

# Rotary International Day at the United Nations

November 5, 2005

By Thomas McConnon, Director  
The Rotary Club of New York



On a summer-like November morning, while thousands of joggers were lining up in front of the United Nations for a warm-up race a day before the New York Marathon, Frank C. Collins Jr., Rotary Representative to the United Nations, hosted the very inspiring and informative Annual Rotary Day at United Nations. There were more than 500 Rotarians in attendance, as well as 200 Interact high schools students. Rotary International's President, President-elect, and Foundation Director were present as were most of Rotary International's directors and senior officers.

In his opening remarks, Frank opened the meeting speaking about how Rotary has been involved with the United Nations since its creation in 1945. In fact, over forty-five of the founding delegates and several Secretary-Generals were Rotarians. He clarified, however, that while Rotary participates in the UN's humanitarian projects, we do not get involved in the political discussions at the UN.



*Rotarians meet at United Nations in New York on November 5, 2005  
in support of the achievement Millennium Development Goals*

## The program was segmented into six panels:

- Service Above Self
- Millennium Development Goals and Rotary Participation
- Hunger
- Water
- Health
- Literacy

Each panel was moderated by a Rotary Representative to the United Nations. The panels consisted of one UN official to explain and clarify what the UN's goals and needs are. Two Rotarians would then outline projects that they were doing to assist in diminishing or eradicating the poverty.

## Service Above Self and the UN's Millennium Development Goals

By the year 2015, all 191 United Nations Member States have pledged to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which are the blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading institutions to reduce by half the following:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases,
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development

For more information go to <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

Isolda Oca, Deputy Chief, UN Department of Public Information to the approximately 1500 NGO's that work with the UN was the first speaker to welcome the assembly of Rotarians to the UN. Originally from the Philippines, where her father and brother were Rotarians, Isolda was very familiar with Rotary. She outlined how Rotarians were essential in the creation of the United Nations. She noted that the unsuccessful predecessor of the UN, the League of Nations, failed because civil society was not incorporated into the organizational structure. It was a wise decision of Franklyn Roosevelt and Harry Truman to insist that Rotarians be involved in the creation of the United Nations. Article 71 of the UN charter encouraged NGO cooperation which the UN. 6yThe Polio-plus program could not have been possible without Article 71, Isolda added. She advised Rotarians to remember that the purpose of the UN in 1945 was to "not to help humanity go to heaven, but to save it from hell".



*Frank C. Collins Jr., President Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar, Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Isolda Oca, and David Linett*

President Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar of Rotary International provided additional insight and inspiration to our organization of business and professional men and women. He stated that he is proud to be a Rotarian because we work for peace and better understanding of people. He happily announced that at that morning's Rotary International Board Meeting, new Rotary clubs in the Peoples Republic of China and Cuba were now being established. "We will now have Rotary Clubs in 170 countries", and he hopes that in the "near future Rotary will have clubs in all the countries of the United Nations".

President Carl shared his view that it is the of youth programs of Rotary that are the best way for Rotary work for peace. "If we could have every seventeen year old be an exchange student, we would have no more wars". He also noted that many poverty eradication programs are too big for any one organization to solve. Therefore, Rotary's "cooperation and continuity" with the World Health Organization and UNICEF to eradicate polio has proven to be very effective. He encouraged Rotarians to continue to concentrate their respective efforts the Millennium Goals, especially water and literacy projects. "Water is a gift a nature and we cannot produce more, the water we drink today was here with the dinosaurs". He also asked Rotarians to encourage the political leadership of the world to support the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Goals.

## **ROTARY AND THE MILENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDG)**

Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Special Advisor to the Secretary General and Director of the United Nations Millennium Project is also the Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University and was listed as one of the one-hundred most influential leaders in the world by Time magazine.

He thanked Rotarians for their work and their one hundred years of service. "Rotarians stand for what all citizens need to be", and when I gives speeches around the world, I always points out to other organizations Rotary's Polio-Plus campaign as a model of public-private partnerships, he noted. Rotary International was the first of all organizations to understand the global mission that we have one world.

