

## Annual Report 2007-2008

I am pleased to submit our annual report together with the Branch's financial report for the three years to 31 March 2008. The financial report covers these years because the attendance at last year's AGM did not provide a quorum. As with my report last year, I refer briefly to activities which have taken place during the current year.

Your committee is confident we have created and managed to sustain a number of important annual events. Generally, these have secured sufficient sponsorship funding to be self-supporting but each year we must renew our applications for funding. Such applications are strengthened by evidence of your continuing support for our initiatives. Please come to our meetings.

### **What we did**

The 6th annual Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law Lecture titled "*Law and Peace*" was delivered by Dr Hans Blix, Chairman of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission. Again sponsored by Clifford Chance LLP with added support from the International Relations Committee of the Bar Council, it was held in association with the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy, SOAS, London University. We arranged for Dr Blix to meet High Court judges prior to the lecture and to speak to staff at UNA Headquarters prior to his departure from London. The waiting list for this event exceeded two hundred names.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Conference to mark the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers was titled "*Ensuring success in post-conflict reconstruction; tasks for peacekeepers and those who follow them*" to link to the keynote Folke Bernadotte address given by Professor Paul Collier, Director of the Centre for the Study of African Economies, University of Oxford. He titled his address "*Learning how to reduce the risk of failure in the post-conflict process*". Other speakers were Karin Christiansen, Research Fellow, Centre for Aid and Public Expenditure, ODI; Andy Bearpark, Director-General, British Association of Private Security Companies; General Philippe Stoltz, Chief of Staff, UNIFIL; Ify Agboola, Deputy Team Leader, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Team, Conflict Issues Group, Foreign & Commonwealth Office; and Lesley Abdela, Eyecatcher Associates/Shevolution.

The remembrance ceremony at the Cenotaph held during the conference was led by Count Folke Bernadotte, son of the UN's first mediator; General Sir Richard Dannatt, Chief of the General Staff; Sir Ronnie Flanagan, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary; and Sir Marrack Goulding and Dame Margaret Anstee, both former UN Under Secretaries-General. They were supported by sixty-six Ambassadors, High-Commissioners and other diplomats. Musical support was provided by the Band of the Irish Guards. This is the largest event held worldwide to mark this anniversary.

In June, our meeting held in association with the UNA West Oxfordshire branch examined the Ahtisaari proposal for Kosovo. Were these a path to integration or stalemate? Alan Phillips, President, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Council of Europe and Clive Baldwin, Head of International Advocacy, Minority Rights Group International, addressed the meeting which attracted representation from most Balkan states and also non-permanent members of the UN Security Council which was due to vote on the proposals shortly afterwards.

In October, HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal, former ambassador to the UK for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia spoke to the subject "*The Challenges Facing the International Community and the United Nations*". Ambassadors from nearly all Arab states attended the meeting which attracted a large and interested audience.

In November, we held our 2<sup>nd</sup> film festival, re-titled the *We the Peoples* film festival. We showed over forty films over five sessions at the National Film Theatre, two sessions at the ICA and a session at the Frontline Club. The event attracted good audiences and panelists and an *Awards for All* lottery grant. This grant also paid for a three-hour compilation DVD of nine of the festival's films for distribution to schools, UNA branches and other civil society organisations.

In August, we held a very enjoyable tea party at Home House, Portman Square, for Elizabeth MacKeith to mark her contribution to the work of the Branch in the cause of humanity worldwide. Elizabeth has served the branch since the 1960s in so many ways and has collected thousands of pounds on annual UNICEF/UNA flag days over the years.

#### **UNA-Connecticut**

We retain close links with our twin, the Connecticut chapter of UNA-USA. Its activities can be followed through our website. Its 2008 United Nations Calendar for Peace features landmark events in the 60 year period following the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We distributed 1000 copies throughout UNA and to schools in Westminster.

#### **Our Honorary Officers**

We are delighted that Baroness Cox of Queensbury, Lord Russell-Johnston and Lord Judd of Portsea continue to serve as our Joint Presidents but sadly, we must report the death of Lord Russell-Johnston. We are pleased that our Joint Vice-Presidents, Juliet Colman,, the Rt. Hon. Jeremy Thorpe PC, Ben Whitaker, Elizabeth MacKeith and Prince Mohsin Ali Khan agreed to continue in those roles but sadly, we report the death of Granville Fletcher, a long-serving Vice-President.

#### **Our Website**

Now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year, it has been praised for its unique 'one-stop guide' to the UN Millennium Development Goals, its reports on major branch activities and its guides to relevant UN initiatives. As well as all this, it links to about 150 websites and when visitors to the site feel exhausted, it can play funky World Music. Also on the home page, a dove can be encouraged to fly across the screen to music by Tchaikovsky, all in the cause of peace! Try it for yourself.

#### **Our Funds**

Our ambitious programme of events is underpinned by the generous legacy of the late Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen but our policy is to seek specific financial support for our flagship events.

#### **Our Future**

Our programme in the current year has featured the 5<sup>th</sup> conference to mark the International Day of UN Peacekeepers with its accompanying remembrance ceremony. Also, a concert to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights held at St. John's, Smith Square. Planned meetings will cover the Right to Development (October); Islam, Democracy and Human Rights (November); and International Lessons to be learned from the Holocaust (January). The 3<sup>rd</sup> *We the Peoples* film festival will be held in November at several locations and will introduce the Young Film Makers for Development festival, the first worldwide for producers and directors under 19 years of age. To mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UN Peacekeepers, we will hold a ceremonial planting of Peacekeeper roses at HM Tower of London. Other events are being planned as well as the annual flagship events.

#### **Our members**

It may be an easy cliché to state that 'our members are our strength' but it is an undeniable truth that we don't really know what our members expect of us. Every penny of every subscription benefits the programmes of our national organisation, not the branch so how can we know what attracts you? During this year, we plan to communicate by e-mail to the sixty percent of our members so registered. Besides saving the branch in excess of £1000 annually, we hope this will encourage more feedback. Better still, come to our meetings and tell us face to face what you want - or better still, how you can help.