



ROTARY'S 7TH AREA  
OF FOCUS



**SUPPORTING THE ENVIRONMENT**



When Paul Harris convened the first Rotary club meeting, in 1905, the ecology of the world had not been substantially damaged. Many of the original forests of the Earth were still standing. Acid rain had not affected rivers and forests in many areas. Large numbers of species had not been exterminated by hunters, agricultural settlers, and industry. There were just over a billion people.

Today, things have changed. Forests have been destroyed, acid rain plagues all the rivers and forests of the world, carbon dioxide concentrations are at levels beyond the normal range, rising each day, and threatening to raise global temperatures and sea levels. Our world population has reached 5.5 billion, adding another billion every 10 years.

With these and other environmental concerns in mind, a record number of heads of state and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) met in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3 to 14 June 1992, to attend the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

A decisive voice among the service organizations represented at the summit, Rotary International contributed its expertise on ecological projects—to a large degree obtained through its Preserve Planet Earth program—to the global wealth of experiences and initiatives shared during the event. The "Earth Summit" was an enormous effort to bring together the leaders and scientists of the global community. Its achievements and its failures will continue to influence global thinking on ecology for decades.

UNCED hosted the official meetings and negotiated treaties covering a wide range of topics, including the issue of stabilizing, and in time reducing, the emission of man-made gases into the atmosphere. The Rio accords also proposed a set of principles to preserve large tracts of the world's old-growth forests, as well as practical measures aimed at protecting the marine fauna of the world.



*Before human beings mastered the technique of making fire, efficient tools and relentless war, Planet Earth was pretty much intact. Forests were undisturbed, rivers and oceans were free of man-made chemicals, and human pollution was hardly noticeable. The equilibrium of life was well within the range established by nature over millions of years. As the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio so graphically demonstrated, the balance no longer exists.*

*In 1987, Comisia Mondială pentru Mediu și Dezvoltare (cunoscută sub denumirea de „Comisia Brundtland”) a lansat Raportul " Viitorul nostru comun" cu o cerere pentru o „nouă carte” care să stabilească „noi norme” care să ghideze tranziția către dezvoltarea durabilă.*

*Ulterior, discuția despre o Carte a Pământului a avut loc în procesul care a condus la Summitul Pământului de la Rio de Janeiro în 1992 în prezența Rotary International.*



*The Gaia, the flagship of the United Nations program to protect children, patrols Guanabara Bay, which borders Rio de Janeiro's western shore. The legend on the sail reads in Portuguese: "Maintain the route toward a better world for the planet's children."*

world has 10 years before the environment will begin to be damaged beyond repair. The time to act is now. No country can afford the luxury of non-cooperation."

The meetings of Rio centered around two basic protocols: the Earth Charter, and Agenda 21.

The Earth Charter declared the responsibility of all nations to protect the Earth's ecosystem. The document calls for efforts to eliminate global poverty, and proclaims the principle of sustainable development. The Earth Charter serves as the ethical standard for the development of Agenda 21.

Agenda 21's main objective is to set out rules of economic and environmental conduct for the nations of the world in the 21st century. A declaration of principles on the issues of sustainable development, the preservation of biological diversity, the environmentally sound management of biotechnology, the safeguarding of the ocean's resources, and the means of implementation to achieve these goals were included in this document, considered by many to be of crucial importance: nothing less than a blueprint for the world's ecological policy during the 21st century.

The declarations included in Agenda 21 are both explicit and forceful, as the following excerpt shows:

"Underlying Agenda 21 is the notion that human activity stands at a defining moment in its history. We can

on its own. Together we can [achieve them] in a global partnership for sustainable development."

Also contributing ideas and information, energy and inspiration, were the multitude of NGOs attending the summit. Together, they held a Global Forum on behalf of science, religion, business and industry, indigenous peoples, art, and other fields. With more than 350 separate meetings, and 650 exhibition booths representing 2,500 organizations and institutions from 150 countries, the Global Forum strived for "a global partnership for sustainable development, based on equity and full participation.

As the leader of the service organizations attending the meetings, Rotary International was a strong voice. An official delegation headed by R.I. Past President Paulo V.C. Costa of Brazil explained the nature of the efforts launched by Rotary on behalf of the ecology of the planet:

"Rotary clubs have developed excellent projects within their communities following the wise and prudent dictum 'Think Globally and Act Locally.' By the end of the first 11 months of the Preserve Planet Earth program, Rotary was already involved in more than 2,000 valuable community projects and had planted 33 million trees, achieving a fantastic victory."

Rotary's presence was not limited to its official delegation; numerous Rotarians from several nations also attended the meeting, as representatives of R.I. districts or



*At this stand staffed by the Rotary Club of Rio de Janeiro-Flamengo, Brazil, seminar participants could obtain information about Rotary's principles and philosophy and specific ecological programs, such as Preserve Planet Earth. From left*



<https://earthcharter.org/>

Earth Charter International (ECI) este organizația care promovează documentul Earth Charter (Carta Pământului), oferind informații, rețele și oportunități educaționale.

Având sediul în cadrul University for Peace, mandată de Națiunile Unite în Costa Rica, Secretariatul ECI promovează misiunea, viziunea, strategiile și politicile adoptate de Consiliul ECI.





"Ne aflam într-un moment de rscruce al istoriei Pamântului, un moment în care umanitatea trebuie sa decida viitorul sau. Pe masura ce lumea devine din ce în ce mai interdependenta si fragila, viitorul ne poate rezerva atât mari pericole cât si nebanuite oportunitati. Pentru a progresa trebuie sa recunoastem ca în mijlocul diversitatii magnifice de culturi si forme de viața suntem o singura familie umana si o singura comunitate terestra cu un destin comun. Trebuie sa ne unim pentru a construi o societate globala durabila bazata pe respectul pentru natura, drepturi umane universale, justitie economica si o cultura a pacii. În acest scop este imperativ ca noi oamenii de pe Pamânt sa declaram responsabilitatea noastra unii fața de altii, fața de marea comunitate a ființelor vii si a generațiilor viitoare." PREAMBUL - Carta Pamantului

# Rotary

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