

RESOLUTION 24R-44

To request the Trustees to consider adding basic human rights as an eighth area of focus

Proposer(s): Rotary Club of Norwich St. Edmund, District 1080, England

1 WHEREAS, Amnesty International’s 2022-23 Report reminds us that across the
2 world, universal freedom continues to be crushed by heavy-handed repression by
3 participants in all sectors of global societies. The report states “The most
4 marginalized were hardest hit and inequality rose. Women, girls and LGBTI
5 people faced gender-based violence and discrimination.” Backup statistics are
6 included on several of the gender-based violence and discrimination issues, such
7 as female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriages. For example, on FGM
8 the report states, “Between 100 and 140 million girls and women in the world are
9 estimated to have undergone the procedure, and three million girls are estimated
10 to be at risk of undergoing the procedure every year.” FGM has been reported to
11 occur in all parts of the world, including the UK and the USA, and
12

13 WHEREAS, despite the United Nations and other human rights organizations
14 investing vast sums into protecting and promoting human rights, they are
15 disregarded in many countries. News reports of grave human rights abuses in
16 countries across all regions of the world are provided almost on a daily basis. This
17 disregard is deeply disturbing for many Rotarians who believe that basic human
18 rights are rights inherent to all human beings regardless of race, sexual
19 orientation, nationality, ethnicity, language, or religion. As former Archbishop
20 Desmond Tutu pointed out, “If we are neutral in situations of injustice, we have
21 already chosen the side of the oppressor,” and
22

23 WHEREAS, these basic human rights were enshrined in the United Nations
24 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) after being finalized using the
25 framework and guidelines from the 1940 RI Convention in Havana, Cuba, i.e.,
26 long before the establishment of the United Nations. Indeed, before “human
27 rights” was a known term, RI adopted a resolution calling for “freedom, justice
28 and peace in the world,” and
29

30 WHEREAS, in subsequent years, the principle of protecting and upholding
31 “human rights” became an integral part of the Rotary Code of Policies. The Code
32 formerly listed nine specific responsibilities which Rotarians were urged to act
33 upon. For example, the list exhorted Rotarians “...a) to defend the rule of law and
34 order to preserve the liberty of the individual so that all may enjoy freedom of
35 thought, speech, and assembly; freedom from persecution and aggression; and
36 freedom from want and fear and b) to uphold the principles of justice for
37 humankind, realizing that these are fundamental and must be worldwide,” and

1 WHEREAS, the list of basic human rights responsibilities was eventually
2 discarded a decade or so ago from the Rotary Code of Policies. In the last couple
3 of years, some references to human rights issues have been included in RI's
4 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Statement and Code of Conduct. However,
5 these still fall short of reminding members of their wider human rights
6 responsibilities as previously set out in the Code of Policies, such as defending the
7 rule of law and order or upholding the principle of justice, etc. If the RI Board
8 does not wish to reintroduce a specific list of human rights responsibilities in the
9 Rotary Code of Policies, a better solution would be for the Board to invite the
10 Trustees of The Rotary Foundation to agree to the establishment of a new area of
11 focus on human rights

12
13 IT IS RESOLVED by Rotary International that the Board of Directors of Rotary
14 International consider requesting the Trustees of The Rotary Foundation to
15 consider adding basic human rights as an eighth area of focus.

(End of Text)

PURPOSE AND EFFECT

16 This Resolution requests the RI Board to seek the agreement of the Trustees of
17 The Rotary Foundation to establish an additional area of focus on basic human
18 rights. Up until the last few years, Rotarians were only specifically reminded of
19 their ethical responsibilities, under Part 2 of the Object of Rotary and The Four-
20 Way Test, but not their human rights responsibilities. These were implied.
21 However, as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement, a Task Force on
22 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) was established by RI. This body produced
23 recommendations which resulted in a DEI Statement and Code of Conduct. Even
24 so, these statements do not cover all elements of human rights issues. Adding a
25 further area of focus focused upon human rights will certainly enhance Rotary's
26 Vision statement.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

27 If implemented, this resolution would result in an increase in expenses for The
28 Rotary Foundation.

29
30 An additional area of focus would be required to provide global grants for
31 activities related to basic human rights. Annual administrative and technical
32 expenses to support an additional area of focus are estimated at US\$232,000. In
33 the first year there would be an additional \$56,000 required for modifications to
34 the existing grant application software.

35
36 Besides having an impact on grant processing and information technology, there
37 are additional administrative impacts in other areas, such as finance and
38 marketing.