



## UNA LASER Newsletter, October 2020



### From our Chair, Trisha Rogers

I expect many of you, like me, have enjoyed following the (mostly virtual) UN General Assembly online, including Prime Minister Boris Johnson's (videoed) [speech](#). It was good to see the Prime Minister's high level of support for WHO, with increased funding to COVAX.

It was encouraging, too, to see his acknowledgement of the importance of international cooperation. He looked forward to the celebration in London in early 2021 of the founding of "this great United Nations". This will be marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first meeting of the UN General Assembly (in London in early January 1946). We look forward to welcoming the UN Secretary General here for this celebration on 10<sup>th</sup> January. Westminster Central Hall is booked, but most of the event will probably be virtual. Put it into your diaries!

The UN Charter actually came into effect on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1945, with the ratification of this founding document by the majority of its signatories. 24<sup>th</sup> October is therefore 'UN Day'. I hope you will join our [UN75 Festival](#) celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> UN Day. We are grateful to the Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation for their financial support for this event.

### [WhatNext4UN.org](#)

Influenced by the insecurity engendered by the Covid pandemic, and working with Peace Child and UNA-UK, we decided to focus on *What Next for the UN? Building a More Secure World* Festival. Each evening (19:00-21:00 BST) from 18<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> October, we shall run an online workshop focusing on a different aspect of security: Health Security, Food Security, Environmental Security, Economic Security, Peace and Security, Digital Security. Themes of human rights, diversity and education will weave through all the workshops. Each workshop will: illustrate why the issue is important; identify some key challenges; discuss them with experts and the participants; and come up with Actions (for individuals, communities, nations and the international community/UN).

On Saturday 24<sup>th</sup>, from 14:30 BST, we will have a conference in which people from each workshop will report and respond to online Q & A. These reports will be interleaved with videos and lead up to the launch of the Action Plan. Recorded speeches from world leaders will lead to the presentation of the Sir Brian Urquhart Award for Distinguished Service to the UN. There will then be a panel considering the future of the UN. The Festival will finish with a concert which - through drama, music, videos and an intergenerational dialogue - will celebrate the UN Past Present and Future.

Please [join us!](#) Please, too, help us publicise the events as widely as possible (including around the world). If you use social media, please visit us at:

- <https://www.instagram.com/WhatNext4UN/>

- <https://twitter.com/WhatNext4UN>

- <https://www.facebook.com/whatnext4un/>

Follow, like, comment, share: this is a joint enterprise!

### **Next Newsletter and AGM**

As you know our (virtual) AGM will be on 28<sup>th</sup> November. We shall therefore send the next Newsletter out early in November. Let [me](#) know if you have items for the agenda or would like to join our committee. Please send any items for that Newsletter to [Jane Beeley](#) by 6<sup>th</sup> November. Many thanks to Jane and to Sarah Webster, for their work editing and sending out this Newsletter.

### **News from branches and special groups**

#### **Blackheath and Greenwich UNA**

The Annual General Meeting of the branch is on Wednesday 21st October. at 7.30 via Zoom. An invitation to attend the meeting will be sent out on the day to all members and supporters. If anyone has not been receiving emails from the branch, and would like to attend, please send me a message, and I can ensure you are added to the list.

You can contact the chair Neville Grant on 0208 858 8489

or email [neville.grant@gmail.com](mailto:neville.grant@gmail.com)

#### **AGENDA**

- 1 Reports of past activities
- 2 Election of officers
- 3 Plans and priorities for the future

Please note: there are currently vacancies on the committee and some of the present committee will not be standing for office again, so please consider volunteering your name- or someone else's willing to stand!

#### **UNA Canterbury Branch**

Our 5th September meeting was again a zoom-based experience. We were very pleased to have our own Professor Richard Norman, Pam Brivio of Kent CND & Deal UNA, together with Marilyn Sansom & Geoff Meaden from Campaign Against the Arms Trade as speakers together with some of their contacts at the meeting. We explored current Nuclear

Arms issues and their related treaties: the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which still needs 6 more states to sign before being fully ratified. Due to the technical absence of a RUSI video, we briefly explored NATO's policy position of deterrence in the face of increasing Russian arms. The concept of deterrence as a defence was critically examined by Dr Norman and, in conjunction with our local activists, we explored how and what "we local people" might do to work for a safer world.

Due to the absence of our Annual UN Peace service at Canterbury Cathedral this year, we showed the video, of our October 2019 service\*, on Sunday 27th September. This proved a valuable review of our Climate Emergency based Peace Service and was well received by the 15 participants. These included the Hon Adolf Mwesige, Ugandan minister of Defence in Kampala, Geoffrey Harris, previously of the EU together with members from Deal and Tunbridge Wells UN Associations.

