Advancing a century old tradition of fostering global harmony with the United Nations and other international organizations.
The arc of relationship building can be long – and, all the more, when working virtually during a pandemic. And, yet, while one doesn’t always see the immediate cause and effect of our work, so expected in a 24/7 news cycle, diligent and strategic follow-through does result in creating positive, lasting change.

When viewed over a period of time, you begin to see what our Representatives do and how they bring value to Rotary and, in turn, offer value to the UN agencies or international organizations with which our Representatives work.

A strong example is Representative Walter Gyger’s Peace Project Incubator. Inspired by Rotary Day at the United Nations/ Geneva in 2017, Walter has continued the event’s focus on peacemaking by working with the Rotary Action Group for Peace and Rotary Peace Fellows. The result has been the Incubator – introducing nearly 50 “ready-made” peace projects designed by Peace Fellow alumni. Rotary clubs and districts can benefit from supporting these projects and help make peace possible at the grassroots, community level.

Another example is the significant work happening in District 9212, the result of our 2018 Rotary Day at the United Nations/ Nairobi. Today, through the efforts of Joe Otin, Representative to UN Environment, the district supports an “Adopt-A-River” program that can be replicated throughout the Rotary world. And, in follow-up to youth engagement for the 2018 event, Dr. Josephine Ojambo has coordinated a district project with UNICEF Kenya’s in-country office to help students prepare to return to school when Covid-19 protocols allow along with a commitment to longer-term projects for WASH in schools.

These are but a few examples of the ongoing work of our Representatives. Through their Action Plan, Representatives are working to not only develop some of Rotary’s signature thought leadership events but, in addition, to knit together the UN agencies’ or international organization’s technical expertise with our community-focused, problem-solving skills. Better interpersonal connections, institutional cooperation, and stronger humanitarian projects result in creating positive, lasting change.

We hope you will enjoy this brief update. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you like to know more.
Personal testimony of polio victim moves Director

Under the aegis of Holger Knaack, President of Rotary International, and Marlene Mortler, German MEP (EPP), a virtual meeting took place with Rotary and the European Union on 9 November 2020 with the theme 'EU leadership in global health security after Covid-19: best practices and policy responses'.

Michel Coomans and Hugo-Maria Schally, Rotary Representatives to the EU, proposed to MEP Marlene Mortler to organize a joint event on the theme of health. She did not hesitate for a second for she had contracted polio with her twin brother at the age of three and a half.

President Holger Knaack recalled this long-standing commitment: 35 years ago, Rotary launched its Polio Plus program. From 350,000 cases in 125 countries in 1988, it has fallen to 140 cases last year, limited to Pakistan and Afghanistan. But the mission of Rotary - and of its partners - will not be completed until the disease has been totally eradicated.

Henriette Geiger, Director at the European Commission (DG International Cooperation and Development), visibly touched by Ms. Mortler's personal testimony, described it as necessary because it reminds us that behind the figures and statistics lay sometimes tragic human destinies. "Covid-19 is a kind of shock that should rid us of our recklessness and our lack of foresight. It would be foolish or naive to consider any response other than collective in the face of this global pandemic." She confirmed the European Commission's will to put in place an effective common policy for vaccine production, procurement, and distribution.

Noting that WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom has said strong health systems are the best way to prevent diseases from turning into epidemics, Geiger said, "We need to improve our ability to collectively respond to major health threats." The first 'roundtable' discussion chaired by Swiss Rotarian Urs Herzog, President of the Major Gifts in Health initiative, notably allowed Belgian Rotarian Emma Groenen, (PDG 1630 and "End Polio Now" Coordinator) to describe her experience in the complex organization of National Immunization Days in India: 700,000 stands, 2.5 million vaccinators and 170 million children immunized in one Sunday! The infrastructures put in place to fight polio can be used for other causes. If we are able to carry out such disproportionate logistics for polio, we can also do it for measles, diphtheria or Covid-19.

