

United Nations Association

Westminster Branch

Campaigning for a strong, credible and effective UN



Annual Report 2009-2010

We are pleased to submit our Annual Report together with the Branch's financial report for the year to 31 March 2010. Also we refer briefly to activities which have taken place during the current year. The Westminster Branch continues to consolidate its programme of activities which is underpinned by three important annual events, the International Law lecture, the UN Peacekeepers Day conference and the *We the Peoples* film festival. For each of these we seek sponsorship funding to make them as self-supporting as possible. But, as important, we seek to encourage our members to attend these events and to introduce themselves when they come.

Our activities

The guest speaker at our Annual General Meeting was Professor Sir Richard Jolly, Honorary Professor and Research Associate of the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex who spoke to the subject "*Is there a Right to Development?*" We are always delighted to welcome Sir Richard to our meetings. His fund of knowledge in the field of development and the challenges facing the United Nations is unrivalled.

The 8th annual Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law Lecture titled *The case for an International Court for the Environment* was delivered by Stephen Hockman QC. Mr Hockman is proposing a body similar to the International Court of Justice in The Hague to be the supreme legal authority on issues regarding the environment. This lecture series always attracts a good audience and we are again grateful to Clifford Chance LLP for their continuing sponsorship. Also we thank the International Relations Committee of the Bar Council for its support and the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy, SOAS, London University for arranging this event in the excellent Brunei Gallery lecture theatre.

The 7th Conference to mark the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers titled *Understanding and effectively tackling new peacekeeping challenges* featured a strong cast of speakers. The keynote Folke Bernadotte address titled *Peacekeeping in crisis? Confronting the challenges ahead* was presented by Dr Bruce Jones, Director and Senior Fellow of the New York University Center on International Cooperation. Other speakers were Brigadier-General Ali Al Mahasneh who spoke on Jordan's Armed Forces participation in Peacekeeping Operations; Minister Rodolfo Cerviño, Argentine Foreign Service who spoke on the unique Argentine humanitarian rapid response teams, the White Helmets; and Colin Smith who updated the audience on current European Security Strategy from a Policing Perspective. The remembrance ceremony at the Cenotaph held during the conference was led by Count Edward Bernadotte, grandson of the UN's first mediator. Sir Peter Ricketts, Head of Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service, Major-General Barney White-Spunner and Mr Denis O'Connor, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary laid wreaths as did representatives of seventy-five embassies and high commissions. Musical support was provided by the Band of the Scots Guards. Pupils from the Grey Coat Hospital School for Girls and City of Westminster School for Boys stewarded the event, leading diplomats through the wreath-laying programme with great professionalism. This is the largest event held worldwide to mark this anniversary.

The Branch programme also featured an address titled *The Attack on World Poverty* presented by Benny Dembitzer, a UNA Westminster branch member with great experience on the subject. He argued for a

more pro-active approach to avert catastrophic famine across most of the poorest parts of the world, issues covered in his new book of the same title.

In June, the Branch held a joint meeting with the Associate Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security in association with Gender Action for Peace & Security (GAPS) and the All Party Parliamentary Groups on Sri Lanka and the Great Lakes Region of Africa to launch the Global Monitoring Checklist on Women, Peace and Security.

In July, the branch was pleased to hold a meeting titled *Somalia-can its diaspora in Europe help the UN find a workable plan?* which witnessed the launch of the G18, a unique group of Somalis with links with all 18 of Somalia's regions.

Another joint meeting, held with the Tropical Medicine section of Imperial College of Science Medical School Union, focused on *Millennium Development Goal 6*, examining how targets are set and effective policies implemented. Speakers included James Droop, DFID, Dr. Sanjoy Bhattacharya, the Wellcome Trust, Professor Karol Sikora, Cancer Partners UK and Professor Peter Davies, Director, the national TB Research Unit. In November, we held our 4th *We the Peoples* film festival, screening twenty nine films in eight locations. Social events during the year took in the Thai festival in Greenwich Park and a large tea party to celebrate the 100th birthday of our favourite branch member, Elizabeth Mackeith. Bravo!!

UNA-Connecticut

We retain close links with our twin, the Connecticut chapter of UNA-USA. Its activities can be followed through our website. Its 2010 United Nations Calendar for Peace was the first to be digitised and can be seen on the UNA Connecticut website. We distributed 500 copies throughout UNA.

Our Honorary Officers

We are always delighted to meet our Honorary Officers who lead busy lives and can report that all have agreed to continue in their roles.

Our Funds

Our ambitious programme of events is underpinned by the generous legacy of Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen but our policy is to seek specific financial support for our flagship events. During the year, your committee appointed a finance sub-committee which examined alternative investment strategies. Since the year end, its recommendations have been acted on and we now enjoy greatly better investment income than we received from simple bank interest. We will report on this fully next year.

Our Future

Our programme planning continues with new initiatives to be launched in 2011. We are excellently supported by our fellow officers and our committee but there remain many jobs to do to ensure we maintain our high standards. If you wish to take on a larger role in branch activities, contact any of us or a fellow committee members. And remember, check our website at info@unawestminster.org.uk.

Contacting each other

We are now introducing e-mail as the preferred member contact method. This is partly because every penny of every subscription benefits the programmes of our national organisation, not the branch. But this can be a two-way street enabling you to tell us what you would like the branch to do and which subjects to tackle. That said, 'Man is a social animal' and we feel most rewarded when you, our members, come to Westminster branch meetings. We look forward to seeing you all there.

David Wardrop, Chairman

Paul Mrazek, Vice-Chairman

Vivienne Eka, Hon Secretary

28 October 2010