

# ESRAG's Policy Statement on Climate Action

Prepared by Past Chair Karen Kendrick-Hands (2017-2018), Patricia Armstrong (Chair 2022-2023) and Laurie Zuckerman

Climate impact reports, such as the 6<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report (AR6) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), have warned that the warming planet is a growing and serious threat to the environment and human populations worldwide.

Under the leadership of five recent RI Presidents, Rotary has embraced the Environment as an Area of Focus, empowering all Rotarians, Rotaractors and Interactors to take climate action. **ESRAG supports actions including advocacy to leverage the power of Rotary as a globally distributed network of local community leaders to contribute to solutions of the climate crisis.**

**ESRAG's Climate Action Policy Statement:** Consistent with the types of climate actions that The Rotary Foundation (TRF) has chosen to fund through its Global Grant Guidelines, ESRAG supports Rotary's engagement to reduce greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere by reducing emissions and increasing carbon sequestration (**mitigation – TRF Action Goal 4**); to help communities **build resilience** to adverse climate impacts, for which mitigation is not enough; and to address the loss and damage caused by increasingly frequent and severe extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change (**adaptation TRF Action Goal 5**).

## Climate Action Messages

### The science is clear.

The AR6 gave a stark warning that taking strong action in this decade is critical to limit global warming to 1.5°C. The consequences of inaction are increasing temperatures, rising sea levels, and more frequent and intense extreme weather-related events (e.g. intense rainfall, floods, forest fires, droughts, storms and hurricanes), all of which impact people, communities and the environment.

### Climate Change is happening now.

There are many observable and measurable examples of the impact of a changing climate:

*Human-induced climate change, including more frequent and intense extreme events, has caused widespread adverse impacts and related losses and damages to nature and people, beyond natural climate variability. Some development and adaptation efforts have reduced vulnerability. Across sectors and regions the most vulnerable people and systems are observed to be disproportionately affected. The rise in weather and climate extremes has led to some irreversible impacts as natural and human systems are pushed beyond their ability to adapt. (high confidence) (IPCC AR6, [Headline Statements from the Summary for Policymakers](#), 28 February 2022)*

### It is serious and life threatening.

The consequences of a changing climate adversely impact natural ecosystems and cause untold misery for human populations, especially those in low-lying and coastal areas, as well as disproportionately and unfairly impacting poor and disadvantaged groups. Climate change places planetary health at risk, not just the health of humans but all the species interrelated through the web of life.

### Humans have caused it.

Humans, especially those in developed countries, contribute disproportionately to greenhouse gas emissions, so it is only reasonable and fair that humans act urgently to reverse it (consistent with the [Rotary Four Way Test](#)).

### **We know how to fix it.**

Climate solutions are known and many are already in place, with innovative technologies and behaviour change programs being developed and implemented across the world. We now need the global imperative to implement solutions, as we did in 1987 with the signing of the Montreal Protocol, an international treaty to phase out chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) that caused the depletion in the ozone layer.

### **The environmental tide is turning.**

To achieve the goal of limiting temperature increase to 1.5°C, governments around the world are setting their own goals and developing plans to reduce carbon emissions. There are many bold plans already in place, although implementation of these plans is lagging. People and communities are also acting to reduce their individual and household emissions. Rotary has a presence in thousands of communities around the globe; Rotarians and Rotaractors are often seen as community leaders and people of action. Our presence provides opportunities to provide leadership and inspire action to implement climate projects and solutions.

### **But ... We need to act quickly, ambitiously and sustainably.**

Even to hold warming to the Paris Accord's 2015 goal of 2°C will require us to halve global emissions by 2030. Rotary is well positioned to contribute to meeting this ambitious goal. It is not too late to engage with corrective action, but the window of opportunity to keep warming below 2°C and the even more ambitious AR6 goal of 1.5°C, is rapidly closing. Recent reports, such as the [UNEP Emissions Gap Report, 2022](#) warns that current climate plans are insufficient and that much more ambitious action is needed to achieve these goals. The report found that:

*[Countries' nationally determined contributions (NDCs), updated since the 2021 Glasgow Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 26), make a "negligible" difference to predicted 2030 emissions and that progress since COP 26 has been "woefully inadequate." The report calls for "a large-scale, rapid and systemic transformation across the globe" to avoid "an accelerating climate disaster." (UNEP, 2022)*

### **We need to act together.**

In our role as one of the planet's largest and most networked humanitarian organizations, we are perfectly positioned to tackle the climate crisis' huge humanitarian costs and to rally the people and resources needed to mitigate further destruction.