Following the video we briefly discussed the need for effective change towards a more green approach during the recovery from the covid19 pandemic and the value of partnership working locally, regionally and internationally. This formed a prelude to our initial virtual meeting with members of the Entebbe Municipality on the 7<sup>th</sup> October. We also look forward to the City Council raising the UN Flag for the first time on UN Day, the 24<sup>th</sup> October, at three sites across Canterbury District.

We will hold a virtual Annual General Meeting on the 5th December and include a speaker on the Crime of Genocide. We are also exploring with the Cathedral staff whether they might hold a Cathedral Service in January 2021 to coincide with the final days of the UN 75th Anniversary.

Michael Vince Secretary UNA Canterbury Branch, Mob. 07511583446

\* the service video is still available at: <https://vimeo.com/373748740>

### **Deal UNA**

On the evening of 28 June, Deal UNA hosted a well-attended virtual meeting with Johnny Rebours of Safe Passage entitled "and will they find safety".

Johnny outlined the work of Safe Passage, reuniting unaccompanied child refugees with family here in the UK. Thousands of unaccompanied child refugees arrive in Europe in search of safety and find themselves stuck in squalid camps, or sleeping rough on city streets, unaware of their legal right to travel safely through Europe.

Disturbing examples were given as to how children became separated from their families, death of parents during the journey, becoming separated on the journey etc. Safe Passage work in France and Greece, and to date they have helped over 1,800 child refugees to be reunited with family in the UK by providing legal support, supporting the children, political advocacy, grassroots campaigning and supporting children post arrival.

He went on to explain the threats to their work as a result of changes to government legislation. The current Brexit agreement will mean an end to refugee family reunions as we know them. This is not what the Prime Minister promised vulnerable refugees when he

removed protections for them from the EU Bill in January. A cross party group of MPs put forward Amendment NC29 to the Immigration Bill, in order to continue existing arrangements for refugee family reunion between the UK and the EU. Those present at the meeting were urged to contact their MPs to support this amendment. But unfortunately, the vote was lost in the House of Commons, and although the matter is now in the House of Lords, the outcome is not yet known.

The meeting was followed by a very informative question and answer session. There is no doubt that this organisation carries out vital work in helping child migrants.

Deal UNA had previously held two successful films showings; one about what had happened when the Calais “jungles” were dismantled (which featured the work of Safe Passage) and the other on the anniversary of the Kinder transportation.

Pam Brivio

Deal UNA

### **Tunbridge Wells & Wealden UNA**

We invite you to join us at the following event:

#### **CLIMATE CRISIS AND THE UN AT 75: Shaping our Future Together**

**Tuesday 10th November, 7pm to 9pm**

This **Zoom** event will consider the global and local impact of climate change, the use of plastics and food security, with reference to United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Some practical, local initiatives will be highlighted.

**Climate and the Oceanographic Impact of Plastics:** Our keynote speaker GONZALO ALVAREZ, Marine Biologist and Oceanographer, is Chair of UNA Climate & Oceans. He will focus on the carbon footprint of plastics globally and their impact on marine biodiversity.

**Plastic Free Tunbridge Wells:** LIZ ORR, Community Leader for Plastic Free Tunbridge Wells (Surfers Against Sewage), will demonstrate ways to reduce our local use of plastics.

**Global Food Security:** ALAN BULLION, who writes for an international agricultural journal, will give a global perspective, highlighting waste and inequalities and ways to achieve sustainability.

**Food Security:** HARRY FREDERICK will explain his sustainable beef and lamb farming in Penshurst.

**Climate Justice:** MARIEKE DE JONGE, Local Coordinator for Tunbridge Wells Friends of the Earth and a graduate in Environmental Studies, will focus on Climate Justice.

**Young Voices:** Some local school students will share their concerns about the Climate Crisis.

There will be brief opportunities for questions.

Please register for this free event on EVENTBRITE [Climate Crisis and the UN at 75](#)  
Jane Beeley Chair, UNA, Tunbridge Wells & Wealden ([Jane\\_Beeley@outlook.com](mailto:Jane_Beeley@outlook.com))



## Communiqué

The United Nations Association Climate and Oceans announces its first Honorary President, new Committee, new Website and Chairman



Dear UNA friends,

It is with great joy that I announce, on behalf of the United Nations Association Climate and Oceans, our first Honorary President, new Executive Committee, new Website and Chairman.

UNA Climate and Oceans is honoured that **Sir Richard Jolly KCMG** has accepted our invitation and is now our **Honorary President**. As Chairman, I am extremely honoured to be receiving Sir Richard's advice and guidance for the path ahead. He doesn't need much introduction as he is such a well-known former UN Official and Academic, so we are only including his shorter Biography to this *Communique*, but please check the link to our website where we have published his Full Biography.



Sir Richard Jolly, KCMG  
Honorary President  
UNA Climate and Oceans

Sir **Richard Jolly** KCMG is Honorary Professor and Research Associate of the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, where he was Director in the 1970s. Richard Jolly served from 1982-95 in UNICEF as Deputy Executive Director for programmes and then until 2000 as Principal Coordinator of the Human Development Report.

