

Excerpt from Rotary International

## **DECLARATION OF PEACE, Lisbon, June 26, 2013**

All human beings have the right to live in a state of peace, free from violence, persecution, inequality, and suffering. As leaders and friends of the Rotary movement, united in service, we publicly declare our commitment to creating a more peaceful world.

Through Rotary, we transcend the national boundaries and political ideologies that so often divide people and enable conflict to take root. We believe that tolerance is necessary for peace to exist, and we respect one another's rights to freely express political, religious, cultural, and social perspectives and practices that differ from our own. Looking beyond our differences, we come together as global citizens to work for the good that we can collectively accomplish. In this spirit, we envision a world of peace without borders.

We know that peace cannot thrive unless we are willing to work for it. Peace is a way of life, requiring steadfast dedication.

"Peace begins with you" is our call to action, and each of us recognizes that we have a personal responsibility to answer it.

Peace begins when all of us make a conscious effort in our daily lives to ensure that every action we take is one that builds goodwill and friendship...and promotes harmony with our neighbours and creates friendships that transcend the divisions of nationality, politics, religion, and culture. Peace is sustained when we join together, work together, and in turn, inspire young people to hear the call to action and carry the pursuit of peace forward, generation after generation.

We nurture the seeds of peace by encouraging young people's creativity, energy, and idealism, empowering them to become catalysts for change. As our legacy for future peace, we recognize the vital importance of conserving and protecting our planet's resources for future generations. We encourage young people to value peace over war, friendship over enmity, and compromise over conflict, knowing that they will carry these values forward as the leaders of tomorrow. As each generation supports the next, the seeds of our actions will yield a green path to peace, constantly moving forward.

We express our desire for a peaceful world through the action of service. By serving and helping others, we gain empathy and understanding, build lasting bonds of friendship, and empower others to become peacemakers.

Peace is not a final destination to be reached, but an active and continuous process. All of us are capable of becoming peacemakers in our own lives, and through our words and actions, we will demonstrate that peace is possible.

Consider some of the ways that we have enhanced peace together through Rotary:

- To help mend international relationships that were damaged during two world wars, Rotary established intercountry committees, which facilitate humanitarian and peace efforts between countries. Today, nearly 250 intercountry committees are working to advance international understanding, goodwill, and peace.
- For more than 75 years, students and host families have broadened their horizons through Rotary Youth Exchange. Each year, more than 8,000 students in 80 countries have the opportunity to bridge cultures and enhance international understanding through short-term and long-term exchanges.

- Through The Rotary Foundation's Peace Fellowships, more than 700 Rotary Peace Fellows have earned master's degrees or professional certificates that enable them to pursue careers in peace-building and conflict resolution. We urge everyone who shares our vision of peace to take action:
- Be a peace-builder in every interaction you undertake with your fellow human beings. Let every action be one that builds goodwill and better friendships.
- Use your voice and your vote to encourage your elected leaders to adopt peaceful conflict resolution practices instead of resorting to war.
- Reject the notion of enemies. Actively befriend people from countries that have traditionally had adversarial relationships with your own country.
- Provide opportunities for young people to develop their leadership potential and become active stakeholders in their communities.
- Connect with others to make a difference. There are Rotary clubs in more than 200 countries and geographical areas, working in more than 34,000 communities worldwide. Join us in advancing Peace Through Service.

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