



London and South-East Region

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 24th November 2018 at Resource for London, 356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA

Apologies

Genia Browning, Jane Grant, Peter Greaves, Roger Hallam, Patricia Rogers, Susan Tirbutt

1. Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 25th November 2017

These were approved unanimously.

2. Chair's report

Catherine Pluygers said:

I continue to be very pleased with the efforts of all our branches and the breadth of what they do. All have worked very hard and some have produced (alongside flagship branches such as UNA Westminster) outstanding results. From the point of view of LASER committee I would say our work this year has been dogged (and necessary) rather than outwardly spectacular.

An important aspect of our work this year is that on resolutions. We will be working again today (for the second year running) on improving (updating) old resolutions and bringing in new ones that have arisen - as they should - organically if you like from public meetings and the work of the branches. I cannot stress enough how important these are or could be if used properly. They are a statement of what we as an organisation believe in and strive for, and are a tool for all branches to use. Some are complex but it is not necessary to take each and every aspect. Branches may find it helpful to choose any part they wish to lobby on.

As a development of this work on policy/resolutions your committee has been in meetings with head office UNA-UK to ensure that we are all pulling in the same direction. And a visible result of this work was the enormous contribution made by LASER members and committee to the UNA-UK conference held earlier on this year. We should all be very pleased about this. I am also very pleased to say that the Laser Trust, primarily existing to support branch projects, has helped UNA-UK fund the print version of their magazine. We believe this publication is very important.

Today I am pleased to announce the launch of our new LASER website. Lucette will lead a session on this.

I am also satisfied that e-laser, initially an experiment seems to have managed to keep going and is reaching people in an efficient way. Thank you to Lucette Stevens for her very hard work and all of you please keep the information coming in.

We have had to review plans to use people from outside UNA to do projects for us. Frankly our first trials had disappointing results. So we have gone back to the drawing board and now feel ready to resume this activity, which was designed to help broaden the scope and impact of LASER.

Our Spring Council held on Saturday March 10th at the Resource Centre was on the subject of 'The UN's Women, Peace and Security Agenda'. This involved not only a speaker event presented by our president Dr Christine Chinkin, Director of the Centre for Women, Peace and Security LSE, but also workshops on this

enormous subject. The event was well-attended by UNA members and diaspora representatives of WILPF. We are very grateful to Dr Chinkin for her help and input into this event.

Our Summer Council was hosted by UNA Canterbury. Sir Richard Jolly spoke on the subject of 'Human Security and the Responsibility to Protect' and Dr Carl Wright UNA-UK spoke on the subject of SDG's. The event was preceded by workshops on this subject which helped people prepare for the afternoon's work. Many thanks to Canterbury UNA for their hospitality, and for do ably organising an excellent meeting. Thanks too to Canterbury UNA for organising another Peace Service in Canterbury Cathedral, which was attended by some members of London's branches too.

- Other important branch events during the year are too numerous to mention. They included:
 - Among other events, Westminster UNA had again organized a film festival which had taken place in November in several locations.
 - The UN Day of Peace-keepers Conference at RUSI, and the cenotaph ceremony honoring those who has died in the cause of peace, also initiated by Westminster UNA
 - On 29th Sept. 2018 Gonzalo Alvarez and Bexhill and Hastings UNA had organized a highly successful one-day conference on the sea, focusing on pollution, and other threats to the oceans, attended by over 180 delegates from eighteen different organisations. A full report is on the L&SER website.
 - Eastbourne UNA had organised a highly successful conference on the environment among a succession of well-attended meetings, and produced an exemplary website documenting these, and a number of current issues..

Finally, Catherine thanked the L&SER Committee for their support during the year, and urged members to come forward if they wished to join the committee. We seek all skills but in particular seek somebody to function as our press officer to get our message out nationally.

3 The website and newsletter

- We were pleased to welcome Lucette Davies to give members an update. Lucette encouraged members to send in articles on important topics to the website; entries from past newsletters were already being uploaded onto the website., but the more content, the better. Submissions could include:
 - Events
 - Information about branches, and how to get involved.
 - Issues, plus comment. Lucette would like to have one feature article each month.
- Lucette also urged branches (and the region) to become more proactive on social media – Facebook, Twitter etc.

3. Treasurer's report

- Peter Webster presented the accounts
- Peter also discussed the position of the London UNA Trust, making it clear that it had funds to support projects in branches in keeping with the Trust's remit.

