



ESRAG's Draft Submission to the COP30 Presidency

Contribution to:

**A) the COP30 Presidency Roadmap on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels
in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner**

**B) the COP30 Presidency Roadmap on Halting and Reversing Deforestation
and Forest Degradation by 2030**

Poistion paper compiled by Chair Alberto Palombo with the support of the Rotarians and Rotaractors of the Rotary@COP30 Organization Committee and ESRAG

*Based on ESRAG Ambition Paper - Rotary Strategic Role in COP Process 20260131.docx
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Abstract:

This submission presents the perspective of Rotarians, Rotaractors, and participants engaged through ESRAG and related Rotary@COP30 efforts on the two COP30 Presidency roadmaps: transitioning away from fossil fuels in a just, orderly and equitable manner, and halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030. Drawing on Rotary's community-based service model, global volunteer network, and emphasis on continuity, innovation, partnerships, youth engagement, and climate justice, the submission highlights how non-state actors can help bridge global climate commitments with local implementation. It identifies key barriers, enabling levers, practical lessons, and differentiated pathways for both agendas, with particular emphasis on community resilience, water, health, education, livelihoods, ecosystem restoration, Indigenous and local knowledge, access to finance, and last-mile delivery. The central proposition is that Rotary/ESRAG can contribute as a people-centered implementation partner, helping translate COP goals into concrete, locally rooted action through trusted community networks, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and scalable humanitarian responses aligned with the spirit of the Global Mutirão.

Draft Submission to the COP30 Presidency

Contribution to:

A) the COP30 Presidency Roadmap on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner

B) the COP30 Presidency Roadmap on Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030

This submission is offered from the perspective of Rotarians, Rotaractors, and participants engaged through the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group (ESRAG) and related Rotary@COP30 efforts. It is grounded in the view that climate action must be translated into practical outcomes for communities, and that non-state actors can help bridge global commitments with local implementation through partnerships, volunteer mobilization, community trust, and service delivery across health, water, education, livelihoods, peacebuilding, and environmental stewardship. Rotary's climate engagement, as reflected in ESRAG's work, emphasizes continuity, innovation, partnerships, climate justice, youth engagement, and the Global Mutirão spirit of collective action.

Part I — COP30 Presidency Roadmap for Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner

(a) What are the most critical barriers — whether physical, economic, financial, institutional, technological or social— preventing a transition away from fossil fuels?

From a community-centered implementation perspective, one of the most critical barriers is the persistent disconnect between high-level transition commitments and the day-to-day realities of people, especially in vulnerable communities. When climate and energy transitions are not translated into concrete improvements in livelihoods, health, water security, education, mobility, and local opportunity, social support weakens and implementation slows.

A second barrier is unequal access to finance, technology, and institutional capacity. Many communities and subnational actors lack the means to prepare, finance, and manage local transition-related projects, even where viable opportunities exist. The COP30 Presidency's own framing recognizes broader financial and institutional constraints affecting implementation, while ESRAG's analysis points to the need for stronger local empowerment, practical guidance, and access to partnerships that can convert ambition into delivery.

A third barrier is fragmentation. Energy transition is often treated as a sectoral or technical agenda, while in practice it intersects with water, agriculture, public health, local enterprise, education, and social cohesion. Rotary's experience suggests that implementation advances more effectively when communities approach climate action in integrated ways rather than through isolated interventions across separate sectors. ESRAG's framework explicitly treats climate action as a cross-cutting challenge that affects all Areas of Focus and therefore requires integrated, people-centered responses.

A fourth barrier is the risk that transition processes are perceived as externally designed, socially unfair, or inattentive to differentiated realities. Communities with higher dependence on fossil-fuel-linked livelihoods or limited alternatives may resist change unless transition pathways include credible local participation, skills development, social protection, and realistic economic alternatives. In other words, transition needs to address unfair energy access and energy poverty.

(b) What potential levers, whether economic, financial, institutional, social or technological, exist for accelerating the implementation of the transitioning away commitment?

An important lever is to connect energy transition with visible co-benefits for communities. In our view, implementation accelerates when people experience the transition not as abstract

decarbonization, but as improved resilience, lower exposure to climate risk, better public health, stronger local infrastructure, safer water systems, and new livelihood opportunities. It is important to understand that the costs of inaction can be at a certain point higher than the value of the opportunities the transition can bring. Rotary's service model can help demonstrate those co-benefits through community-based initiatives that integrate climate resilience with WASH, health, education, and local economic development.

A second lever is partnership with climate-finance and implementation actors. ESRAG has identified structured dialogue with the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility, and the Adaptation Fund as a strategic priority, precisely because financial resources must be linked to trusted community delivery systems and measurable outcomes. Rotary's comparative advantage lies not in replacing governments or multilateral institutions, but in helping connect finance, volunteer capacity, local legitimacy, and last-mile implementation.

