

United Nations Association

Westminster Branch

Campaigning for a strong, credible and effective UN



Annual Report 2013-2014

We are pleased to submit our Annual Report together with the Branch's financial report for the year to 31 March 2014. 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 11th annual Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law Lecture titled "*Establishing human rights in post-revolution states and in international waters*" was delivered by David Hammond of 9 Bedford Row Chambers' International Group. A theme that would have resonated with Ruth given her strong interest in the work of the IMO and Law of the Sea Treaty. 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 10th Conference to mark the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers titled "*After the soldiers leave*" were led by Ann-Marie Orlor, former Police Adviser, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Also speaking were Freddie Carver, Team Leader, Security and Justice Team, UK Stabilisation Unit and Douglas Brand OBE, Chief Police Advisor to the Ministry of the Interior, Iraq. Baroness Onora O'Neill, CBE, Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, led the diplomatic wreath-laying ceremony held at the National Monument to the Women of World War II. Prayers were offered by the Reverend Clare Herbert, Lecturer in Inclusive Theology at St Martin in the Fields and

Flight Lieutenant Emily McCullough, RAF Leuchars, UK Armed Forces Humanist Association. 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. Captain Philip Stonor, RN Ret'd, former Naval Attaché, British Embassy, Paris, laid the wreath in memory of French officer, Commandant René de Labarrière, the first UN fatality. Mrs Anne Hartley, Vice Chairman, War Widows Association laid a wreath on behalf of all widows of fallen peacekeepers. The Band of the Blues and Royals 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.

Our meetings programme included a wide-ranging review on the UK's nuclear weapons programme by Commander Robert Green RN Ret'd. He explained why he became one of very few ex-Commanders with nuclear weapon experience to come out against them. He reminded us of the nuclear arsenals still held by nine states, and the associated threats to security from their determination to modernise them.

Frederic Eckhard who had served as UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's spokesperson for many years recounted his years at the UN, travelling with Mr Annan and watching him work under intense pressure. He introduced his book *Kofi Annan: A spokesperson's memoir* which chronicles Kofi Annan's early life. Mr Eckhard, now retired, has set up and sponsors the Burkina Women's Education Fund, renamed *Chance for Change*, financing the higher education of those financed through secondary school by a sister organization, Solidarité Goëlo-Burkina. At the meeting, the branch organised an appeal for *Chance for Change*, raising £830.

To mark the UN International Day of Peace, we organised the Flights for Peace initiative. Working with the London Peace Network and the Christian Muslim Forum, we arranged with TFL, operator of the Emirates Air Line to use its cable car service crossing the Thames from North Greenwich to the Royal Docks. People from different faiths or no faith and from different cultures and countries shared cabins for the ten minute northbound journey.

The Annual General Meeting this year was held well into the current year and will be fully reported in next year's Annual Report. It was followed by a meeting titled *Does the UK have a credible race equality strategy or is a new vision required?* and themed around the UK's obligations under the UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). It was chaired by Lord (Herman) Ouseley and panelists from several political parties presented commentaries on the issue, together with independent experts on the UK's Treaty Monitoring obligations, leading to a lively discussion with the audience.

In November, we held our 8th *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 the lives of Kenyan women far from major towns. Once again, we thank the British Universities Film & Video Council for sponsoring the *Best Film* awards and providing prizes for young film makers and also the British Film Institute for hosting the event.

UNA-Connecticut

Our twin UNA Connecticut continues its busy programme. Its annual *UN Calendar for Peace* is

now available by [e-mail](#), informs us daily of key international events that happened on that 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 have all 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

2 December 2014