

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



THIS YEAR, we celebrate Earth Day on 22 April with a new sense of purpose. The environment is now an area of focus for Rotary. Solutions for all great tasks always start with you and me, and there is much we as individuals can do simply by changing our behavior: Cutting down on our use of plastic and using energy wisely are just two examples. But now we have the opportunity to do more together.

Supporting the environment is not new to Rotary; clubs have long worked on environmental issues based on local needs. Now climate change — a problem that affects us all, rich and poor — requires us to work together more closely than ever. Alberto Palombo, a Venezuelan engineer living in Brazil and a member of The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers, shares his view.

For 30 years, my work has been to connect with communities and policy officials to take care of the environment. Today, I am excited about Rotary's opportunities to help reduce environmental degradation and make communities more environmentally sustainable.

In every community where we have a Rotary, Rotaract, or Interact club or a Rotary Community Corps, there are environmental challenges. As Rotary members, we can become stewards of environmental sustainability and adopt the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in our daily lives at home and in our clubs. Then we can incorporate them into our Rotary projects.

My club has been involved with water and environment projects since day one. We seek opportunities to empower Rotarians and foster partnerships in our region and beyond, working with groups such as the Inter-American Water Resources Network and the World Water Council. Local clubs worked with the Water, Sanitation, and Hy-

giene Rotary Action Group (wasrag.org) to help Rotary get a seat at the table during the 2018 World Water Forum in Brasilia, where we discussed how communities can recover from environmental disasters like the one caused by the failure of a mining dam on Brazil's Rio Doce in 2015.

Taking care of the earth is an effort that never stops. To make an impact, we must align our knowledge, abilities, and enthusiasm — and Rotary is already great at doing this. As a volunteer with the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group (esrag.org), I have seen how our work for the environment dovetails with much of what we are already doing in water and in our other areas of focus. Rotary members are not passive spectators; we take action. Let's work together and make a positive impact.

Support from The Rotary Foundation will define this new chapter in our service. Through district and global grant projects, we will build upon our previous projects that help the environment. We will look for ways to collaborate more closely and make a greater impact on global environmental issues. And we will incorporate environmental concerns into all of our programs, projects, and events.

Rotaractors and participants in our youth programs expect Rotary to take a clear position and provide leadership with vision. We will work with them, seeking intelligent solutions to the problems they will inherit. Our incredible members, networks, and Foundation give us the capacity to make an important and lasting contribution. Now, we will discover together how *Rotary Opens Opportunities* to help us expand our service to preserve the home we all share.

HOLGER KNAACK

President, Rotary International



Alberto Palombo
Rotary Club of Brasilia-
International, Brazil