As Rotarians, Rotaractors and Interactors, we can work together, across our Clubs, Districts, Zones, and international boundaries. We can leverage local and global partnerships with businesses, non-profit organizations, and government organizations. We can educate and advocate for actions that are consistent with Rotary International's Vision, Mission and Four Way Test.

## **Applying the Rotary Four Way Test**

Adapted from a flier by Alan Anderson from RCAT - Rotary Climate Action Team from the Rotary Club of Northfield, Minnesota, USA.

1. **Is it the truth?** The science behind the climate crisis is clear, with agreement by an overwhelming majority of the world's climate scientists. Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation support projects, "addressing the causes of climate change through the reductions

in the emission of greenhouse gases and interventions in energy usage.” ([Environment Guidelines for Global Grant Funding](#)).

2. **Is it fair to all concerned?** The current and future consequences of climate change will be unfair to all humans, especially to our children and grandchildren, future generations and those that Rotary works hardest to help. Understanding that we must act now, recent Rotary International Presidents have increasingly focused on the urgent need to mitigate and address the effects of climate change.
3. **Will it build goodwill and better friendships?** Our efforts in slowing and eventually stopping runaway climate change is already building goodwill and better friendships across communities and attracting people across generations and continents to Rotary, Rotaract and Interact. Read about some of these projects and programs in ESRAG newsletters: <https://esrag.org/newsletters/>
4. **Will it be beneficial to all concerned?** Climate change is inextricably intertwined with a broad range of societal issues, including human and planetary health, the economy, security, food, etc. Acting to address climate change brings benefits to all humans and the environment. It can be a key part of what we do in the Rotary family: to do good in the world for people and the environment.

## ESRAG’s Climate Roadmap for People of Action

We are people of thoughtful, deliberate action. ESRAG’s Climate Roadmap outlines goals that are consistent with Rotary International’s [Strategic Priorities and Objectives](#). Most importantly, we are reminded of the urgency and importance of acting now.

