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# Westminster United Nations Association

Campaigning for a strong, credible and effective UN

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## Annual Report 2022-2023

This annual report refers to the period ending 31 March 2023. It will be formally presented at the next annual general

meeting together with an oral report of events and initiatives up to that date.

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### Our activities

#### [Annual Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Law Lecture](#)

Held in memory of Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen, the 19<sup>th</sup> lecture titled *Brexit, the Good Friday Agreement & the Constitutional Future of N. Ireland* was given by Professor Colin Harvey, Director, Human Rights Centre, Queen's University Belfast. The focus of his lecture was how the Good Friday Agreement deals with the questions of self-determination and sovereignty, issues that rest at the heart of the ethno-national conflict in and about Northern Ireland. In recognising that the precise mechanism used is of wider international significance and interest, he averred that the following month's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Agreement offers the opportunity for reflection and renewal and held out the possibility that it could one day lead to a viable framework for a United Ireland. Due to transport and teaching staff strikes, the event was held online.

#### [International Day of UN Peacekeepers](#)

Our 19<sup>th</sup> Conference to mark this UN anniversary was held online. It featured a dialogue between Jean-Pierre Lacroix, UN USG for Peace Operations and Dr Karin von Hippel, Director-General, RUSI. Panel discussions were titled *How effectively does the UN address the challenges of Peacekeeping?* and *The Digital*

*Transformation of Peacekeeping*, the latter held in the memory of Dame Margaret Anstee.

We were delighted to return to the traditional format for the wreath-laying ceremony at the Cenotaph. The Rt. Hon. Lord Ahmad, Minister of State for the UN, and Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, CDS, were joined by diplomats from ninety nations, contingents from four army units recently returned from UN deployment and many others. The Band of the Grenadier Guards provided musical support. We welcomed back pupils from the Grey Coat School for Girls and the City of Westminster School for Boys who directed the diplomats to their positions. A short film of the ceremony can be watched on our website.

#### **United Nations Green, 2<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Party**

We returned to United Nations Green for its 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday party, coinciding with the anniversary of Nelson Mandela's birth, welcoming those who, during the day, had walked the Mandela Mile, from his bust at the South Bank to his statue in nearby Parliament Square. Once again, members of the diplomatic community joined us, each planting their nation's flag in our giant *UN75 flags of the UN* display. Again, we enjoyed the peace dove release and access to the display of UN memorabilia in the Methodist Hall's archive room.

### [The Dag Hammarskjöld programme](#)

We continue to host the most authoritative information source on developments in the UN's continuing inquiry into the possible causes of the plane crash in which former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and fifteen others died in 1961.

### **Commonwealth members' stance on Ukraine**

Following our search for reasons why certain Commonwealth nations refused to join the majority of UN member states in criticising Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we have set out our arguments in our blog and will continue to monitor their stances.

### [UNA Connecticut](#)

Along with its long-running UNA scholarships programme targeting schools in Connecticut, the Chapter has devoted the year to highlighting the plight of women survivors of human trafficking, principally in Nepal. In this, it is cooperating with SASANE, an NGO working with victims of sex trafficking in Katmandu.

### [We The Peoples Film Festival](#)

We were unable to run our traditional *We the Peoples* film festival, but again we have shortlisted films that might be screened later.

### **Lost friends**

Members we will miss include Bruce Kent, the determined campaigner against nuclear weapons, 'an unfazed, unbending champion for peace'. Also, the passing of William Say, a long-time executive committee member, was a great shock. He had been dedicated to UNA

over many years, he had contributed to work on peacekeeping, human rights, development, and supporting the principle of fair equity for all. Many of us attended his memorial service.

### [Westminster UNA Young Professionals](#)

Westminster Young Professionals play an important role in our work and we encourage young people interested in the work and mission of the United Nations to join us.

### **Annual General Meeting**

Our AGM, held in January to mark the opening of the UN General Assembly in 1946, was held in parliament to a packed audience. The committee was elected and the annual financial report accepted.

Our speakers were Sara Shaw, International Program Coordinator for Climate Justice & Energy at Friends of the Earth International who reported on the principal outcomes of the recent COP27 meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt, and the economist Benny Dembitzer, a Westminster UNA member, who pointed to the evident failures in the structure of the international aid programme which continued to hinder regeneration of indigenous farming patterns, worsening dependence.

### [The UN's New Agenda for Peace](#)

In response to the UN Secretary-General's invitation to civil society to contribute ideas to his New Agenda for Peace, we canvassed members and submitted our list of priorities to the UN. These are detailed in our News Pages.

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## **Our Honorary Officers**

We are delighted that Baroness Cox of Queensbury has agreed to continue as President and Juliet Colman and Sir Peter Marshall have both agreed to continue as Joint

Vice-Presidents. With great sadness, we learned of the death of HH Prince Mohsin Ali Khan who had been a great supporter and advocate for reconciliation of faiths.

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## **Our Finances**

Our ambitious programme of events is underpinned by the generous legacy of Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen. The Fidelity Fund in which

we have invested has rewarded us well. The annual accounts for all years are available for inspection by members.

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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**

**10 May 2023**