



Rotary Commonwealth Peace Envoy

The Rotary Commonwealth Peace Envoy Committee was established on 24th October 2017 at a meeting in Marlborough House between London District 1130 Rotarians and Commonwealth Secretariat (Comsec) Staff.

Meeting Objective: The Purpose of the meeting was to meet with Commonwealth Secretariat representatives to discuss various D1130 Peace Project initiatives and identify synergies that could be leveraged between London Rotarians and Comsec Staff, and the possibility of presenting these initiatives at the various forums that take place during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in April 2018. The other purpose is to develop concepts for presentation, by President Josephine who is also the Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth Secretariat, at the Rotary International Peace Conference in February 2018.

The first outcome after the initial discussions of the meeting was to confirm the establishment of a standing committee of District 1130 Rotarians and Commonwealth Secretariat staff who would comprise the joint Rotary Commonwealth Peace Envoy Committee. A number of Peace Project initiatives were discussed and it was agreed that some of these would be aligned to benefit from the synergies of both the Commonwealth Secretariat and London Rotarians.

Brief Summary of the RCPE Meeting.

This was the first formal meeting of the RCPE Committee comprising District 1130 Rotarians and Commonwealth Secretariat (Comsec) Staff members. This summary captures some of the salient points that highlight the synergies that could be leveraged between Rotarians and Comsec Staff.

1).Deputy Secretary General(DSG) Dr Josephine Ojiambo informed the meeting that the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting(CHOGM) has been scheduled to take place in London in April 2018. There were a number of ways in which the RCPE team could be involved. She gave an outline of possible partnership initiatives from a Commonwealth perspective. The DSG also touched upon some projects and perspectives that could be brought to bear on developing the thematic content of the Rotary International Peace Conference in Coventry in February 2018. There was common ground in carrying out joint initiatives to promote social inclusion and cohesion amongst young people, promoting sport for developing peace, and developing effective programmes to counter violent extremism, especially amongst people who are vulnerable. As Rotary is a non-political and global organisation, it is well placed to engage in areas of conflict where it could seek short periods of cease-fires to enable humanitarian and other assistance to be rendered. This example could be extended to other joint initiatives of the RCPE Committee.

DGN Tony Sharma gave an overview of the Peace Projects that D1130 had in the pipeline:

2).The Rotary International 'Children for World Peace' Assembly (ICA) is being planned as a bi-annual event – each event will be hosted by a different city. The first ICA is being planned to take place in Sophia, Bulgaria in August 2019 and the next one is being planned for London in 2021. Plans for the Bulgarian ICA are well advanced with approvals obtained from the national and local

governments and Bulgarian Rotarians. A Rotary Global Grant application is at an advanced stage of preparation. This initiative is being headed by President-elect Nellie Stefanova of the Greenwich Rotary Club.

From a Commonwealth perspective, even though Bulgaria is not a member of the Commonwealth, the concept of a bi-annual Rotary International World Peace Assembly for Children which will be hosted by different host cities on a rotation basis, to promote Peace and Harmony, has merits. For starters, this event could be promoted through the Commonwealth Youth Forum to ensure that Children from the Commonwealth are well represented. The RCPE will work to progress this further.

3). The Rotary Stand for Peace the World Over – is a stand that would be supplied as a self assembly kit to schools, community organisations and other public places where it could be safely erected. The stand will be personalised to reflect the Rotary theme and local cultural ethos of the area in which it is erected. For example in schools, it can have the decals of the flags from which the children in the school originate from. The Stand will promote Rotary and Peace.

This is a UK wide initiative and the Stand for Peace could be called the Rotary Commonwealth Stand for Peace and could carry a Commonwealth Peace message from the Secretary General. It would also have the RCPE logo which includes the Commonwealth logo. This initiative was agreed by the RCPE.

4). A tour bus is being planned to start from India and finish in Hamburg in Germany. It will be painted to promote Rotary and will visit schools and communities as it passes through the various borders along the route. Rotary gifts and promotional material will be handed out by Rotarians along the way. To give this project a Commonwealth perspective, the RCPE is reviewing this project to determine if it could hand out Commonwealth promotional material including material related to the joint peace initiatives along the cross country tour route.