The Millennium Developmental Goals of 2000 are the world's shared hopes and goals. Unfortunately, they are not on track. The MDG's are the life and death struggle for the world. Twenty to thirty thousand men, women, and especially children die every day of extreme poverty. A \$7.00 anti-malaria treated bed-net will last for 5 years and protect 2 children, yet 3 million will die from malaria "The goals are sensible and achievable yet they are still bold commitments. We still have a decade to put in the practical steps in even the poorest and the most seemingly hopeless parts of the planet. In the Polio-Plus program, "Rotarians did not say we are going to implement our life saving project in only parts of the planet and that some of the other countries are too poor, or hopeless, or too poorly governed to get the job done". Needless to say, if the MDG are not achieved on schedule, it will be an embarrassment for all and "we will be a world without shared goals."

He also emphasized that we need all of the goals to be achieved since poverty has to be defined in its entirety of income, hunger, gender equality, disease control, safe child birth, access to water and sanitation, and environmental sustainability.

The world leaders got it so right when they set the goals in 2000. "The definition of poverty is not one dollar a day; if there is no clinic, no roads, and no girls going to school what good is one dollar a day".

Millennium Goal Villages require assistance to eliminate extreme poverty:

- Donated seed and fertilizer
- Treadle pumps for water
- Schools available for male and female children,
- School meals in the schools as an incentive to send their daughters as well as their sons to the schools
- Local clinic that is stocked with oral dehydration solutions, basic antibiotics for acute respiratory infections and anti-malaria drugs
- Bed-nets in every sleeping sight in malaria infected regions
- Help in transport and communication of people and cargo to reduce head-loading injuries.

To provide this assistance for self sufficiency, it will cost approximately \$50 per person per year for several years to end extreme poverty in it's entirety within a generation. The MDG's want to half extreme poverty by 2015, but we could end extreme poverty by 2025, he said. Professor Sachs concluded his remarks by stating that he is grateful to Rotary International for its leadership to achieve the Millennium Development Goals because "the peace on the planet depends on them".

Frank C. Collins Jr., Representative to the United Nations, the moderator of the panel thanked the speakers for their participation.

For more information go to or click <http://www.earthinstitute.columbia.edu/about/director/>

## HUNGER PANEL

This panel was moderated by Alternate Representative to the United Nations, Sylvan Barnett (a.k.a. Mr. UN) and a member of the Rotary Club of New York. He opened the panel discussion reminding Rotarians that with the onset of the Avian flu, millions of poultry will be destroyed thereby causing a huge loss of the food supply in many countries.

He also provided the following facts on the reality of hunger:

- 2.1 million African children died of hunger last year,
- 40% of African kids are undernourished,
- One-third of all children world-wide are African,
- 8 million African farmers have died over the last few years from HIV Aids,
- 10 million sub-Saharan Africans need food desperately,

Rima Salah, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF also thanked Rotarians for their efforts over the last twenty years. Rotary Partnerships with UNICEF “proves that miracles do happen and they have made a better world for children”. More than 2 billion children have been immunized on the Polio-Plus program public-private partnership. Rotary’s comparative advantage is that Rotarians are everywhere, and Rotarians are connected to, or they are, the local decision makers to get the message out.

While nearly \$4 billion has been raised, more than \$600 million of this amount was contributed by Rotarians. She also credited the Vitamin A nutrients in the vaccine to have saved an estimated one million children.

She noted, however, because of food shortages:

- 300 million children who are malnourished,
- Six million children under 5 years of age die every year,
- 27% of all children are underweight.

Disappointedly, while the international community had hoped to cut the number of under-weight children in half by 2015, in the last five years the number has only been reduced by 1%.

A properly nourished child needs:

- A healthy mother,
- Exclusive breast feeding for the first six months of life,
- Breast feeding - combined with a daily intake of high protein complimentary food from 6 months to two years of age,
- Iodized salt (Kiwanis International is the led NGO with Unicef in this area)
- Nutritious food 3 or 4 times a day from age 2 to 5.

Rotarian Paul M. Munson represented District 6450 of Illinois and outlined the **Temple Solar Project** that donates solar ovens that can bake, broil and steam food in developing countries. In Haiti, for example, it is estimated that women spend 55% of their income buying charcoal. As deforestation expands wood and charcoal will become even more expensive.

