

Good [morning/afternoon].

Since 1945, Rotary International has been a close partner with the United Nations, working together to build a healthier, safer and more peaceful world. For the last 20 years, we have also been UN partners in one specific challenge: the effort to achieve a world free of the crippling disease polio.

To date, Rotary has committed \$700 million US dollars and countless volunteer hours to immunize more than two billion children in 122 countries.

Over the years, there have been setbacks, and there have been triumphs. We celebrated as the number of new cases each year dropped more than 99 percent. In 1985, 350,000 children fell ill to polio. Today, it is just over 1,000 children per year. All but four of the world's countries have been declared polio-free.

No, it has not gone as smoothly, or as quickly, as we once hoped. But together, we have achieved something remarkable, and lasting.

And as is often the case, the most important lessons, and perhaps the most valuable accomplishments, were the ones that we did not expect.

We have created partnerships that will endure, and will yield benefits far beyond the elimination of one disease.

By working together to fight polio, we have effectively reached out to people of many different social, economic, and religious backgrounds.

And, our work in water, health and hunger, and literacy are now also a hallmark of our movement.

We have brought the world closer to the end of a disease, and to the achievement of the fourth Millennium Development Goal: reducing child mortality.

Rotary is committed to ending polio, and to building the healthier, safer, and more peaceful world of which we all dream. In 170 countries, our 1.2 million members are working to make that dream a reality. They are doing it the only way it can be done: together, and with all of you.

Thank you.