

Rotary honors Chancellor Merkel for supporting a polio-free world

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(Berlin, GERMANY – 9 May 2008) In recognition of her contributions toward ending polio worldwide, Rotary International today presented Chancellor Angela Merkel with its Polio Eradication Champion Award.

The award, presented by Robert Scott, Chair of the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International, and accepted by Minister H. Wieczorek-Zeul on the Chancellor's behalf, was established in 1995 to recognize governments and world leaders who have made outstanding contributions toward the goal of eradicating polio – Rotary's top philanthropic goal.

"On behalf of Rotary's 1.2 million members worldwide, I am honored to present this award to Chancellor Merkel," said Scott. "As we stand on the verge of eliminating this crippling and potentially fatal disease, it is important to recognize that we could not have progressed this far without the vital support of Germany."

As the fourth highest among public sector donors, Germany has contributed US\$223.45 million through 2009 toward eradicating polio worldwide. In addition, Chancellor Merkel raised the profile of this global health initiative by placing polio on the agenda of the 2007 G8 Summit last June. Germany is one of only three G8 countries to have increased its support.

A highly infectious disease that can cause paralysis and sometimes death, polio still strikes children in parts of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. As there is no cure, the best protection is prevention. For as little as 60 cents worth of vaccine, a child can be protected against this crippling disease for life. To date, the number of polio cases has been reduced from 350,000 children annually in the mid-1980s to 1,307 cases all last year.

Other leaders who have been honored with Rotary's Polio Eradication Champion Award include former Prime Minister Tony Blair of Great Britain; former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India; former President Bill Clinton of the United States; former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan; and President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan.

Rotary's commitment to end polio represents the largest private-sector support of a global health initiative ever. In 1985, Rotary members worldwide vowed to immunize all the world's children against polio. Since then, Rotary has contributed \$700 million to polio eradication, of which the approximately 47,000 members of Rotary clubs in Germany have contributed nearly €12 million (\$18.4 million).

Besides raising and contributing funds, Rotary members have volunteered their time and personal resources to help immunize more than 2 billion children in 122 countries. Just recently with support of German clubs, Nigerian Rotary members distributed thousands of insecticide treated mosquito nets to prevent malaria, along with administering the oral polio vaccine to

children as part of that country's immunization plus days. The nets were donated by the BASF and German Rotarians covered the shipping costs.

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative is spearheaded by the World Health Organization, Rotary International, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and UNICEF.

For further information visit, www.rotary.org or www.polioeradication.org

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Rotary is an organization of business and professional leaders united worldwide to provide humanitarian service and help to build goodwill and peace in the world. It is comprised of 1.2 million members working in over 32,000 clubs in more than 200 countries and geographical areas. Rotary members initiate community projects that address many of today's most critical issues, such as violence, AIDS, hunger, the environment and health care.

[You can find this press release here](#)