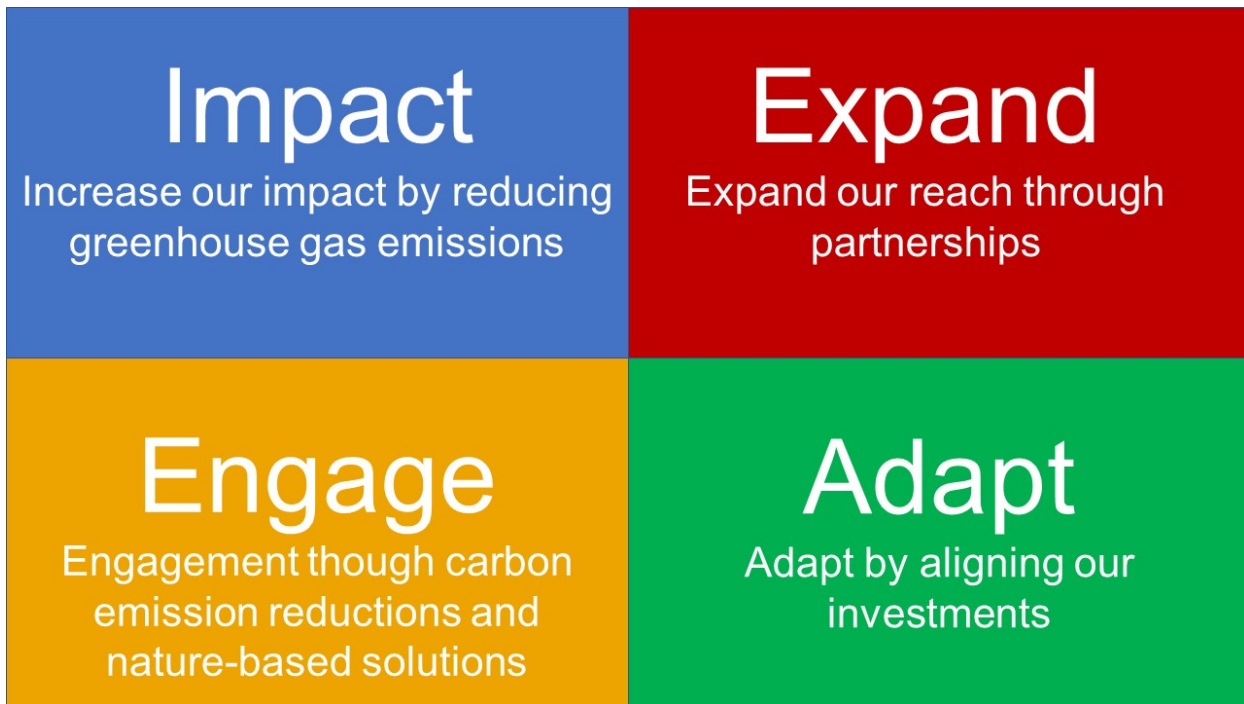
1. **Increase our Impact by reducing greenhouse gas emissions:** Because the climate crisis affects all ecosystems and planetary health<sup>1</sup>, Rotarians, Rotaractors and Interactors have the capacity to positively affect every aspect of our work by reducing carbon emissions. Every Rotary member can pledge to reduce his/her environmental and carbon footprint. Our Clubs, Districts and Zones can establish Environment Committees and commit to completing environmental projects every year. ESRAG is ready to help - our Climate Action Teams, which align with “Protecting the Environment”, provide programs and projects for individuals, families, businesses, Rotary Clubs, Districts and Zones to lower and compensate for greenhouse gas emissions and support adaptation. [ESRAG](#)
2. **Expand our Reach through partnerships:** ESRAG’s Climate Roadmap seeks to develop and grow partnerships with reliable international partners, including environmentally focused NGOs (non-governmental organizations), relevant UN agencies and other IGOs (intergovernmental organizations) to work together on climate projects. ESRAG has built, and continues to build, partnerships and collaborates with colleagues from UNEP.
3. **Engagement through carbon emission reductions and nature-based solutions:** ESRAG promotes programs and projects that address the Climate Crisis by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases (e.g. plant rich diet and green energy) and increasing carbon sequestration,

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<sup>1</sup> “The Rockefeller Foundation-Lancet Commission on Planetary Health recognizes that human health and the health of our planet are inextricably linked, and that our civilization depends on human health, flourishing natural systems, and the wise stewardship of natural resources. With natural systems being degraded to an extent unprecedented in human history, both our health and that of our planet are in peril.” ([UNFCCC, 2022](#))

adapting to climate change and removing greenhouse gases through nature-based solutions, such as mangrove restoration, tree planting and sustainable agriculture. In addition, these programs and projects attract and engage people of all ages and demographics, as well as building local and global relationships and becoming a springboard for building peace.

4. **Adapt by aligning our investments:** ESRAG's Climate Roadmap seeks to motivate The Rotary Foundation, Districts and Clubs to manage their endowments to ensure their investments align with Rotary's Environment Area of Focus, Protecting the Environment. It also seeks to motivate individual Rotary members to ensure that their personal, family and business investments also align with this new Area of Focus.



*ESRAG's Climate Roadmap Goals*

**Summary:** ESRAG commits to supporting the leadership of Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation, as well as engaging with Rotary, Rotaract and Interact clubs to address climate change through actions that mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, build resilience and adapt to climate impacts. These actions are consistent with Rotary's Four Way Test.

The four goals of ESRAG's Climate Roadmap provide a framework for this Policy Statement on Climate Action.