

United Nations Association

Westminster Branch

Campaigning for a strong, credible and effective UN



Annual Report 2015-2016

This annual report refers to the period ending 31 March 2016. It will be formally presented at the annual general meeting

to be held in summer 2017 together with an oral report of events and initiatives up to that date.

Our activities

The 13th annual Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law Lecture titled *“Chasing Religious Persecution in Law: Bloodshed, Concerted attack or Maintaining Representation?”* was delivered by Dr Nazila Ghanea-Hercock, Associate Professor in International Human Rights Law at the University of Oxford. She noted the explosion of interest in ‘religious persecution’ in the media in recent years, and questioned the reasons. “Is there something new about the recent experience of religious persecution and its increasingly politicised nature?” she asked, citing the purpose of the lecture being to give attention to its scope, meaning and implications, particularly in international human rights law. 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.

For our 12th Conference to mark the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, Major General (Retd) Robert Gordon, Former Force Commander of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, delivered the keynote address titled *“Rich states in UN peacekeeping: time to lead by example?”*

Also speaking were HE Mrs. Sylvie Bermann, Ambassador of France; Richard Gowan, Associate Director, Managing Global Order, Center on International Cooperation, New York University; Sir Jeremy Greenstock, Chairman UNA-UK and former UK Ambassador to the UN; and Professor Michael Clarke, Director General, Royal United Services

Institute. The diplomatic wreath-laying ceremony returned to the Cenotaph. Prayers were offered by the Right Reverend Lord Harries of Pentregarth and Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra, Leicester Interfaith Forum.

Ninety embassies and high commissions participated in this, the world’s largest ceremony to mark this important anniversary. The first wreath, in memory of Count Folke Bernadotte, UN mediator assassinated in Palestine in 1948, was laid by Astrid Bernadotte, his grand-daughter. Admiral Henri Schricke, Defence Attaché, Embassy of France, laid the wreath in memory of French officer, Commandant René de Labarrière, the first UN fatality. Irene Wills, Chairman, War Widows Association, laid a wreath on behalf of all widows of fallen peacekeepers. The Band of the Royal Logistics Corps provided musical support. Pupils from the Grey Coat Hospital School for Girls and City of Westminster School for Boys stewarded the event and the UN Veterans’ Association provided the Colour Guard. We welcomed the support of UNA-UK in coordinating this event, a considerable administrative burden.

In July, we held a joint meeting to mark the 70th anniversary of the atomic age which has overshadowed humanity. Titled *‘Sowing the Whirlwind’: Nuclear Politics and the Historical Record’*, the event was held in association with the Institute of Commonwealth Studies of the School of Advanced Study at London University. Together, we assembled eleven speakers from the USA, Japan, Sweden, Norway and the UK. Videos of several of the presentations are posted on our Events Reports page.

In September, together with the Bar Council of England and Wales, we organised a prestige diplomatic reception to mark the UN's 70th anniversary, held in the historic Great Hall of the Inner Temple, one of the four Inns of Court.

Among the sixty embassies represented, thirty were from amongst the UN's founder members which attended the inaugural meeting of the UN in London in January 1946. Guests were welcomed by the Master Treasurer of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple, Lord Justice Moore-Bick QC. He was followed by Chantal-Aimée Doerries QC, incoming President of the Bar Council. The event also successfully created a new network comprising members of the Young Bar Council, the Young Diplomats in London Group and our own UNA Young Professionals.

In October, we led a Study Tour comprising 20 people to the UN in Vienna. We arranged meetings with six UN agencies and leading Vienna-based institutes. The group met the UK Ambassador to the UN, HE Susan le Jeune d'Allegeershecque and her team. A good social programme was also enjoyed. Several younger members of the Study Group were granted bursaries by us to assist their participation and we are grateful to the UNA London & South East Region Trust for granting bursaries also. The individual reports of those receiving bursaries have been posted on our website, together with a detailed report.

In October also, we joined forces with the Austrian Embassy, the City of Vienna and the London Academy of Diplomacy to mark Austria's 60th anniversary as a UN member and enjoy a photo exhibition on the work of United Nations organisations based in Vienna. The keynote address titled *70 Years of United Nations – A view from the*

UK was delivered by Douglas Wilson, Legal Director, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

On 10 January 2016, we marked the exact 70th anniversary of the first meeting of the UN General Assembly held in Methodist Central Hall Westminster. We worked closely with Superintendent Minister Revd. Dr Martyn Atkins and his deputy, Revd. Tony Miles, who gave an excellent sermon. This was an event worthy of this important anniversary.

During the year, we coordinated national and international initiatives to ensure that UN Member States pursued the programme to re-open investigation on how former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and others died in 1961. The seminar '*A Solemn Duty: Dag Hammarskjöld and Conflict in the Congo*' was held at the School of Advanced Study, University of London. Speakers were Professor Henning Melber, Director Emeritus of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Dr Roger Lipsey, author of *Hammarskjöld: A Life*; and David Wardrop, Chairman UNA Westminster. Throughout the year, our dedicated website kept a worldwide community updated with developments in both the UN and other fora. www.hammarskjoldinquiry.info In November, we held our 10th *We the Peoples* film festival, screening films in several locations. The Young Film Makers Day at the National Film Theatre attracted great numbers. The *#Tweeterpitch* award of £500 was won by Nick Finegan and Cecilia Golding for their proposed film *The Swimming Club*. We thank the British Film Institute for hosting the event and also the students of the Ashdown Academy who curated the many screenings in the Festival programme.

Our twin UNA Connecticut continues its busy programme with visits by its officers to several international hotspots.

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 all agreed to

continue to serve. Juliet Colman and HH Prince Mohsin Ali Khan have both agreed to continue as Joint Presidents.

Our Funds

Our ambitious programme of events is underpinned by the generous legacy of Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen.

The two Fidelity Funds in which we have invested reward us well as shown in our financial statement.

We welcome your comments. Please contact us on info@unawestminster.org.uk

David Wardrop, Chairman

Paul Mrazek, Vice-Chairman

Vivienne Eka, Hon Secretary

10 February 2017