



Nunzio Scibilia

District Governor
2016-2017

Palermo, February 1st, 2017

My dear friends in Rotary,

Peace is not simply the absence of conflict. Peace brings freedom, security and happiness. Peace is the enemy of persecution and instability. It is one of the central elements of Rotary's mission on which our efforts for the good of humanity stand.

Rotary's commitment starts in the local communities each of which has different requirements and problems. Although we may carry out our Rotarian service in numberless manners, let us concentrate on the six areas of intervention as these reflect the most pressing requirements of civil society.

Let us keep in mind, however, that some years back Rotary increased the impact and quality of humanitarian action by inserting, among these six areas of intervention as seen by the Rotary Foundation also a very specific area that sees us Rotarians support the training and instruction for the promotion of Peace through the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

Some years back, ***Sakuji Tanaka***, the Japanese International President for Rotary, launched a challenge for the creation of peace through service. Club members responded by setting up and financing projects, by sponsoring Rotary Peace Scholarships and convening specific fora. World fora held in Berlin, Honolulu and Hiroshima contributed to mark Rotary's role in the world scenario for attaining a lasting peace.

Unfortunately since then not much has changed. Still today 20.000 persons are either maimed or killed by landmines. 90% of the victims of armed conflicts are civilians and at least half is made up of children; 51 million persons are presently displaced owing to armed conflict and persecution, hence the migrants, the refugees escaping areas of conflict where they would suffer persecution and violence. We must consider also the outcasts of society and the 300.000 child soldiers (boys and girls below the age of 18) who are involved in armed conflict around the world.

This is a vast and challenging scenario for which identifying the causes in an effort to mitigate them is not sufficient. Neither are goodwill and determination alone sufficient. Much more is necessary. It is necessary to organise action projects that involve all the members of the United Nations and not only the opposing factions. It is here that Rotary can and must intervene. We can only seriously take up this mission if we live up to the statements of our statute free and unencumbered from radical opinions to represent a global action movement.

Rotary's most meaningful commitment for the promotion of peace is its Program for Peace Centres which was set up in 2002. Each year the program prepares some leading professionals of international fame in order that they may promote national and international cooperation for the resolution of conflict. Each year Rotary offers 100 peace scholarships available at Universities. The holders of these scholarships are leaders in the promotion of cooperation in social change and are peace operators at international level, they are chosen for their ability to have a meaningful impact on world peace. By means of strict academic training, experience on the field and opportunities of global networking, the Rotary Peace Centres Program trains leaders who become a force for peace and for the prevention and resolution of conflict within their own communities and worldwide.

This program and these leaders are therefore one of the most significant contributions that Rotary places at the service of humanity, in the hope that all this may lead to better understanding, respect and tolerance of diversity which may give birth to the optimal condition for the human race: ***World Peace***.

Yours,

District Secretariat 2016-2017

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