

Westminster UNA Young Professionals

Backgrounder

www.unawestminster.org.uk

Wednesday 25 September 2024

Westminster YPs launch in 2012 after UN Syria failure

Failure in the UN Security Council to handle the developing crisis in Syria led to our launch, then one of three UNA YPs worldwide. Since then, the YPs have initiated projects and developed links with the Young Bar, the Young Diplomats in London and run many of our film presentations in the *We The Peoples* Film Festival. Please join us as we set out our programmes and activities.



Study visits to the UN and key cities

This month, we visited the UN in Vienna. We heard presentations from UN agencies handling Outer Space, Drugs & Crime, the test ban treaty, Atomic Energy and more. Also, we visited the OSCE, the Peace Museum and Sigmund Freud's apartment. We first visited Vienna in 2015, then New York in 2017 and then key European cities in 2018

YPs role in Human Rights report

Westminster YPs joined the British Institute of Human Rights to produce a Joint Civil Society Report to submit to the UN as part of its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UK. The UK was one of the first 42 UN Member States to be reviewed. The YP's also published a report on the Responsibility to Protect. *What next?*

We mark the International Day of UN Peacekeepers

In 2004, Westminster UNA initiated an annual conference marking this anniversary now held at the Royal United Services Institute. This is arguably the UK's most authoritative review of UN peacekeeping activities. The 21st conference will be held in May 2025. The all-day



conference pauses for an important and moving wreath-laying Cenotaph ceremony. This year, diplomats from more than one hundred embassies and high commissions along with ministers and military chiefs laid wreaths in memory of those who died in the cause of peace. The Band of the Royal Air Force provided musical support.

YPs' 'Meet the Ambassador' programme launches in 2018

The first Meet the Ambassador was held with London's longest serving diplomat, HE Mr Khaled Al-Duwaisan from Kuwait. Later events have featured ambassadors of Croatia, Jordan, Greece and Algeria.



HE Mr Yannis Tsaousis, Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic (left), spoke at a meeting jointly held with young members of the European & Commonwealth Forum of the National Liberal Club

Westminster UNA submits detailed proposals for UN's New Agenda for Peace

These are set out on our News page (see 14 January 2023) and follow the invitation by the UN Secretary-General to all people and only after some strong debate!

Westminster UNA co-hosts World Press Freedom Day meeting

To mark the 30th anniversary of World Press Freedom Day, Westminster UNA and the Centre for Freedom of the Media and the Commonwealth Journalists Association and the Association of European Journalists, hosted a meeting in parliament titled '*Towards Press Freedom, new hope or false dawn?*'

Westminster UNA debates the health of universal norms of human rights

This year, to mark the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we hosted a debate titled "*Human Rights: universal values or mere political construct?*" Chaired by Baroness Frances DeSouza, former Director of Article 19, the debate covered whether human rights are universal or a political construct. Treaties have created a compelling narrative of human progress despite their negative portrayal in the media, and to reinforce this, better education on the subject is sorely needed. A lively exchange of views followed, covering women's rights in Saudi Arabia, China's interpretation of cultural rights, the impact of social media and inadequate human rights education in the UK syllabus.

Blue Shield President outlines strategy to protect historic properties in time of conflict

November 2023 Speaking to the title 'When our cultural heritage is destroyed, our children are dispossessed', Professor Peter Stone, UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection & Peace at Newcastle University, stressed the importance of intergovernmental treaties in ensuring cultural property is protected in times of conflict. The 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its 1954 and 1999 Protocols point the way but how will these be actioned? He argued that cultural property can only be protected if the value of that protection is sufficiently understood and that the process is started in peacetime.

Westminster UNA lobbying leads HMG to name United Nations Green on UN's 75th anniversary

Yes, a day of immense pride! UN Green is centrally located between Westminster Abbey, the QEII Conference Centre, and Methodist Central Hall Westminster which hosted the first UN General Assembly in 1946. Where better!



Westminster UNA initiates annual International Law Lecture

Upon the invasion of Iraq in 2003 without a UN mandate, we invited Hans Corell, UN Legal Counsel, to address a large London audience on the importance of the Rule of Law. Next year's 25th International Law Lecture will be hosted by the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy at SOAS and supported by the Bar Council of England and Wales. Our webpages list all previous speakers and also the text of their speeches. They include Dame Rosalyn Higgins, President, International Court of Justice; Dr Hans Blix, Chairman of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission and Sir Denis Byron, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

UN Anniversaries? We like 'em!

On the UN's 60th we filled St Paul's Cathedral with two thousand, led by HM the Queen. HRH the Duke of Edinburgh and the Prime Minister read the lessons.

On its 70th, we persuaded the Bar Council to host a lavish celebration in the Inner Temple.



On its 75th, we planted the flags of all 193 member states into a monster banner on UN Green and held a party!

YPs mourn UN deaths in Gaza



10 December 2023, Human Rights Day, we marked the 75th anniversaries of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, more sadly, the first deaths of United Nations staff in Palestine and Israel while working in the cause of peace.



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