After leaving the UN he worked on a multi-volume history of the UN's economic and social contributions, the summary volume being *UN Ideas That Changed the World*. In 2014, he published *UNICEF: Global Governance that Works*. He was knighted by the Queen in 2001 for services to international development. [Full Biography](#)

I therefore invite you all to visit our fantastic new Website, where you will have the details regarding **our wonderful new Executive Committee**, our Mission Statement, interesting Articles, and much more! Here it is: [www.una-climateandoceans.org](http://www.una-climateandoceans.org)

Please also visit the page dedicated to our new **Youth Ambassador, Nina Monju (UNA Sweden)**, as she will start publishing her own articles there. [UNA Climate and Oceans](#)

Our **Notice Board** on the Home Page also has exciting links to news and developments. And our **Photo Gallery** reflects well how alive and active our UNA Group has been!

You will also find on our Website that we now have our **UNA Editor, Climate, Oceans and the Commonwealth**, so please find out who this extraordinary Academic is! [UNA Climate and Oceans](#)

As we prepare for 2021 to be the year when the **UN launches the Decade of Ocean Science (2021 - 2030)** and the **UK will host UN COP26** we firmly believe that we are now very well positioned to drive an amazing movement of Young people, Environmentalists, Conservationists, Climate Change activists, Policy makers and Academics, as our Network keeps growing week by week. But we are aware of the challenges too in 2021, with the COVID-19 pandemic still causing human loss, uncertainty in the World Economy, the

Climate crisis getting worse, Biodiversity extinction continues, Multilateralism threatened, Geopolitical realignment, and the risk of the New Start Treaty not being renewed. There is no doubt that next year will indeed be a challenging year.

I wish you all the very best in all you do to make this world a more sustainable, inclusive, peaceful and a more secure one.

best regards, Gonzalo

**Gonzalo J. Alvarez, DTh, BSc, BA Hons**  
**Chairman, UNA Climate and Oceans**



This is a repeat of an announcement in the September Newsletter:

Members of **UNA LASER** and **WILPF** have formed a working group looking at the impact of the merger of Dfid with the FCO and also the huge cuts to aid announced just before parliamentary recess this summer.

We have had two meetings, the first in early August and the second last month, with the aim to lobby parliament on the aid cuts and lack of transparency in decision making. We are currently identifying sympathetic MPs. If you wish to help please contact [catherinepluygers@hotmail.com](mailto:catherinepluygers@hotmail.com).

#### **STOP PRESS:**

**Emergency Fund for Refugees suffering from the impact of Covid 19, administered by United Nations Association Trust**

Here are some examples of the kind of projects that would merit grant support. These are not exclusive:

- Helping provide food, clothing, shelter and access to basic services for refugees
- Providing access to services, housing, translation, legal help, education to refugees
- We are particularly keen to support unaccompanied minors and children. This could include help with legal fees

Please note:

No individual applications will be accepted.

Grants are available from £200 to £800. Please consult with us first if you wish to apply for a larger grant than £800.

We particularly but not exclusively wish to support existing United Nations Association groups who are already working in this area, or who wish to extend their work with their local communities in order to help promote the values of the UN.

Please contact Catherine Pluygers, Chair UNA Trust. [catherinepluygers@hotmail.com](mailto:catherinepluygers@hotmail.com)

### **A personal reaction to the UN APPG hosted briefing (which took place on Friday 11th September) on the UK's objectives for the 75th UN General Assembly 2020**

The newly formed Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, patched together amid much controversy, is keen to demonstrate that it is determined to play a leading part on world affairs. At a meeting in the Commons, chaired by UNA's former chairman Lord Hannay, the Minister of State at FCDO Lord Ahmad, told MPs that we will play an active role in this year's UN General Assembly, albeit that it will be only a "virtual Assembly".

Britain's role in combatting the COVID 19 pandemic has been to pledge £774 million towards international efforts to help poor countries. In addition, the Government has matched the £10 million given by the public in response to an appeal by the Disasters Emergency Committee. This will mainly be used in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, the Congo and Syria.

The Government is particularly anxious to play a leading role in UN affairs as two UN events will take place in Britain next year. In January it is hoped the Secretary General Antonio Guterres will come to London to take part in events to mark the first meetings of the General Assembly and Security Council 75 years ago. The other opportunity for Britain to show its commitment to international cooperation will come at the end of the year when the Climate Conference COP 26 will be held in Glasgow.

However, the Minister was not so sure of his ground when questioned about the Government's bill to flout international law with regard to the European Union Divorce Treaty, should no new trade deal be concluded. His bland non-committal answer brought only misgivings to anybody concerned to uphold international law, one of the corner stones of cooperation between states and of the United Nations itself.

Keith Hindell



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