The ovens are manufactured by Sun Ovens and were designed by a Milwaukee Rotarian. The ovens are mobile and easy to set up. By working with local Rotary clubs, the Rotary Foundation may provide matching grants. Sun Ovens have been placed in China, North Korea, Afghanistan, Tsunami affected areas, and throughout Africa.

(For More information go to or click <http://www.rotarysolarovens.org/>)

J.B. Roberts, PDG, RC of Plainview, Texas talked about the Hunger-Plus project where Rotarians collaborate with USAID and USDA and send food, especially dehydrated products due to the long shelf life, around the world.

(For more information go to or click <http://www.hungerplus.org/> )

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## WATER PANEL



*Frank Collins, Brad Jenkins, Jim Bodenner Eirah Gorre-Dale, and Bob Hunt of the Water Panel*

Eirah Gorre-Dale, Special Representative of the Water Supply and Sanitation, Collaborative Council to the United Nations' World Health Organization (WHO) is responsible for developing the United Nations' Water and Sanitation Hygiene Project (WASH). Eirah is a native of the Philippines and lives in the United Kingdom.

WHO estimates that:

- 4,500 children die every day from lack of access to clean drinking water,
- 288 million lack accesses to safe drinking water every day.

Eirah emphasized that there needs to be a “pyridine shift from the old supply-driven and hardware-focused intervention to a demand-based, people-centered, and software-oriented approach on developing clean water supplies and sanitation”.

Rotary can participate in WASH in many ways:

- providing rain water collection containers,
- hygiene education,
- work with water coalitions with our coordinators around the world
- Promote and build separate gender toilet facilities.

The UN has declared 2005 to 2015 as the “Water for Life Decade”. She also emphasized that we need to do away with social taboos that sanitation is not a dirty word. She showed a video that was part of the BBC Earth Report.

Rotarian Jim Bodenner, PP, RC of Rockford, Michigan represented District 6290 and 6360 in the Bio-Filter Project. The filter was invented by Dr. Mann of Canada who provides it free to organizations such as Rotary. There are no mechanical parts and there is nothing to break on the filter. It cost approximately fifty-dollars and can filter 150 gallons of water a day with nearly any type of source water.

Rotarians first introduced the filter in the Dominican Republic four years ago. Currently they have duplicated the business model with seven Rotary clubs in 6 Districts in three countries. Local micro-businesses have been trained to make the filters and Peace Corps Volunteers are assisting in the educational needs. It is expected that other micro-businesses will sustain the Bio-sand filter project in the Dominican Republic and other countries.

(For more information go to or click <http://www.rotarydistrict6290.org/indexFlash.htm> and [http://www.district6360.com/files/bio-sand\\_filter\\_project.pdf](http://www.district6360.com/files/bio-sand_filter_project.pdf)

Rotarian Bob Hunt, PDG, RC of Fairport, New York pointed out that Malawi, one of the poorest countries in the world, has a population of 12 million people, yet has more than one million orphans. Its average school class size is 102 students per class room, and the life- expectancy is 37 years and an average family income of \$150 per year. Bob spoke about donated treadle pumps that are similar to Stair Masters gym equipment. These pumps allow even a ten year old to power these transportable pumps to numerous fields to irrigate the crops in drought periods and making more lands viable to food production with the help of irrigation.

Rotary Alternate Representative to the United Nations Brad Jenkins moderated the panel and congratulated the Rotarians for their contributions on water projects.

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## Rotary - United Nations Partnerships



*President-elect William Boyd, Sylvan Barnet, Ambassador William H. Luers, President of General Assembly Jan Eliasson and Frank Devlyn*

William Boyd, President-elect of Rotary International from Auckland, New Zealand, gave his vision of Rotary and United Nations collaboration in achieving the MDG's. "We both share a vision of common good that outweighs the desire of personal gain - and we believe in a better world."

We live in a very different world from 100 years ago and Rotary needs to promote peace and prosperity and international good will.

- He sees that the world is safer yet more dangerous
- There is greater wealth and starker poverty;
- There is more food and more mouths to feed;
- There is greater communication to see more clearly how great global injustice can be.

Because of this, Rotary and the UN strive for the same goals of peace and prosperity, help and international good will. At this moment local Rotary clubs are working with the world's UN Population Fund to provide famine relief in Niger. "We may not share the same language, religion, or culture but we do share the same basic humanity" and "we are all responsible for each other".

