



Forthcoming Events

Blackheath and Greenwich UNA

Wednesday 14 October 2009 / 19.00

UNHCR Talk Refugees: the Role of the Host Community
The Old Bakehouse, Bennett Park, Blackheath (Opposite the station). Refreshments. All welcome.

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Monday 16 November 2009 / 19.00

Screening of **The Age of Stupid** followed by discussion as preparations for Copenhagen heat up.
The Old Bakehouse, Bennett Park, Blackheath (Opposite the station). Refreshments. All welcome.

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Tuesday 8 December 2009 / 19.00 – 21.00

Christmas "Bring and Buy sale" at 13 Glenluc Road, Westcombe Park, Blackheath, SE3 7SD. Mince Pies, fellowship and bargains! All welcome. Donations.

Further info from Neville Grant 0208 858 8489

Blackheath & Greenwich's UNA

"Greenwich Social Network" for refugees

Saturdays 24 October, 21 November, 12 December
Meetings with refugees 10.30 – 13.00

Boys Brigade Hall, Reynolds Place, Blackheath SE3
Further information call 020 8318 1050

Tunbridge Wells UNA

Tuesday 13 October 2009 / 19.30

Talk by **Lesley Abdela MBE "The United Nations – Putting its House in Order on Women"**

St. John's Church, St. John's Road, Tunbridge Wells
Lesley Abdela is 2009 UK Woman Political Journalist of the Year and Senior UN Gender Advisor in Nepal.

Contact Brian Beeley on 01892 533566.

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Thursday 10 November 2009 / 19.00

Talk entitled '**Global challenges – local solutions**' by Refugee Action representatives; followed by short films and a discussion; at Grosvenor Hall, St. John's Church, St. John's Road, Tunbridge Wells

Contact Jane Macnaghten (macnag@btinternet.com / 01892 724 040). Also see www.unatunbridgewells.org.uk

Putney and Roehampton UNA

Tuesday 19 January 2010 / 19.30

Three short talks on **UN, Human Rights and Liberty** by Sir Brian Barder KCMG (on "Secret Trials" & protecting informers), Jeremy Corbyn MP (on political aspects) & Vijay Mehta (on achievements, failures & future prospects).
Hurlingham Yacht Club, 43A Deodar Rd, Putney SW15 2NP

Westminster UNA

Tuesday 20 October 2009 / 18.30 – 20.30

Eric Joyce MP hosting talk on **Attack on World Poverty** by **Benny Dembitzer**. Portcullis House, Committee Room 6.
Contact: info@unawestminster.org.uk or pmrazek@fsmail.net.

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Tuesday 24 November / 18.30

AGM with Charlotte Onslow of **GAPS** and Lesley Abdela of **Shevolution** as speakers. Location TBC. Contact Catherine Plugers at cathrineplugers@hotmail.com.

Enfield and the Barnets UNA

Thursday 17 November 2009 / 19.30

In conjunction with The Enfield Civil Society Forum: **Examination of Trust & Leadership in Public Institutions**.
Cross party participants of all 3 Enfield MPs.
Council Chamber of the Civic Centre. All welcome.
For information ring 020 8882 3621

Branch Flag Day 2009-2010

Raise money for UNA and UNICEF



The Annual Branch flag day in the London Metropolitan Area is on

Saturday 17 October 2009.

Some branches organise local collections on other days. Funds raised support UNA's education and campaigning, and UNICEF's work for children around the world.

Members whose branches do not have a collection can make a donation or volunteer to help another branch.

Cheques (made out to UNA) can be sent to Peter Webster, UNA Regional Treasurer at 30 Culverhouse Gardens, Streatham, London SW16 2TX.
Contact Peter at webster.home@btinternet.com.

we the peoples
FILM FESTIVAL
23 November – 29 November 2009
www.wethepeoples.org.uk



Green LaSER 2010. Help us!

The Region recognise the cost - financially and environmentally – of printing and posting several thousand newsletters each year. We want to send out as many LaSERs by email as possible; and hope that by the next issue, over 50% of the distribution will be electronic.

If you have already signed up to receive LaSER by email, this will be your last paper issue. Going forward, you will simply receive email notifications when the new LaSERs are published on our website.

If you haven't already done so, register online at www.unalondonandse.org/publications.htm.

We understand that some members may prefer to continue receiving LaSER in hard copy. If so, please contact Wendy Higgs (Honorary Secretary) (e: wendy-higgs@hotmail.co.uk; T: 020 8318 1050).

We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your help in reducing our carbon footprint.



