

United Nations Association

Westminster Branch

Campaigning for a strong, credible and effective UN



Annual Report 2018-2019

This annual report refers to the period ending 31 March 2019. 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.

Our activities

The 17th annual Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law Lecture titled *"In Search of the International Law of Cyberspace: A Travelogue"* had to be cancelled as Professor Michael Schmitt, Professor of Public International Law, Exeter Law School, took ill at late notice and an alternative date could not be fixed.

We are fortunate to retain the support of the International Relations Committee of the Bar Council and the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy at SOAS and look forward to next year's lecture.

Our 15th Conference to mark the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers focused on 'Politics, Partners and Protection'. The opening session "When there's no peace to keep" reviewed what 'robust peacekeeping' really means in the context of the recent report by Brazilian General Cruz and the increasing hostility UN missions have faced, particularly in sub Saharan Africa.

The Folke Bernadotte memorial lecture was given by Ian Martin who led UN missions to Libya, East Timor and Nepal and co-authored the UN's High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report. In a hard-hitting address, he stated that as the UK is the Security Council's penholder for Yemen, it was now particularly inappropriate in view of its support for the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, which has contributed to the Council's lack of effective action in the face of the worst humanitarian crisis in the world.

The afternoon session, now named the Margaret Anstee memorial seminar titled "Future peacekeeping" examined the search for capacity, how the gap between expectations and resourcing can be met, particularly in the context of budget cuts and changes to the UN's peace and security architecture. The speakers, from the military, government, academic and not-for-profit communities wrestled in trying to square the circle.

The traditional Cenotaph wreath-laying ceremony featured two government ministers, parliamentarians, the military and police along with diplomats from more than a hundred countries. Count Bernadotte af Wisborg, laid the wreath in memory of his grandfather, Count Folke Bernadotte and Commandant René de Labarrière, the first UN fatality was also remembered.

Prayers were offered by the Reverend Canon Joseph Hawes and Imam Fadel Soliman, Director of the Bridges Foundation. The Band of the Irish Guards provided musical support.

The public address system was managed by members of the Youth Production Network, all with disabilities and magnificently overcoming these.

Once again, 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 July, our meeting *'Poaching, Trafficking and Security: threats posed by the illegal wildlife trade'* featured Mary Rice, Executive Director, Environmental Investigation Agency. The meeting included our Annual General Meeting. In July, we coordinated the campaign to *'Walk the Mile'* for Nelson Mandela, marking the centenary of his birth and supporting the causes he espoused; peace, health, justice and equality. The *'Mandela Mile'* is the distance between Nelson Mandela's statue in Parliament Square and his bust beside the Royal Festival Hall, very close to an exact mile.

In December, we mounted the *'Hands Off Africa!!'* conference marking the 60th anniversary of the ground-breaking All African People's Conference held in Accra, Ghana, which set out to advance the ideology of Pan Africanism through non-alignment, anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism and African unity. The event was organised in association with the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at London University, and attracted excellent speakers from several countries and a good audience.

In February, the UNA Westminster Young Professionals invited HE Amar Abba, Ambassador of Algeria and Dean of the African Union Heads of Mission in the UK to address their third *'Meet the Ambassador'* event, again kindly hosted by Ashfords LLP.

Our lobbying campaigns included activity by our Young Professionals who wrote to the FCO sharing their concerns for the fate of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe following her continued detention by Iranian officials in 2016. We also shared our concern at the Pakistan government's capitulation to mob pressure following its Supreme Court's acquittal of Asia Bibi. Separately, in confidence, we liaised with those close to Asia Bibi's family and the Canadian government and were pleased that efforts by others as well as ourselves led to Asia Bibi's resettlement in Canada.

In September, we led a week-long Study Tour to The Hague, Brussels, Strasbourg and Paris, visiting in each city important international institutions. A full report can be read on our website news pages.

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.hammar skjold inquiry.info

In November, we held our 13th *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 *#TweetaPitch* award for a £500 bursary was won by Giulia Gandini who plans to make a film working with homeless people showing life through their eyes. We thank the British Film Institute Future Film team for hosting the event and the students of the Ashdown Academy who curated the many screenings in the Festival programme. Following each of the eleven screenings, experts led informative discussions on the subjects covered. Festival venues included the Cinema Museum in Lambeth and the Rio Cinema, Dalston, Miranda at the ACE Hotel London, SOAS and The Attic at Hackney Picturehouse.

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.

Our Honorary Officers

We are delighted that Baroness Cox of Queensbury and Lord Judd of Portsea have agreed to continue as Joint Presidents. Lord Lester of Herne Hill QC has

resigned. Juliet Colman and HH Prince Mohsin Ali Khan have both agreed to continue as Joint Vice-Presidents.

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.

We welcome your comments. Please contact us on info@unawestminster.org.uk

David Wardrop, Chairman

Paul Mrazek, Vice-Chairman

Vivienne Eka, Hon Secretary

2 June 2019