

United Nations Association

Westminster Branch

Campaigning for a strong, credible and effective UN



Annual Report 2010-2011

We are pleased to submit our Annual Report together with the Branch's financial report for the year to 31 March 2011. 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 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 9th annual Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law Lecture titled *Lessons learned from the Rwanda Criminal Tribunal* was delivered by Sir Dennis Byron, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. This lecture series always attracts a good audience and we again thank the International Relations Committee of the Bar Council for its support and CISD, SOAS, London University for arranging this event in the lovely Brunei Gallery lecture theatre.

Our speakers at the 8th Conference to mark the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers titled *Keeping the Peace, Protecting the People* were led by Mr Alan Doss, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the DRC. Other speakers were Jacob Aasland Ravndal, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, Sandy Allsopp, Allsopp Helikites Ltd, Andrew Stewart, Thales UK and Edward Burke, FRIDE, Madrid. The Remembrance Ceremony at the Cenotaph held during the conference was led by Mr Doss who was joined by representatives of eighty embassies and high commissions. Musical support was provided by the Band of the Coldstream 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.

Dr Dan Plesch, Director, CISD at SOAS spoke on *The UN at war: FDR's global UN Day 1942* and was accompanied by Professor Chris Bellamy, Cranfield University and Paul Lay, Editor, *History Today*. Our meeting at UCL titled *Who deserves to stay on the UN Human Rights Council? The record on women's rights* was addressed by Liesl Gertholtz, Women's Rights Director, Human Rights Watch, Dr Saladin Meckled-Garcia, Director, UCL Institute for Human Rights, Martha Jean Baker, International Vice-President, WILP F, Mr Akin Oyateru, High Commission for the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Ms M. Subhashini, High Commission for India.

In November, we held our 5th *We the Peoples* film festival, screening films in six locations. The Young Film Makers Day at the National Film Theatre attracted great numbers and featured live link-ups with fellow film makers in Soweto, South Africa and in Ghana.

We thank the British Universities Film & Video Council for sponsoring the Best Film awards and providing prizes for young film makers. Also we thank Sainsbury Ltd who supplied food and soft drinks for the young film makers and International Diplomatic Supplies Ltd for providing refreshments for the international gala reception that followed. Social events included a performance of *Welcome to Thebes* at the Royal National Theatre after which we met the cast. Following our Annual General Meeting, we invited members of the Somali diaspora to join in discussion on the challenges facing Somalia. The branch continues its close association with the diaspora.

UNA-Connecticut

We retain close links with our twin, the Connecticut chapter of UNA-USA. Its activities can be followed through our website. Its 2011 United Nations Calendar for Peace in month over month printed format was published and we distributed copies to members.

Our Honorary Officers

We are always delighted to meet our Honorary Officers who lead busy lives and we are delighted to 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, a finance sub-committee proposed an alternative investment strategy and this was adopted and discussed fully at the 2010 Annual General Meeting. Our Financial Report indicates this decision was beneficial to the branch.

Our Future

Our programme planning continues with new initiatives. 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 member. And remember, check our website at 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 so please help defray costs by enabling us to contact you in this manner.

David Wardrop, Chairman

Paul Mrazek, Vice-Chairman

Vivienne Eka, Hon Secretary

11 November 2011