London & SE Region
United Nations Association

LaSER

TRIANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF THE LONDON & SOUTH EAST REGION
WORKING FOR A STRONG, CREDIBLE & EFFECTIVE UNITED NATIONS

ISSUE 8 | OCTOBER 2009

Welcome to the October issue of LaSER, the newsletter for all United Nations Association members in the London and Southeast Region.

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Copy date of the next issue:
10 February 2010.

For contribution guideline and details, go to:
www.unalondonandse.org/Publications.htm

Editor: Linda Leung
(editor@unalondonandse.org)

London Region at the UNA-UK 2009 Annual Conference

The 2009 UNA Annual Conference was held in June in the prestigious surroundings of the Scottish Parliament and Edinburgh University.



In his keynote speech, Sir John Holmes, UN Under-Secretary-General on Humanitarian Affairs, talked about the challenges facing the UN in its role as the world's humanitarian co-ordinator, in particular in reconciling the tensions between national sovereignty and international responsibilities. He gave examples of natural and man-made disasters, and drew attention to the humanitarian consequences of climate change.

The Region's Participation

The London & Southeast Region contingent was smaller compared to previous years, primarily due to the distance. Our impact, nevertheless, was not lost. All 5 of the Region's motions were carried and are now incorporated in UNA's 2010 policy statement. The Region is grateful to Max Ehrenwerth and his team who did a tremendous job in coordinating and drafting the very well-thought out motions which are summarised below.



Improved Conference Proceedings Applauded

Sheila Kesby is a UNA veteran, having represented Canterbury Branch at Annual Conferences for the last 10 years. In the last 4 years, there have been various proposals for reform of Conference proceedings. Sheila was among those who are pleased that we have finally got it right.

Policy-making and resolution debates were condensed into a one-day intense business session. The new policy statement was drafted overnight, presented to delegates to review and vote the following morning, and became active once approved. ▶▶▶ page 2

London & South East Region Motions

■ Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation

Calling for the Trident system not to be renewed, and for a significant proportion of the resources released to be used for peace building and conflict resolution.

■ Israel/Palestine conflict in Gaza

Calling for an independent investigation into alleged war crimes on both sides (since completed by the Goldstone report), and for reparations to be paid for wanton damage to civilians and for UN property.

■ Torture and Extraordinary rendition

Calling for an enquiry into allegations of torture, and complicity in torture, and asking HMG to reaffirm its commitment to the UN Convention Against Torture.

■ Safeguarding journalists

Calling for HMG to support UNESCO in condemnation of violence and intimidation against journalists, and for the Human Rights Council to investigate such incidents.

■ Climate change

Calling for HMG to invest heavily in green technology, to encourage industry to reduce carbon emissions, and to implement principles of environmental sustainability.

Photos from top to bottom. Sir John Holmes, Sheila Kesby © UNA-UK/Simon Hollington



UNA-UK 2009 Annual Conference (cont'd from page 1)

Proposed Change of Conference Format

An important development that will impact the Region and all UNA branches was the proposed change to the Annual Conference format - from an annual event to a two-year cycle of a one-day policy-making conference alternated with a one-day outreach conference. This will be done initially as an experiment in 2010. The proposal was debated in a brainstorming session.

Reasons given for the proposed change took into account feedback from past conference attendees, financial reality resulting in the need to prioritise and the one-year policy cycle not allowing adequate time for implementation. In particular, it was noted that substantial resources (staff and financial) were put towards organising a two-day resident event attended by only 2% of UNA's membership.

All these reasons are valid and the statistics correct. A longer policy cycle will give more time for implementation and impact assessment. UNA Sweden has found moving to a two-year cycle of policy-making successful. UNA-UK has a track-record of organising high profile and well-attended public events. The new format will be undertaken as an "experiment" in 2010, thereby leaving scope for revisions.

Book Review

Roger Hallam notes the limits of protection in Michael Newman's latest book **Humanitarian Intervention**.



The United Nations attempts to persuade sovereign states to collaborate in the interests of their peoples. Throughout the Cold War the principle of sovereign inviolability

underpinned the system. But what about situations where a state fails to protect its population? Must outsiders look on helplessly while famine and violence destroy peoples and communities?

Newman charts the development of international thinking on these issues in ways which will stimulate and challenge current debates within the UN – and indeed within UNA. What were the lessons of Rwanda, Kosovo and Timor? Has there been a fundamental change in sentiment towards intervention in crises? What are the implications of the "responsibility to protect" which the UN Security Council adopted in 2006?

Newman's own view is that intervention should be driven by enlightened humanitarianism. It should recognise that fundamental human security is endangered not only by overt violence and conflict, but also by policies and practices which undermine the capacity of peoples to

Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that despite only accounting for a small percentage of total membership, those attending Annual Conference are representing the voices and interests of their respective Branches, Regions and affiliated groups. Like the London and Southeast Region, these representatives consult their members and work very hard in the lead up to Annual Conference to help frame UNA national policies.

