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President, 2021-22

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Dear Changemaker Governors,

It was little over 18 months ago when I first referred to you as the great changemakers within Rotary. In this short time, it is remarkable what we have achieved. You have lived up to the highest aspirations of Grow More, Do More.

We have grown like we haven't in many years and that despite the pandemic. Rotary members adapting to Each One Bring One have added a net 47,000 members so far this Rotary year. This ends a long period of membership decline within Rotary – and happened while the world is still feeling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. I compliment the thousands of Rotarians and you, the Changemaker Governors, for making Each One Bring One more than a slogan, you made it a vehicle for growth.

This growth has led us to do more. You showed your belief in Serve to Change Lives through all the meaningful work that Rotary members have done in all areas of focus. Around the world we educated the illiterate, brought water to parched villages, and improved sanitation facilities in communities. We healed the sick and worked for the environment, creating the conditions for peace.

While Rotary excels in positive peace through its service activities, we also took a stand for peace, expressing solidarity with the people of Ukraine. And Rotary members also continued important peace efforts in Afghanistan, Yemen and across the world through the work of our Peace Centers.

One example of our organization's full potential is our Empowering Girls initiative. Rotary has the power to lead the charge for gender equality – and that charge has begun. There is no country in the world where the status of girls couldn't be improved. Every country that Rashi and I visited, we were greeted by hundreds of girls whose lives had started to change because of the initiatives of Empowering Girls.

To take a leap forward in this program, this year at an excellent event on the Rotary day at the United Nations, we formed a new partnership with UNICEF that will lead community-based efforts to empower girls everywhere.

This is just another example of Rotary taking on a big challenge and seeing a big impact. We know what we can achieve together. We are closer today to eradicating polio than ever before. Each time I speak about Polio around the world, I get goose bumps. Polio eradication is not just a miracle in public-private partnership of an enormous effort over three decades to save millions of lives, it is in fact a shining example of bringing peace in this world. I feel Rotarians are the true harbingers of peace in the world.

Challenges remain, but we have a strategy in place that is working – and we need to keep inspiring our fellow Rotary members to take us to the finish line.

We took on the great challenge of protecting the environment in our new area of focus, and shortly thereafter, I was invited to participate in COP26, the global climate change summit that brought together nearly 100 heads of state and governments under a roof to save the environment.

We accomplished so much this year. The seven presidential conferences brought the desired results. Thousands of Rotarians have been inspired to do more in the areas of focus. They showcased the best of Rotary Projects around the world.

We were able this year to showcase Rotary's commitment to Serve to Change Lives to world leaders. As Rashi and I moved from country to country, we met more than 30 Presidents and Prime Ministers of countries. And with each of them, I could discuss the partnership of Rotary with their government, which they welcomed whole heartedly.

We have committed to work on education, heart surgeries, capacity building for

nursing, eye hospitals, dialysis centers and more in different countries all over the world.

Every one of our commitments will be fulfilled. We will be able to work with more than 30 governments around the world – and this surely will raise the bar of Rotary Service and enhance our global image.

The more deeply I think of Rotary and the work Rotary members do, the stronger is my belief that we are doing God's work on earth.

For Rotary to grow even bigger, we all will need to hold fast to dreams and continue to lead Rotary in a positive direction. The erstwhile President of India, the late Abdul Kalam, once said "Dreams are not what you see when you sleep. Dreams are those that will not let you sleep."

When people of action take up a challenge, they do not stop. Let us all work to ensure that the dream of the stature of this organization growing happens by valuing ourselves, leading to greater partnerships, in turn leading to bigger projects, culminating into greater impact. This will complete a virtuous circle, which started with just a dream.

I will keep working towards the dreams that we have all imagined for the good of the organization, even when I step down as President, and my fellow changemakers, I hope you do as well.

Let's keep turning the wheel together so humanity thrives. We have the power and the magic to *Serve to Change Lives*.

Warmest Regards,

Shekhar Mehta

President, Rotary International, 2021-22

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