A third lever is youth engagement. Rotaract and Interact can contribute leadership, innovation, public communication, and local mobilization. Youth engagement is especially important in building social legitimacy for transition pathways and in expanding climate literacy and practical participation at community level. ESRAG's COP framework places strong emphasis on youth empowerment as part of Rotary's contribution to COP30.

A fourth lever is digital and community-based innovation. ESRAG's COP30 strategy has emphasized transparency, monitoring, digital tools, and the "last mile" of implementation. Technology can accelerate transition only when it is combined with local trust, accessible governance, and institutions that can translate data and finance into real community action.

A fifth lever is synchronized social mobilization through the Global Mutirão concept. Broad, distributed action by communities, civil society actors, youth groups, and local institutions can help create momentum, visibility, and ownership around transition efforts, especially when these efforts are linked to tangible local priorities. The Presidency's call was itself issued in the spirit of mutirão, and ESRAG has embraced that orientation as a core organizing principle.

(c) What country, regional or sector roadmap experiences, best practices, and lessons learned can be shared?

A key lesson from Rotary's own history is that large-scale global goals become actionable when translated into persistent, locally rooted, partnership-based efforts. ESRAG's ambition paper draws a direct parallel with Rotary's polio eradication campaign: continuity across years, strategic partnerships, local trust, innovation, and volunteer mobilization were all critical to sustained progress. Those same features are relevant to climate transitions.

A second lesson is that integrated approaches are more effective than stand-alone measures. Rotary's climate-related work is framed across all Areas of Focus, not only environment. This includes health and climate, water and infrastructure, education and community engagement, economy and livelihoods, and nature and culture. That multi-sector approach offers a practical template for local implementation, especially in settings where communities experience climate impacts as intertwined rather than neatly separated by sector.

A third lesson is that trusted local networks matter. Rotary's global footprint and community relationships can help identify needs, convene stakeholders, support local ownership, and sustain follow-up. In this sense, one transferable best practice is the use of civic and volunteer networks as intermediaries between global agendas and community implementation.

A fourth lesson is that climate action gains traction when it is narrated in humanitarian terms. ESRAG's material consistently presents climate resilience as an extension of humanitarian service. That framing may be useful in contexts where energy transition debates are politically polarized but

communities respond positively to practical agendas around resilience, dignity, opportunity, and protection of vulnerable populations.

(d) How can a just, orderly and equitable transition best reflect the diverse realities of countries at different stages of development and with different degrees of dependence on fossil fuels?

A just, orderly, and equitable transition must begin from differentiated realities rather than from one uniform pathway. The Presidency's invitation itself recognizes that no single pathway applies to all countries and regions. In our view, this principle should be reflected not only at national policy level but also in subnational and community implementation. Transition frameworks should allow countries and communities to move at different speeds and through different combinations of technology, finance, social policy, and local development.

In terms of a just transition, equity also requires that transitions be linked to poverty reduction, resilience, and local opportunity. ESRAG's framework emphasizes climate justice and just transition as central principles: vulnerable populations, including those least responsible for emissions but most exposed to impacts, should be protected and empowered, and workers and communities should benefit from economic shifts rather than be displaced by them.

For Rotary and ESRAG, this means prioritizing people-centered implementation: climate literacy, youth engagement, resilient livelihoods, local enterprise, public health, community adaptation, and access to safe water and services. It also means paying attention to fragile contexts where climate stress can intensify inequality, migration, and conflict. In these settings, justice requires deliberate support for social cohesion, local participation, and fair access to the benefits of transition.

Finally, an equitable transition should value the role of non-state actors as implementation partners. Community-based organizations, volunteer networks, local leaders, and youth can help ensure that transition pathways are not only technically sound but socially legitimate, locally intelligible, and durable over time.

Part II — COP30 Presidency Roadmap for Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030

(a) What are the most critical barriers — whether physical, economic, financial, institutional, technological or social — preventing the halting and reversing of deforestation and forest degradation?

The most critical barriers are not only ecological or technical; they are also social, institutional, and economic. Communities living in and around forest landscapes often face immediate livelihood pressures, weak access to sustainable alternatives, fragile local governance, and limited financial support for restoration, conservation, or regenerative production systems. Without viable local pathways, forest protection can remain aspirational rather than implementable.

A second barrier is fragmentation between forest agendas and wider development agendas. Deforestation is often linked to water insecurity, weak territorial planning, poverty, lack of climate-resilient livelihoods, low institutional capacity, and limited access to finance. ESRAG's analysis emphasizes that climate action should be approached through integrated systems that connect environmental stewardship with health, water, education, livelihoods, and local empowerment. That same integration is necessary for durable forest outcomes.

A third barrier is insufficient recognition and operational inclusion of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and traditional knowledge holders. The Presidency's forest roadmap expressly highlights the need to reflect rights, knowledge, and differentiated realities. From our perspective, forest protection will be less effective where these actors are treated as peripheral rather than central to governance, stewardship, and implementation.