Frank Devlyn, Chairman of the Rotary Foundation, stated that over the decades many Rotarians have helped others to see by treating blindness in many ways. But, Rotarians also ask others to see in a different way. They

ask others to see the suffering around them and to see what they can do to help. Conversely, “the worst kind of blindness is for those who do not see the needs that exist all over the world”. Rotarians need to give their four T’s: Thinking, Talents, Time, and Treasure. Rotary is involved in every one of the MDG in some way and since we have over 106 fellowships, why not a fellowship for each Millennium Goal or “Friends of the United Nations” Fellowship.

Jan Eliasson, President of the 60<sup>th</sup> Session of United Nations’ General Assembly, who is the senior ranking officer of the United Nations, also addressed the assembly. President Eliasson is the former Sweden Ambassador to the United States and Swedish Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Coincidentally, President Eliasson is from the same town in Sweden as our own Rotary International President.

President Eliasson confessed that he was a recipient of the Rotary High School Exchange Program, and studied for one year in Indiana. During that time, he addressed more than 50 Rotary clubs and one unforgettable Indiana Ladies Church group.

During his talk, he suggested that we must encourage others to remember that , “There is a world outside of Verona”, as written in Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet”. To show that, “We must be engaged not only in our local and national scenes but also internationally”. We need to reach the moment in history when we all understand that good and effective international cooperation is indeed in our national interest and that we can say that we truly internationalist and that is why we love our country. ”We all need to show the world that we have international solutions for international problems.

William H. Luers, President United Nations Association / USA a non-governmental grass roots foreign policy organization also addressed the Assembly on UN reform. Mr. Luers is the former president of the Metropolitan Museum in New York and serves on a number of corporate and not-for- profit boards. The Ambassador was awarded an Honorary Rotarian membership by Frank Devlin in 2004. He congratulated Rotarians because in many ways the Rotarian voluntary mission typifies the best in human instinct. Rotary International is:

- Community based and community driven,
- Democratically sustained,
- Effectively run,
- Generous in spirit and reach,
- Global in membership and vision.

He explained that reform of the United Nations is needed because it is a different world than when the UN was created. There no longer is much danger of large countries going to war in the scale as when the UN was created. Now, the world has to deal with other issues that no nation can solve by itself, such as natural disasters and terrorism. “The world is different and the UN has to be different”.

Regarding the “Oil for Food Program” scandal, the investigation cost \$30 million to essentially uncovered that one individual may have stolen \$130,000. Paul Volker’s reports did, however provide suggestions for organizational direction, and management and transparency reform.

The UN agenda of the developed world is security oriented and the UN agenda of the developing countries is poverty reduction. The MDG’s was a compromise to each group. It should be pointed out that the United States delegation at the UN were originally not in support of the MDG’s but after months of negotiation and refinement the President of the United States announced his support at the UN Summit..

Several of the important points at the recent UN Summit are:

- Not able to define terrorism.
- Security Council was not reformed.
- Peace Building Commission has been designed to help build nations after conflict
- Human Rights Council to replace the degraded Human Rights Commission
- Responsibility of UN to protect peoples from genocide

The Ambassador recommends that all Rotarians voice support to their elected officials for building a new United Nations relevant to the modern world. Frank C. Collins Jr., Representative to the United Nations Rotary Club of E. Hartford, Connecticut moderated this panel

## HEALTH PANEL

Dr. Richard Alderslade, Senior External Relations Officer at World Health Organization spoke on the report "Make Every Mother and Child Count".

This report documents that every year:

- 550,000 women die during pregnancy or childbirth.
- Four million children die during their first day of life.
- Ten to twelve million children die before 5 years of age.
- 68,000 die from unsafe abortions.
- Malaria causes 800,000 deaths, mostly children and mostly in Africa
- 150 million are suffering from diabetes's

(For more information go to or click <http://www.who.int/whr/2005/en/index.html> and [http://www.who.int/whr/2005/overview\\_en.pdf](http://www.who.int/whr/2005/overview_en.pdf))

Five medical illnesses are responsible for the deaths of 90 percent of children:

- 1) preterm birth respiratory infection, (most notably pneumonia)
- 2) diarrhea,
- 3) malaria,
- 4) measles,
- 5) HIV-AIDS

Potential partnerships with NGO's are identified on WHO's website. These problems are far too large for any one organization and we need to partnership, Dr. Alderslade noted.

