

United Nations Association

Westminster Branch

Campaigning for a strong, credible and effective UN



Annual Report 2012-2013

We are pleased to submit our Annual Report together with the Branch's financial report for the year to 31 March 2013. 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 UN and Torture Prevention: theory and practice*" was delivered by Professor Malcolm Evans, Chairman of the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, other Cruel and Degrading Treatment or Punishment. 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 "*Soldier, peacebuilder and aid-giver; can one hat fit all?*" were led by Baroness Valerie Amos, USG, UN Office for Humanitarian Activities and Emergency Relief Coordinator. Also speaking was Victoria Metcalfe of the Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute. Baroness Betty Boothroyd led the diplomatic wreath-laying ceremony held at the National Monument to the Women of World War II. Prayers were offered by the Revd. Lucy Winkett, Rector of St. James's Piccadilly. About eighty 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. Rear-Admiral Henri Shricke, French Defence Attaché, laid the wreath in memory of French officer, Commandant René de Labarrière, the first UN fatality. Mrs Rosalind Dillon Lee of the War Widows' Association laid a wreath on behalf of all widows of fallen peacekeepers. The Royal Artillery Band provided musical support. Pupils from the Grey Coat Hospital School for Girls and City of Westminster School for Boys stewarded the event, leading diplomats and the UN Veterans' Association provided the Colour Guard.

On 16 August, in Central Hall Westminster, site of the first UN General Assembly, we hosted the presentation of ambassadors' letters of support for the UN General Assembly Olympic Truce Resolution agreed the previous October. Diplomats from fifty embassies and guests heard presentations by the *London Peace Network* which announced that on the UN International Day of Peace, mosques, synagogues, temples and churches would for the first time, welcome all visitors; *Truce 20/20*, a Newham youth initiative and *Peace Unlimited* from Rochdale reported on their community-driven programmes; and the UNHCR reported on its *Giving is Winning* partnership with the Olympic organisers. World G18 Somalia announced the publication in Somali of the UN educational comic *Score the Goals* and the UN Veterans Association, all former peacekeepers, paraded the UN and Olympic Truce flags.

Speeches by the FCO official leading its Olympic Truce programme and the Russian ambassador joined that of the Kuwait ambassador, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps who presented the collected diplomats' letters to Phil Mulligan, then Executive Director, UNA-UK. He in turn presented these for safe keeping to Methodist Central Hall Westminster. Also, the ambassador urged the Young Diplomats in London and UNA Young Professionals to share best ideas from all countries in building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal. The event had opened with a short play which irreverently revisited the opening of the first UN GA in 1946.

In May, we published our critique of the UN Security Council's poor support for Kofi Annan's Six Point programme for a settlement in Syria. In June, we formally launched the Westminster Young Professionals Network at the UN Forum in central London.

In November our meeting tackled the UK government's performance in the exercise and protection of human rights. Titled *Is Equality Lite the new UK human rights standard?*, speakers

shared views on these issues, conducting 'health checks' on the UK's record on Equalities and Human Rights, showing concern that the UN's Accreditation Committee might withdraw NHRI status from the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Following the Annual General meeting, the Chair was passed to the Chair of Westminster UNA Young Professionals for their public meeting titled "*Is the only answer to the Iranian question a Military One?*" The speakers were Heather Blake, *Reporters without borders*, and Dr Dan Plesch, *Director of the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy at SOAS*.

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 #Tweeterpitch award of £500 was won for a planned film following pregnant mothers in Gaza seeking skilled medical assistance. Once again, 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 continues its busy programme. Its annual *UN Calendar for Peace* is

now available by e-mail, informing us on key international events on each day.

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, our Joint Vice-

Presidents, the Rt. Hon. Jeremy Thorpe PC, Ben Whitaker, Juliet Colman and HH Prince Mohsin Ali Khan agreed to continue as our Honorary Officers.

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 major sums continue to reward us well as shown in our financial statement.

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

20 April 2014