lifetime:

- to see an end to extreme poverty and illiteracy;
- to eradicate polio so no child will ever be exposed to the crippling disease;
- to provide access to safe drinking water
- to establish the rights of women and children from sexual abuse and exploitation under the Convention on The Rights of the Child as an international treaty that recognizes the human rights of children
- to achieve sustainable environment and development and stop mindless acts of deforestation before we reach the tipping point and exhaust our natural resources

We may not be able to achieve all the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 but that should not discouraged us from **working together** and **setting targets** which will enable us to review our progress at key **milestones** in our journey towards achieving these Millennium Development Goals.

Let's ***reach within to embrace humanity*** and harness our inner resolve and strength to press on. Let's tune our ears to hear and train our hearts to feel so that we may not be lacking in human compassion.

Thank you