It should also be noted that the Conference agenda this year included 2 workshops, 3 film showings, a gala dinner and a brain-storming session, few of which could be accommodated by the new proposals.

Comments from the brainstorming session are being incorporated in a revised proposal. The UNA Board will soon call an Extraordinary General Meeting to change the format of Annual Conference formally.

Have Your Say

Do you have a view about these proposals? How does one assess the success of this experimental format? If you have any views, contact your Branch - or come along to the Region's AGM on 14 November and make your voice heard!! ■

thrive. Among these might be the effect of biofuels and agricultural dumping on food markets, the imposition of economic policies inappropriate to local realities and of course climate change which the North has largely inflicted on the South. Humanitarianism should not merely relieve immediate suffering, but should open its eyes to the causes of that suffering, both those originating locally in the society in question and those arising from structures of economic and political power in the wider world. Military intervention – which tends to emphasise only the local factors – should be an option to be exercised extremely sparingly.

Today, Newman thinks, the risk is that the responsibility to protect is being interpreted narrowly to focus on physical security. The challenge is to develop a wider notion of humanitarianism which offers protection from poverty, degradation and disease. ■

About the Author: Michael Newman is Jean Monnet Professor of European Studies and Professor of Politics at the University of North London. His previous books include Harold Laski: A Political Biography, John Strachy, and Democracy, Sovereignty, and the European Union. (Humanitarian Intervention, pp 246, Hurst 2009 ISBN: 9781850659747)



Message from the Chairman



2009 has been a busy but rewarding year for the Region.

Highlight for me was the successful Climate Change conference in April, when the Region played host to leading experts, NGOs and members of the public to exchange ideas on climate change strategies.

All eyes are now on the flurry of negotiations by world leaders in the lead up to Copenhagen in December.

Branches in the Region have been active. In their different ways, they all play an important role in keeping the UN and UNA in the public eye.

Westminster UNA, operating near the corridors of power, hosted the successful Cenotaph event to mark the International Day of UN Peacekeepers and is and is soon to launch the We The Peoples Film Festival.

Other branches organised a wide range of events. Putney & Roehampton UNA looked to the stars in their public meeting on UN International Year of Astronomy. Blackheath & Greenwich UNA have taken on refugee issues. Twickenham & Richmond UNA had Lord Patten of Barnes at their AGM talking about *Global Problems and Global Governance*. Enfield & The Barnets UNA looked at Future Shock & Disintegrating World Order in one of many meetings. Wealdon UNA continues its focus on education and hosted a MUNGA for 120 sixth formers. One could go on...

On a lighter side, the Region's Summer Council was held at St James Park this year on 4 July. Those who came included members and non-members and all enjoyed a gloriously summer afternoon. Westminster UNA's Summer Social was held on 8 August at the 2nd Thai Festival at Greenwich Park. The beautiful sunny day was perfect for a reunion. H.E. Mr Kittti Wasinondh, the Thai Ambassador to the UK who opened the festival, was

greeted by members of UNA Westminster committee.

Behind the scenes, the wheels of London region machine tick on. Accounts are prepared and brought up to date, letters and newsletters prepared and sent out, meetings organised and prepared for, minutes written, website updated...Branches have asked for help and advice on a wide range of issues, from sourcing speakers for events to organising Flag Day collections. Gone are the good old days when we had Bruce Robertson as our Regional Development Officer. We no longer have the luxury of having a paid member of staff to help with such matters.

For this reason, I am asking members seriously to consider taking a more active role in running the affairs of the Region by standing for the Executive Committee. The Committee meet 4 times a year. Time commitment is not arduous as we all work together as a team.

By the way, this is the last year, according to the rules, your chair can offer himself for re-election. It is not too early for members to consider whom they would like to take over in October 2010, or indeed, October this year!

Nominate branch members (and indeed yourself!) for the 2010 Executive Committee. Need blood and new ideas are needed by any organisation if it is to keep up to speed! Nomination forms are enclosed with this Newsletter. ■



UNA members at the Westminster Branch Summer Social. Enjoying a sunny day and Thai festivities at Greenwich Park on 8 August.



London and Southeast Region Annual General Meeting

14 November 2009

1.30 pm

Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road
London N7 6PA

The draft Agenda is enclosed with this newsletter.

Planning to attend? RSVP by phone or email to Wendy Higgs (Hon Sec)
e: wendy-higgs@hotmail.co.uk | M: 07751 297291 | T: 020 8318 1050

Space is limited. First come first served.