4. Resolutions

Peter Webster then presented drafts of resolutions that had been sent in to the committee's redrafting committee, which were then presented, one at a time, on screen, for members to comment on, refine, and approve. (See L&SER website)

- This exercise took about two hours, and all were amazed at the efficiency shown by Peter and his team, and by the good sense and disciplined way in which those in attendance co-operated in keeping proposed amendments trenchant and to the point. The resolutions were:
- 1 Atrocity prevention
- 2 Climate change
- 3 Human rights
- 4 Localising the UN Strategic Development Goals
- 5 Oceans
- 6 Protection of journalists
- 7 Strengthening UN Peacekeeping and peace-building missions
- 8 Yemen
- 9 The Asia Bibi case

- To these were added resolutions already considered at the Policy Forum in November 2nd. 2017 and presented at the Council meeting on Women Peace and Security in March 2018, some of which were updated at the 2018 AGM:
- 1 UN reform
- 2 UN SDGs
- 3 Nuclear Weapons
- 4 Sri Lanka
- 5 How did UNSG Dag Hammarskjöld Die?
- 6 The role of Women in the UN
- 7 Yemen and Saudi Arabia
- 8 North `Korea
- 9 Women, Peace and Security
- 10 Palestine 100 years after the Balfour Declaration

5. Elections

The following were elected or re-elected to the L&SER Committee

Catherine Pluygers (Chair) – Putney & Roehampton UNA/Westminster UNA
(after a special resolution permitting her to stand for one more year in office)

Neville Grant (Hon. Sec.) Blackheath & Greenwich UNA

Peter Webster (Treasurer) (Clapham & Streatham UNA)

Committee members:

Gonzalo Alvarez (Bexhill and Hastings UNA)
 Jane Beeley (Tunbridge Wells UNA)
 Roger Hallam (Enfield and the Barnets UNA)
 Wendy Higgs (Blackheath & Greenwich UNA),
 Keith Hindell (Westminster UNA)
 Kishan Manocha (Westminster UNA)
 Rodney Mantle (Twickenham & Richmond UNA)
 Patricia Rogers (Westminster UNA)
 Ron Storey (Putney UNA)
 Antony Vallion (Westminster UNA)
 David Wardrop (Westminster UNA),

6 Award

The Stephens Trophy for branch of the year was awarded to Bexhill & Hastings UNA for its outstanding conference on the sea and other initiatives.

7 *Following the formal AGM and a break for refreshments, the meeting proceeded to a talk by Dr Dan Plesch of SOAS on **Might is Right: The Threat to International Law.** Neville Grant in the chair.*

- In his talk Dr Plesch gave a brief survey of the role of international law in dealing with international issues, and pointed out the widespread lack of understanding of its importance. He pointed to a BBC programme – the Moral Maze – in which the four supposedly well-informed participants denigrated the work of the UN in helping to evolve an international rule-based system. As never before, there was a need for establishing international norms.
- These norms were being broken: Russia, China, the US and smaller countries (Pakistan, India, Phillipines, North Korea, Saudi Arabia ... the list goes on.) The basic reason for the UN was to avoid catastrophic conflict – the only hope we had; yet the nibbling away of norms made it more likely.
- Examples include: the collapse of arms control – Arms Trade Treaties very weak in application; the destabilizing of, and by, Iran; mno serious attempt to control nuclear weapons; Yemen only becoming an issue after Kashoggi
- He highlighted the importance of the UDHR. UDHR blatantly flouted in China, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Gulf DCR is a disaster.
- The failure to bring war criminals to book *cf* Nuremberg: the UN War Crimes Commission largely toothless. Today the ICC is slowly fragmenting, with no comprehensive system for gathering evidence or bringing culprits to trial.
- Certain countries – eg the US – were against the law being implemented against crimes against humanity because they might indict their own citizens
- Failure of UN to implement international law meant a diplomatic vacuum which states filled by beginning to act unilaterally, often acting more in their own interests rather than those of the international community
- The impasse could only be resolved if member states recognised the dangers, and renewed their commitment to international law under the auspices of the UN

11 **End of meeting**

The meeting closed at 4.45. In closing the meeting, the chair thanked Dr Plesch for his fascinating and scholarly presentation; and also all those who had attended the meeting, including our President, Professor Chinkin.

Catherine Pluygers

Chair

Neville Grant

Hon. Sec.