5). A Rotary Peace Park is being planned for the India-Pakistan border and this initiative is being promoted by the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park Association (WGIPPA). The WGIPPA set up a Peace Park on the USA-Canada border at a time when there was a lot of tension between the two countries some 85 years ago. The idea of a Peace Park on the Lahore-Amritsar border has gained full support of the District Governors and Rotarians on both sides of the border. A letter from the WGIPPA has been circulated to all senior Rotarians at RI, RIBI, District 1130, and the respective District Governors in Lahore and Amritsar.

The RCPE committee has requested the Comsec Team to explore the possibility of the heads of both India and Pakistan and their senior officials being briefed by the RCPE about this peace initiative during CHOGM. This idea would be actively pursued within Comsec.

6). DG Mike Hodge briefed President Josephine that Rotary is planning to plant 300 trees all over London on 22 April 2018. The young people of the Commonwealth who are attending the Commonwealth Youth Forum would be involved in planting these trees. President Josephine informed DG Mike that she was reminded by officials representing the palace and the UK government that CHOGM events should be promoted throughout the UK and not only in London.

It was then discussed that RIBI could be approached to involve all the RIBI clubs throughout the UK in tree planting. Following further discussions between DG Mike, DGN Tony, President Josephine and Chairperson Sree, an idea arose to contact all the Rotary Clubs in the world to suggest to them that one tree be planted for each Rotarian in their respective Clubs to meet the aim of RI President Ian Riseley, to plant 1.2million trees this Rotary year. There could be a **Rotary Commonwealth Global Tree Planting Day** held on 22 April 2018, just as CHOGM comes to an end. Trees would be planted on the same day all the way from Tuvalu in the East to Kiribati in the West. The initial thoughts are that each club will pay for the costs of the trees it plants. This initiative is to be discussed and developed further in consultation with RIBI and RI.

7). Mr Lawrence Muli from the Youth Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat invited the RCPE committee to have a stand at the 2018 Commonwealth Youth Forum which is being held just before CHOGM in April 2018. This was accepted by the RCPE committee. He also mentioned many opportunities for Rotary and Rotaract to engage with youth through the division's upcoming projects. The RCPE Committee including Mr Muli will continue to meet to develop some joint initiatives mainly aimed at UK Schools and Youth.

8). Mr Mark Albon, Head, Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Unit of the Commonwealth Secretariat discussed the activities of his department and ways through which community involvement and education can assist in decreasing radicalisation especially amongst vulnerable youth. Possible partnerships with Rotary, as well as with Rotaract were discussed, primarily in the aspect of community awareness on providing education on countering extremism at the community level. AG Anshu Jain who is a London Rotary Assistant Governor, agreed to liaise with the RCPE and Mr Albon to determine if a trial could be conducted at an East London School where he is a School Governor.

9). Ms Kai-Nneka Townsend, Assistant Programme Officer, Sports & Development for Peace (Youth Division), spoke about the various programme initiatives undertaken by her division to promote sports and development to achieve peace. She invited the RCPE committee to engage with her to develop joint initiatives to promote sports and development in this context. The RCPE agreed to involve the Rotary London District Sports officer to engage with Ms Townsend through the RCPE with a view to developing some sports initiatives to promote peace.

District Governor Mike Hodge summed up the meeting by listing a number of Rotary goals – all of which would lead to the creation of Peace. He touched upon the various topics that were discussed at the meeting and pointed out that these tied in very well with the objectives of Rotary and the overall aim to achieve Peace.

International Chairperson and District Governor nominee elect 2020/21 Francis Uwaechi, finished on a very positive note as he concluded that the meeting had made a good start and a number of initiatives were identified. He encouraged everyone to come up with good action plans for their areas of interest.

The London RCPE Chairperson Sree Vallipuram, thanked DSG Josephine Ojiambo for hosting the meeting in Marlborough House. He also thanked the senior District Rotarians and Comsec staff for actively participating in this inaugural meeting. As President Josephine has been invited to be a guest speaker at the RI Peace Conference in Coventry in February 2018 in her capacity as the Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth Secretariat, he encouraged all participants to continue engaging with one another and to flesh out the various initiatives discussed so that a paper could be developed for President Josephine in line with the theme of the Peace Conference.

The next joint meeting of the RCPE Committee would in January 2018.