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Dear fellow Rotarians, Rotaractors, members of the Family of Rotary, and friends,

I am delighted to welcome you to your 2020-2021 district conference. The COVID-19 crisis has changed the world. But our District Conferences continue and are more important to the future of Rotary than ever before.

There is no more business as usual at Rotary, and this will be the reality even after the current crisis has passed. So it is a good time for us to reach back to our core values and to think about why Rotary is so important to us and what essential qualities we need to preserve for Rotary going forward.

If we ask ourselves what brought us to Rotary – and why we stay in Rotary -- there will be many different answers. Not only does Rotary have different meanings for members in different parts of the world, it also has a unique and individual meaning for each of us. But we all have some things in common. First, we all share Rotary's values, and we all share the same ethics as expressed in the Four-Way-Test. Second, we foster our friendships, and love to spend time together. And thirdly, we care about helping others, and we are committed to the idea of "Service Above Self."

We are prevented from meeting in person as usual, and we don't know how long this will continue. But getting together is only one of the three shared parts of the Rotary experience that bring us together. Everything else remains the same for us! We now come together virtually, we can see each other if only on a computer, we can have discussions, listen to speakers and plan new projects. Even in times of crisis - and especially now - Rotary Opens Opportunities.

This event helps us come together and share thoughts on how to make Rotary service more impactful and our member experience more engaging. Once again this year, we will be focused on Growing Rotary. But for me, Growing Rotary is all about showing care – taking extra steps to ensure that new members are well suited to their clubs and taking care with all members to make sure they are fully engaged in membership.

It is exciting that you will be adding your ideas and your energy to your district conference. Thank you for stepping forward and taking an important role in Rotary leadership and for helping us navigate this time of rapid change.

Whether conducted face to face or online, District Conferences are a wonderful opportunity to share ideas and to demonstrate how Rotary Opens Opportunities for us and the people we serve.

Thank you.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Holger Knaack". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'H' and a long, sweeping tail.

Holger Knaack  
President, Rotary International 2020-21