

# United Nations Association

## Westminster Branch

Campaigning for a strong, credible and effective UN



### Annual Report 2017-2018

This annual report refers to the period ending 31 March 2018. It will be formally presented at the next annual general

meeting to be held later this year, together with an oral report of events and initiatives up to that date.

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#### Our activities

The 16<sup>th</sup> annual Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law Lecture titled *“International Law and the Use of Armed Drones”* was delivered by Professor Dapo Akande, Yamani Fellow at St. Peter's College, Oxford and Co-Director of the Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law and Armed Conflict.

We again thank the International Relations Committee of the Bar Council for its support and the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy at SOAS for arranging at late notice an alternative venue, Mary Ward House.

Our 14<sup>th</sup> Conference to mark the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers titled *‘Better peacekeeping: how to make the most of UN missions’* sought to turn the Ministerial Summit's 3P agenda into a plan of action. The keynote speaker was Major General (Retd) Patrick Cammaert, experienced in many UN operations. The conference initiated the Margaret Anstee Memorial Seminar which discussed how to improve trust and credibility in a context of ongoing allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse and a perceived failure to protect. The programme can be viewed on the home page (Peacekeeping).

The diplomatic wreath-laying ceremony at the Cenotaph included prayers offered by the Revd Nigel Cowgill, Methodist Church and Mrs Geetha Maheshwaran from the Shree Ghanapathy Temple. One hundred and fifteen 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 by his grandson Count Edward 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 Welsh Guards 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, we led a study visit to the UN in New York. The group heard sixteen presentations on subjects including counter terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, the Sustainable Development Goals, the application of the Rule of Law, UN Women and the tensions between UN peacekeepers and UN health staff in the field. The group was fortunate to be hosted by the UNA New York Chapter and visited UNA Westminster's sister chapter in Westport, Connecticut, to share in its annual jUNe Day celebrations. The visit included a chance to walk across the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Memorial Bridge.

In July, our meeting titled *‘Voices for Africa, Voices for Women at the United Nations’* discussed gender issues in southern Africa and also witnessed the launch of *“Angola in the UN Security Council 2015/2016: Resolutions and Experiences in World Governance”* written and introduced by Dr António Luvualu de Carvalho, Ambassador-at-Large for the President of the Republic of Angola.

In December, our meeting titled *‘The UN, the UK and people with disabilities: who's listening?’* chaired by Baroness Campbell of Surbiton DBE reviewed the UK's performance in implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities. Speakers included Rebecca Hilsenrath, Chief Executive, Equality & Human Rights Commission, Debbie Abrahams, Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, and Kamran Mallick, Chief Executive Officer, Disability Rights UK.

In March, our meeting *“Why is the UK trailing its Commonwealth partners in tackling the UN SDGs?”* featured Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale, Co-Chair, APPG, Global Goals for Sustainable Development; Dr Amina Osman, Education Adviser, Economic, Youth and Sustainable Development Directorate, Commonwealth Secretariat; Dr Carl Wright, former Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum; Farooq Ullah, Director, Stakeholder Forum for a sustainable future; and Steve Kenzie, Executive Director, UK Network, UN Global Compact. It was chaired by Lord Judd, our Joint President.

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 12<sup>th</sup> *We the Peoples* film festival with screenings in many locations. Once again, the Young Film Makers Day at the National Film Theatre attracted great numbers. The *#Tweeterpitch* award of £500 was won by Pascale Kann who, aged 17, is still at school! 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. Over the eleven screening events, twelve experts led informative discussions on the subjects covered. New festival venues were the Cinema Museum in Lambeth, 100 Year Gallery in Hackney, HMS President and Café Cairo in Clapham. The festival also returned to popular

venues including the Century Club, Miranda at the ACE Hotel London, the University of Westminster, SOAS and The Attic at Hackney Picturehouse.

Our UNA Westminster Young Professionals continue their project to review the effectiveness and relevance of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) concept to the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis and in other tense locations. We were proud that Harry Wright, Young Professionals Co-Vice-Chair, was invited to address the 13th Conference of Youth in Bonn, Germany, in November, an event linked to the very crucial 23rd UN Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP23) in the same venue. In March, the Young Professionals launched the first of their planned ‘Meet the Ambassador’ series of meetings, kindly hosted by the law firm Ashfords LLP.

To continue our campaigning work beyond that supporting the initiatives of UNA-UK, we stated our disappointment that the UK government has delayed setting out its national strategy to promote and implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals; welcomed the adoption of the UN treaty banning nuclear weapons, regretting the UK did not attend the conference; reviewed the funding and organisational challenges facing the new UN OCHA chief, Mark Lowcock; and submitted several resolutions to the UNA London & South East Regional Council’s AGM;

We continue to monitor developments in parliament relating to the relocation of the House of Lords, so that renovation work on the Palace of Westminster can commence. It appears that any move to the QEII Centre would not happen before 2025. Therefore we will continue to lobby for an early decision by government to agree renaming Broad Sanctuary Green as United Nations Green.

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**

**5 April 2018**