Rotarian Blake McBurney, PP, RC of Atlanta represented District 6900 in the **Balashikha, Russia Project**. Russia has a declining population while the average Russian women may have 4 abortions in a life-time. The goal of the project is to reduce infant mortality by 50 percent within 5 years, and encourage mothers to carry their pregnancies to full term. "Power of One" taking several partnerships to make the project a success. The project is also build upon a working relationship between Atlanta and Russian medical community.

(For more information go to or click <http://www.futureofrussia.org/balashikha.html>)

Rotarian Elaine Hernandez, the health delegate to Mexico for the American Red Cross, RC of McAllen North, Texas spoke about the Bi-national Tuberculosis Initiative. Tuberculosis (TB) is rampant in many parts of the world including the American-Texas border. TB kills two million people a year, yet it is curable when detected early and appropriately treated.

(For more information go to or click [http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/tb/notes/TBN\\_2\\_05/hightlight\\_TXborder.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/tb/notes/TBN_2_05/hightlight_TXborder.htm))

Rotary Bi-national Plan to control and eradicate TB along the United States and Mexican border by:

- Raise awareness to Rotarians,
- Raise community awareness,
- Develop new partnerships,
- Help to find funding,
- Mobilize political support for TB programs. TB-Plus of District 5930 of southern Texas and District 4130 of North Eastern Mexico collaborated to support TB projects and the goals. The guiding slogan is: Attitude, Fortitude, Latitude and Gratitude.

Joan Fyfe, Alternate Representative to the United Nations Rotary Club of Fairport, N.Y. was the moderator for this panel and thanked the panelists for their contributions

## LITERACY PANEL



*Doris Lewis Sargeant, Benita Somerfield, Örsçelik Balkin, and Glenn Chamberlain of the Literacy Panel*

Benita Somerfield, Executive Director of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy also serves as an advisor in “Reach out and Read, was named International Literacy Resource Person for UNESCO’s “Decade of Literacy. Since 1989 Benita wanted to thank Rotarians for their support of the Barbra Bush Foundation around the United States buying books or providing transportation or a site for the reading programs around the country.

She outline UNESCO’s ground breaking initiative “Literacy Initiative for Empowerment” (LIFE). Thirty-four countries have been identified as most needed in literacy improvement. Local governments will drive the initiative with private partnerships. UNESCO encourages Rotary to be part of this project.

Rotarian Örsçelik Balkin, Rotary International Director-elect, PDG, RC of Istanbul-KARAKÖY, Turkey explained the Concentrated Language Encounter Program (CLE) designed to teach reading and writing in a short time. It was first started in Thailand. It is an immersion program within group activities. Teachers start the learning activities and shared reading of text and then group activities by saying every word they know to the group. Rotary Clubs can provide promotion and awards for successful graduates while local Ministry of Education provide classroom space and teachers.

(For more information go to or click <http://cleliteracy.org/>)

Rotarian Glenn Chamberlain, PP, RC of Ephrata, Washington, spoke about the Guatemala Literacy Project. Glenn retired from local city politics in 1990 and has since made 9 trips to Guatemala to enhance literacy by providing books to impoverished schools. Under this model, a Rotary club provides the initial books and the children’s families pay a small fee for the books. The books should last for five years and the fee that was paid by the students is used to purchase replacement books.

For more information go to or click [http://www.coeduc.org/r\\_about.htm](http://www.coeduc.org/r_about.htm)

Doris Lewis Sargeant, Alternate Representative to the United Nations Rotary Club of Smithtown N.Y moderated this panel.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Frank C. Collins Jr. provided an inspiring and thoughtful closing remarks and the Rotarians thanked him for conducting a enjoyable, informative and sometimes very funny Rotary Day at the United Nations.

*Rotary Public Service Announcements (PSA) were showed during panel changes. These PSA’s are produced by Rotary International and are available for Rotary Clubs for viewing to club members and community organizations that is available to all Rotary Clubs the first is Rotary and the UN*