

United Nations Association

Westminster Branch

Campaigning for a strong, credible and effective UN



Annual Report 2011-2012

We are pleased to submit our Annual Report together with the Branch's financial report for the year to 31 March 2012. 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 anchored by three major annual events, the

International Law lecture, the UN Peacekeepers Day conference and the *We the Peoples* film festival. For each, we seek sponsorship funding to make them as self-supporting as possible but, just as important, we seek to encourage our members to attend our many other events and activities and to introduce themselves when they come.

Our activities

The 10th annual Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law Lecture titled *The Decline of Universal Jurisdiction – Is it Reversible?* was delivered by Mark Ellis, Executive Director of the International Bar Association. This lecture series always attracts a good audience and we again thank the International Relations Committee of the Bar Council for its support and the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy at SOAS, London University for arranging this event in the excellent Brunei Gallery lecture theatre.

Our speakers at the 9th Conference to mark the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers titled *Creating a Sure Foundation for Peace* were led by Mr Alan Le Roy, Under Secretary-General UN Peacekeeping Operations. Other speakers were Dan Smith, Secretary-General, International Alert, Dr Funmi Olonisakin, Director, Conflict, Security and Development Group, King's College London, Toshi Nakamura, Executive Director, Kopernik, Mahdi Aadam, Secretary, World G18 Somalia, Martin Grixoni, Cohorts LLP and Simon Jones, Triton International. The Remembrance Ceremony at the Cenotaph held during the conference was led by Mr Le Roy who was joined by representatives of eighty embassies and high commissions. Musical support was provided by the Band of the Life 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 professionalism. This is the largest event held worldwide to mark this anniversary. Following the government's abrupt ending of its financial support for this event, we are very grateful to Land Rover for generously sponsoring the ceremony.

Our programme of meetings included *Who deserves to stay on the UN Human Rights Council?* *The record on women's rights* held in association with the University College London Law Department. Our speakers included Liesl Gerntholtz, Human Rights Watch, Dr Saladin Meckled-Garcia, UCL Institute for Human Rights, Martha Jean Baker, WILPF, Akin Oyateru, Nigeria High Commission and M. Subhashini, High Commission for India.

Our social night took in *Welcome to Thebes*, a new play by Moira Buffini at the National Theatre. After the performance, we were delighted to be invited to meet the cast.

Our meeting *Human Rights for Sexual Minorities: Is the UN the right forum to campaign?* attracted a large audience to hear Stuart Milk of the Harvey Milk Foundation, Renato Sabbadini, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association and Emma Reed, Head of LGB&T Equality, Government Equalities Office. Our Annual General meeting featured a debate on *Routes to Peace in Somalia: Roles for the international community and the Somali Diaspora*. In November,

we held our 7th *We the Peoples* film festival, screening films in several locations. The Young Film Makers Day at the National Film Theatre attracted great numbers, with the new #Tweeterpitch award of £500 presented by the Commonwealth

Broadcasting Association. We thank the British Universities Film & Video Council for sponsoring the Best Film awards and providing prizes for young film makers.

UNA-Connecticut

Our twin UNA Connecticut's busy programme included an address by Nobel Peace Laureate Dr Rigoberta Menchú Tum and an art exhibition commemorating the bombing of Hiroshima and members lobbied on Capitol Hill to raise awareness of the UN and its role in advancing American national security and foreign policy

goals. On UN Day, it coordinated a rolling celebration through three state locations and its members witnessed the General Assembly debate held on the International Day of Peace. We hope we will be able to feature its *2013 UN Calendar for Peace* on our own website.

Our Honorary Officers

We are delighted that our Joint Presidents, Baroness Cox of Queensbury, Lord Judd of Portsea and Lord Lester of Herne Hill, QC and our Joint Vice-Presidents, the Rt. Hon. Jeremy Thorpe PC, Ben Whitaker, Juliet Colman and HH Prince Mohsin

Ali Khan have agreed to continue as our Honorary Officers. However, it is with great sadness that we report the death of Elizabeth Mackeith aged 102. An appreciation of her life was published on our News Page on 25 January.

Our Funds

Our ambitious programme of events is underpinned by the generous legacy of Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen. Last year, we changed our

investment policy, placing funds in two Fidelity Funds which have rewarded us well as shown in our financial statement.

Since March 2012

We held an event at Central Hall Westminster to mark the Olympic Truce and the role of the United Nations in promoting this which was attended by about 50 embassies. Our meeting *Is Equality Lite the new human rights standard?* attracted excellent speakers who shared their deep concern with the direction of the government's proposed Human Rights legislative changes. We aim to take forward these matters to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. These events are

fully reported on our website. The Westminster Young Professionals group has been set up and we are determined to support it in every way possible. We continue to be excellently supported by our fellow officers and our committee but there are 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 member. And, remember, check www.unawestminster.org.uk

Contacting each other

E-mail is becoming the preferred member contact method and we assure members that addresses are not shared with third parties. Please help

defray costs by enabling us to contact you in this manner. You can do this by emailing us on info@unawestminster.org.uk.

David Wardrop, Chairman

Paul Mrazek, Vice-Chairman

Vivienne Eka, Hon Secretary

15 December 2012