

# United Nations Association

## Westminster Branch

Campaigning for a strong, credible and effective UN



### Annual Report 2020-2021

This annual report refers to the period ending 31 March 2021. 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**

The COVID19 pandemic interrupted our programme in a major way, leading to public meetings where possible and all committee meetings being held using Zoom.

##### **Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law Lecture**

Efforts to secure a speaker failed after some months of effort. Eventually, we agreed to cease our efforts and plan for 2022.

Throughout, we have retained close contact with our partners, the International Relations Committee of the Bar Council of England and Wales and the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy at SOAS.

##### **International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers**

Our planned 17<sup>th</sup> Conference to mark this day was also cancelled. However, we had already arranged to record the keynote address which was duly given by Brigadier Maureen O'Brien, then Acting Force Commander, UN Disengagement Observer Forces (UNDOF), and relayed from the Golan Heights.

The traditional Cenotaph wreath-laying ceremony took place during lockdown in a deserted Whitehall. Wreaths were laid by Lt-Col Steven Neville, previously serving with MINUSMA in Mali, and by Wing-Cdr Cat Davison, previously with UNMISS. Wreaths were laid also by UNA and the UN Veterans Association.

##### **The Mandela Mile**

In July, we participated in the 'Mandela Mile' project, marking the centenary of his birth, and supporting the causes he espoused. The event was organised online, linking many countries.

##### **Marking UN75**

We marked the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the UN Charter in San Francisco by installing into the then-named Broad Sanctuary Green a 7-metre square banner of the UN symbol into which we planted flags of the 193 UN Member States. To accompany this, we published on our website a personal letter to our members written by former British Diplomat Sir Peter Marshall, chronicling the UN's 75 years.

##### **Freedom of Religion or Belief**

We marked the UN International Day commemorating the victims of acts of violence based on Religion or Belief by cooperating with the Faith Forum for London with an online event which attracted 70+ participants. This provided useful experience for future similar online events.

##### **'What Next for the UN?' conference**

On 24 October (UN Day), we played a leading role in the seven-day event titled "*What Next for the UN? Building a more secure world*" jointly organised by LASER and Peace Child

International. Of its six topics where security is critical (health, food, environment, the digital space, the economy, and peace), Westminster UNA coordinated the Security and Peace programme.

#### **The UK's contribution to the United Nations**

In January, we organised a well-attended online event reviewing Britain's role in the creation of the United Nations, titled '*London 10 January 1946: The UN has landed, forecast hopeful*'.

#### **How should the Commonwealth prepare for COP26?**

In March, we cooperated with the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at London University in organising an online event titled '*Climate change challenges: the Commonwealth's path towards COP26*' which featured two leading Caribbean diplomats and a speaker representing the International Institute for Environment and Development.

#### **We The Peoples Film Festival**

We were unable to run our traditional *We the Peoples* film festival but shortlisted films that might be screened during the summer, separate from the planned 2021 festival in November.

#### **United Nations Green is named at last!**

During the year, we continued to monitor developments in parliament relating to the relocation of the House of Lords, hoping that we might soon be able to rename Broad Sanctuary Green as United Nations Green.

During the summer, we started negotiations with the House of Lords Restoration and

Renewal Delivery Authority which raised our hopes. Listening to wise advice from Lord Hannay and others, we waited upon arrangements for the UN Secretary-General to visit Methodist Central Hall to mark the UN's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In the end, he did not visit the UK but on 10 January we were delighted to learn that the government had agreed to the renaming as we had requested. Our chairman was able to announce the news during the online service held by the Methodist community on that same day.

#### **Westminster UNA Young Professionals**

During the year, the Westminster UNA Young Professionals set up a Slack group with groups tackling SDGs 3, Health and Wellbeing; SDG 13, Climate Action and Environment; and SDG 16, Peace and Justice. Recently, contact has been re-established with the Royal Overseas League Younger Member programme and we hope to organise future '*Meet the Ambassador*' meetings at the ROSL.

Our twin UNA, Connecticut continues its busy programme online.

#### **Lord Judd**

We sadly announce the death of Lord Judd of Portsea, one of our Joint Presidents, a loyal supporter of our activities and initiatives over many years. He was so willing to help, chairing our meetings in parliament and lobbying on international issues we raised with government. In 2017, Lord Judd was awarded the Sir Brian Urquhart Award for Distinguished Service. A true friend, he will be greatly missed.

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### **Our Honorary Officers**

We are delighted that Baroness Cox of Queensbury has agreed to continue as President. 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 Fidelity Fund in which we have invested has rewarded us well.

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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 June 2021**