

# United Nations Association

## Westminster Branch

Campaigning for a strong, credible and effective UN



### Annual Report 2016-2017

This annual report refers to the period ending 31 March 2017. It will be formally presented at the next annual general

meeting to be held in 2018 together with an oral report of events and initiatives up to that date.

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#### **Our activities**

The 14<sup>th</sup> annual Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law Lecture titled *“Should we be worried about the health of international law?”* was delivered by Professor Françoise Hampson, Emeritus Professor of Law at the University of Essex. She averred that making rules and adhering to them has underpinned the course of the United Nations and international relations more generally since 1945. She observed that some States have not respected these and situations have arisen where adherence to these rules were dismissed but this had limited impact on the rules themselves. They were a violation of the rules, rather than a challenge to them. But some argue that they must now fight for the rules themselves, a cause they never anticipated. 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 13<sup>th</sup> Conference to mark the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers titled *Sustaining Momentum: What Next for UN Peace Operations?* featured Jean-Marie Guéhenno, President and CEO, International Crisis Group as keynote speaker.

Also speaking were Melinda Simmons, Head, Conflict Department, FCO, Victoria Holt, Deputy Assistant Secretary, US Department of State and Lt Gen (Rtd) Philip Campose, former Vice Chief of the Indian Army. The diplomatic wreath-laying ceremony at the Cenotaph included prayers offered by The Revd. Nadim Nasser, Director and co-founder of the Awareness Foundation and Mrs

Mandeep Kaur, Sikh Chaplain to the British Armed Forces.

Ninety five embassies and high commissions participated in this, the world’s largest ceremony to mark this important anniversary. Wreaths were laid in memory of Count Folke Bernadotte and Commandant René de Labarrière, the first UN fatality. Government, the military and police as well as other groups also laid wreaths. The Band of the Corps of Royal Engineers 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 again welcomed the support of UNA-UK in coordinating this event, a considerable administrative burden.

In June, our meeting titled *The UN’s drugs policy; right at last or so, so wrong?* followed the UN General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS) which had been triggered by an accelerated review process prior to the formal review conference in 2019. Baroness Meacher, Co-Chair of the APPG on Drug Policy Reform, hailed the UNGASS as a ‘moment of transformation’, seeing it as the moment when the UN had turned its back on the concept of a ‘war on drugs’. HE Mr Nestor Osorio, Ambassador of Colombia, referred to his country’s painful experience as an unwilling source of coca, controlled by local mafia groups and the subsequent recognition for a coordinated approach.

In September, we marked the UN International Day of Peace, joining others in the London Boroughs Faith Network at St. Martin in the Field's church to preview *'London is Open'*, a short film announcing our city's churches, synagogues, temples, mosques and other places of faith would be open to visitors over the next weekend. In October, we joined the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan at Southwark Cathedral to sign up to a new London Declaration. *Inter alia*, this pledges our determination that London must be a place of welcome, generosity and equality, with respect for all.

In December, our meeting titled *The UK response to the UN's race audit: blueprint for change or empty promises, to gather dust until the next submission to the UN in 2021?*, chaired by Lord Ouseley, followed up that held in 2014 which reviewed the UK's progress in implementing recommendations made in the 2011 audit conducted by the Committee for the International Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). Speakers included Andrea Murray, Human Rights and Research Director, Equality & Human Rights Commission, Barbara Cohen, Runnymede Trust, and Ian Naysmith, Senior Policy Adviser in the Integration and Faith Division at the Department for Communities and Local Government

We continue to coordinate the international campaign to pursue the UN investigation into how former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld died and we maintain our dedicated website which keeps the international community updated with developments in both the UN and other fora. [www.hammaraskjoldinquiry.info](http://www.hammaraskjoldinquiry.info)

In November, we held our 11<sup>th</sup> *We the Peoples* film festival with screenings in many locations, each opening with a screening of *'London is Open'*. The Young Film Makers Day at the National Film Theatre attracted great numbers. The *#Tweeterpitch* award of £500 was won by Mei Leng Yew for her proposed film (later) titled *The Stranger in My Home*. We

thank the British Film Institute Future Film team for hosting the event and also the students of the Ashdown Academy who curated the many screenings in the Festival programme.

Our UNA Westminster Young Professionals jointly hosted a meeting in the House of Lords with Liberal International to review the effectiveness and relevance of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) concept to the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis. This started a joint project aiming to re-ignite the R2P debate in the UK, raising public awareness and knowledge on the topic. The project continues. Also, the Young Professionals group participated in the year-long programme initiated by the British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR) to produce a Joint Civil Society Report for submission to the United Nations as part of its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UK. In March, they hosted a screening of the documentary *Before the Flood* before a capacity audience at the L' Escargot restaurant in Soho.

After exhaustive searches for a location in London which could be linked to the United Nations by renaming, as already enjoyed by other cities worldwide, we identified the existing Broad Sanctuary Green which nestles between Central Hall Westminster, Westminster Abbey and the QE II Conference Centre. The government agreed in principle to the name change but has requested delay until parliament decides the temporary relocation of the House of Lords during restoration of the Palace of Westminster. This might move to the QE II Centre. Meanwhile, the City of Westminster Planning Committee welcomed the initiative and agreed to our proposal for a large plaque on the site, to be funded by members of the UK Network of the UN Global Compact. Our negotiations continue.

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

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## 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 Vice-Presidents.

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## 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.

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**We welcome your comments. Please contact us on [info@unawestminster.org.uk](mailto:info@unawestminster.org.uk)**

**David Wardrop, Chairman**

**Paul Mrazek, Vice-Chairman**

**Vivienne Eka, Hon Secretary**

**30 January 2018**