Michel Coomans  
Rotary Representative to the European Union  
Rotary Club of Brussels

Hugo-Maria Schally,  
Rotary Representative to the European Union  
Rotary Club of Brussels-Europe

2020/21 Rotary Representative Network
First Rotarian Peace Projects Incubator tackles urgent community needs

To foster actions for Peacebuilding and Conflict prevention, Rotary’s Primary Representative in Geneva, Ambassador Walter B. Gyger echoed the wishes of Rotary’s Board for strengthened relations between Rotarians and Peace Fellows at Rotary Day at UN/Geneva 2017, under the theme: Peace: Making a Difference. Following the event’s conclusion was the idea to recommend partnership approaches to increase Rotary’s impact on sustaining peace.

Over the past months, Rotary Peace Fellow (RPF) Alumni, Rotarians, Rotaractors, together with international experts and international governmental and nongovernmental organizations, have developed peace project ideas that can be proposed to Rotary Clubs and Districts around the world for implementation. Originally a two-day event was planned in July 2020 at the Geneva Peace House. Because of the pandemic, the event was postponed. Participating Peace Fellows used the additional time to further develop project ideas and organized a multitude of webinars with global attendance.

The Swiss/Liechtenstein Peace Group and the European Chapter of the Rotary Peace Fellowship Alumni Association organized on 1 November 2020 the first Rotarian Peace Projects Incubator (RPPI). The basic idea was to create a cooperative framework for Rotarians/Rotaractors, Rotary Peace Fellows, and international experts to jointly develop peace projects tailored to address urgent community needs. The collaboration with RPF was key for the success of the RPPI. There was great readiness on their part to work with Rotarians to develop and implement concrete projects.

Strengthening relations between Rotarians, Rotaractors and Peace Fellows is an excellent tool to develop Rotary’s actions in the focus Peacebuilding and Conflict prevention. The knowledge and experience of RPF is impressive. RPF Alumni would be happy to offer a return to Rotary for their generous scholarships. This was possible thanks to the generous support of a devoted group of volunteers, including Sibylle Rupprecht, President of the Swiss/Liechtenstein Peace Group and Urs Klemm, RI Director-elect.

Walter B. Gyger
Primary Representative,
United Nations Offices, Geneva (UNOG)
Rotary Club of Geneva International
The project focusing on COVID-19 & WASH in Schools was endorsed by District 9212 on Friday 27th of November by the District Secretary. There was a signing ceremony held at the UN compound in Gigiri, Nairobi. In attendance were: UNICEF Country Representative Maniza Zaman; Rotary Representative to the UNICEF Kenya and UNON, Dr. Josephine Ojiambo; UNICEF Chief of WASH, Mahboob Ahmed Bajwa; UNICEF Chief of Communications Andrew Brown; and Rotary Advisor Mr. Amos Oluoch.

A joint high level fundraising call was held on the 11th of December 2020 with high net worth influencers including Rotarians, Government representatives, business leaders, and media personalities. The district partnership secured an initial commitment of $1,500 USD with anticipation to secure additional funding from the high net worth individuals in attendance. Rotary has received much in donations.

The partnership produced a fundraising video and shared widely on a number of social media platforms. The video was promoted, shared, and ultimately reached over 370,000 people. The partnership team also produced fundraising posters for print and social media, and continues to share messages and materials on the safe return to school and advocates for the end violence against children in all forms. The district partnership is producing a second joint fundraising video that will feature DG Patrick Obath, UNICEF officials and others. Rotary Kenya is applying for a global grant for the project. UNICEF will offer review and support for this application. A launch event to mark deployment of Wash in Schools will be held when the fundraising target is met to support the first 30 schools.

Dr. Josephine Ojiambo
Representative, UNICEF Kenya &
At-Large Representative in Nairobi
Rotary Club of Nairobi

2020/21 Rotary Representative Network
"We must step up our efforts to reimagine education" says UN Secretary-General

The 3rd International Day of Education was observed on Monday 25 January 2021 with the theme, ‘Recover and Revitalize Education for the COVID-19 Generation.’ Organized by UNESCO, UN Headquarters, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies (CRI). To observe the day, I attended the webinar as Rotary Representative to UNESCO in Nairobi.