A fourth barrier is limited access to implementation finance and to practical project design capacity. Many local actors are willing to restore and conserve ecosystems but cannot readily access the funding, technical support, monitoring systems, or partnerships needed to scale and sustain results.

(b) What potential levers, whether economic, financial, institutional, social or technological, exist for accelerating the implementation of the commitment to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation?

One major lever is community-based restoration and stewardship anchored in local institutions and civic networks. Rotary's comparative advantage is its ability to mobilize trusted community actors, including clubs, youth networks, and local partners, around practical interventions such as restoration, watershed protection, climate education, and livelihood support. ESRAG's framework identifies Rotary as a bridge between global climate priorities and local action, especially where community trust and volunteer mobilization matter.

A second lever is the promotion of integrated landscape solutions that connect forest conservation with water security, resilient agriculture, local enterprise, and education. ESRAG's thematic alignment with the COP30 Presidency includes water and infrastructure, economy and livelihoods, nature and culture, and innovation and technology. That integrated framing can help accelerate forest action by making it relevant to broader development needs and not only to forest-sector stakeholders.

A third lever is partnership with climate-finance institutions and other implementation actors. As in the energy transition context, access to climate finance can be strengthened when projects are rooted in credible local delivery systems, measurable outcomes, and trusted partnerships. ESRAG has explicitly identified partnerships with GCF, GEF, and the Adaptation Fund as strategic.

A fourth lever is youth engagement and climate literacy. Schools, youth groups, and community educators can help build long-term constituencies for conservation and restoration. ESRAG's COP30 approach places strong emphasis on Rotaract, Interact, and climate literacy as implementation assets.

A fifth lever is the use of digital tools and data systems in ways that strengthen local action rather than bypass it. ESRAG's COP30 planning emphasizes transparency, monitoring, digital innovation, and the "last mile." In forest contexts, this can support participatory monitoring, accountability, and better linkage between local realities and wider finance or reporting systems.

(c) What country, regional or sector experiences, best practices, and lessons learned can be shared regarding forest conservation and restoration?

A central lesson from ESRAG's own strategic work is that forest-related climate action becomes stronger when linked to broader humanitarian and community agendas. Rotary's Areas of Focus provide a practical framework for this: forest and ecosystem stewardship can be connected to WASH, disease prevention, climate education, local enterprise, peacebuilding, and protection of vulnerable populations. This broad framing helps move forest action from a narrow environmental niche into wider community ownership.

A second lesson is the importance of partnership models. ESRAG's COP30 strategy highlights the value of forging partnerships with governments, UN agencies, philanthropy, the private sector, Indigenous and local communities, and climate-finance actors. For forest conservation and restoration, that lesson is highly transferable: multi-actor cooperation is often essential to combine knowledge, legitimacy, finance, and implementation capacity.

A third lesson is that local success stories should be documented and amplified. ESRAG specifically notes that Rotary can support the documentation of climate initiatives, curate COP-aligned guidance for clubs and districts, and highlight success stories and local voices. In forest restoration and

conservation, visibility of replicable practices matters because many promising approaches remain scattered and under-recognized.

A fourth lesson is that synchronized collective action can create momentum. The Global Mutirão concept offers a useful template for coordinated civic mobilization across localities, with clubs and communities undertaking aligned actions while adapting to local context. That approach may be relevant for restoration campaigns, watershed protection, community nurseries, environmental education, and forest-linked livelihood initiatives.

(d) How can forest conservation, sustainable management, and restoration best reflect the diverse realities of countries at different stages of development, the rights and knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities, and different degrees of forest cover?

Forest conservation, sustainable management, and restoration must be grounded in differentiated context. Countries with extensive forests, degraded forest landscapes, fragmented ecosystems, or lower forest cover will not require the same policy mix or implementation model. The Presidency's invitation explicitly recognizes this diversity, and we believe it should translate into flexible pathways for conservation, restoration, agroforestry, water-linked landscape management, and community resilience.

Respect for Indigenous Peoples and local communities must be foundational, not ancillary. ESRAG's COP30 framework emphasizes respect for Indigenous knowledge and local leadership, and identifies nature and culture as a strategic field in which traditional leadership and biodiversity protection must be strengthened together. In practice, this means recognizing these actors as rights holders, knowledge holders, implementers, and partners in governance.

Equity also requires attention to vulnerable groups, including women, youth, and marginalized communities whose livelihoods and well-being depend directly on healthy ecosystems. ESRAG's approach to climate justice and just transition is relevant here: environmental strategies should not impose burdens on those already under pressure, but should expand opportunity, resilience, and voice.

Finally, implementation should connect forests with people's real lives. The COP30 Presidency has repeatedly stressed the need to connect the climate regime to lived realities. Forest strategies that improve water security, strengthen local livelihoods, support education, reduce climate vulnerability, and build community resilience are more likely to gain durable legitimacy and succeed over time. Rotary and ESRAG can contribute to that people-centered approach by helping translate broad objectives into community-based partnerships and practical action.

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