The global event had three sessions moderated in panels addressing learning heroes, innovations, and financing. The first session on prioritizing education, working together and financing our future was moderated by Stefania Giannini, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education. The keynote speakers were Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director-General; António Guterres, UN Secretary General who delivered his message via video; H.E. Volkan Bozkir, President of 75th UNGA; and H.E. Odd-Inge Kvalheim, Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway to the UN on behalf of UN Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning.

In her welcome address, Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director General, said "at the peak of the pandemic, schools were actually closed for 91% of learners, or 1.5 billion pupils and students. It then became apparent to everyone that education was a global public good and school was more than just a place of learning: it was also a place that provided protection, well-being, food, and freedom."

UN Secretary-General António Guterres reminded us that education is a global fundamental right and a global public good must be protected to avert a generational catastrophe. "In 2021, we must step up our efforts to reimagine education, train teachers and bridge the digital divide," he said. “Let us commit to promote education for all, today and everyday.”

Salome Gitoho
Rotary Representative to UNESCO, Nairobi
Rotary Club of Nairobi

What is the future of NGOs?

The 2020 International Conference of Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) took place from 16-18 December 2020. In the face of multiple unprecedented crises that resulted or have actually worsened because of the pandemic, what future, what role is there for NGOs? The International Conference of NGOs has provided some answers and shared experiences.

Members of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and members of UNESCO Secretariat have worked together behind the scenes to deliver the best conference possible.

As a member of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison committee, I worked with the teams of the UNESCO Secretariat, at the headquarters of this organization, to help with the technical steering and the conduct of the international conference.

Cyril Noirtin
Rotary Representative to UNESCO, Paris
Rotary Club of Paris Agora
Rotary and WHO: Together for mother’s and children’s health  
25 February 2021  
10:00am-11:30am ET/ 16:00–17:30 CET  
Globally, 7,000 newborn babies and more than 800 women die every day from pregnancy or childbirth-related causes, most in low-income countries.

Join Rotary International and the World Health Organization to explore how community-based solutions can protect and empower mothers and children, setting them up for healthy, hopeful and thriving futures.

This 90-minute virtual event will raise awareness of maternal-child health projects while focusing on strengthening health infrastructures to prevent maternal-child deaths worldwide.

During the event, you’ll hear from our inspiring speakers about the importance of investing in maternal-child health and explore how innovative community-based solutions can protect and empower mothers and children, setting them up for healthy, hopeful, and thriving futures.

Learn more and register:  
https://who.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_qvRHJJs-RgCbdynUpp1YcA

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF ACTION: Rotary & the United Nations  
Saturday, 10 April 2021  
10am-1pm NYC/4pm-7pm CET/6pm-9pm EAT  
Thousands of Rotarians across New York City and the world have commemorated the United Nations’ 75th anniversary, building upon Rotary’s lasting support of the United Nations and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Rotary District 7230, home to the United Nations in New York, is collaborating the Rotary Representative Network and others to celebrate Rotary’s 75-year history of international service with the United Nations.

On 10 April 2021, join an online celebration with special guests including members and leadership of Rotary, colleagues across the United Nations and a special celebrity guest! A series of flash talks, discussions, this live online event will offer expansive opportunities for the public to learn the role of the United Nations and Rotarians- and how simple acts of service are helping achieve peace.

To RSVP, visit: www.75yearsofaction.live
The Rotary Representative Network started this work in the 1940s, with Rotarians having played multiple leadership roles at the 1945 San Francisco conference which led to chartering the United Nations.

Building upon its deep and lasting relationship with the United Nations, the Rotary Representative Network today is comprised of 31 Representatives to 23 UN offices, specialized agencies and key International organizations in 14 cities around the world.

Rotary International President Holger Knaack has called on this group to open opportunities across the world for talented, thoughtful, and generous people to unite and take meaningful action through Rotary service.
Compiled on behalf of the Rotary Representative Network by:

**Jason Gonzalez**  
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**Judith Diment**  
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For questions, please contact judith@thediments.co.uk