



UNA LASER Newsletter, November 2020

From our Chair, Trisha Rogers



It was lovely to see many of you in the audience of our recent UN75 Festival: *WHAT NEXT FOR THE UN? Building a more secure world*. The UN75 festival considered actions to create a more secure world in: health, food, environment, economics, peace and the digital space.

The 6 workshops developed actions that should be taken by individuals, communities, nations and the UN.

To see more about the festival please visit [its website](#). The Action Plan - *Actions for building a More Secure World* – is there and soon the website will give access to recordings of all the events, as well as blogs and discussion to help take things forward. I hope you will find these ideas for action useful in your local branches. Please [let me know](#) if you would like to help adapt some of the material from the festival for use by schools and by community groups. There is also news of the festival on [our laser website](#), which we are currently updating.

Our AGM will be on 28th November at 2pm by Zoom. At our AGM we elect 6 members of our Executive Committee, as well as our Executive Officers (Chair, Secretary and Treasurer). The Committee meets about every two months, normally in central London – currently by zoom. If you would like to stand to be an Executive Officer or to be a member of the Executive Committee, please send our Secretary, Neville Grant, by 14th November, your nomination, which can be by any two members of the retiring Executive Committee, a branch or any 6 members of UNA LASER. With your nomination, please send short biographical details (up to 150 words).

At the AGM, we shall be proposing the new constitution that you can see [here](#). The minutes of last year's AGM are [here](#). And [this](#) will take you to a copy of the previous constitution.

If you have any motions that you would like put to the AGM, please see the procedure in 6c of the draft new constitution below (the same in this respect as its predecessor) and send them to Neville by 14th November.

Please register for the AGM on [this link](#) by midnight on 26th November. We shall email out the papers for the AGM on 27th November.

UNA Croydon and Sutton

After many years of excellent service - particularly in organising their annual schools' debating competition - the Officers of Croydon and Sutton branch are retiring. If you are interested in helping to run this branch, please contact [me](#) and I should be delighted to help you in this important endeavour.

Many thanks to Jane Beeley for editing this newsletter and to Peter and Sarah Webster for sending it out. Material for the next newsletter should [reach Jane](#) by 6th January 2021.

Branch events to mark UN75

UNA Canterbury

I am delighted to report that the Lord Mayor and Town Sergeant formed the civic group to attend the short ceremony to raise the United Nations flag in Dane John Gardens at 11.00 am on UN Day, 24th October 2020.

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 J Vince, Branch Secretary
Mob. 07511583446

Greenwich celebrates UN 75



UN Day is celebrated annually to commemorate the day that the United Nations officially came into existence and countries around the world came together to sign the UN Charter.

On Saturday 24th October, Cllr Denise Scott-McDonald, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cllr Linda Bird, the Mayor of Royal Greenwich raised the United Nations (UN) Flag above Woolwich Town Hall to support the 75th anniversary of UN Day. The flag flew above Woolwich Town Hall for one day and was lit up in blue lights that night. Cllr Linda Bird read the opening words of the UN Charter 'We the peoples' to reaffirm our promise of an equal and safe home for people of all ages to live, work and play. Our two councillors were joined by a few representatives from the local branch of the United Nations Association.

Neville Grant, the Chairman of Blackheath and Greenwich branch of the United Nations Association (UK), said: "We are so pleased that the Royal Borough is celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, which continues its vital role in bringing nations together to deal with international issues that no one state can hope to solve on its own."

The Royal Borough of Greenwich stands in solidarity with those who are facing social, physical, economic and environmental threats all over the globe.

Cllr Linda Bird, The Mayor of Royal Greenwich has said: "Today, the whole world is facing a threat of something that we could have never predicted. UN Day comes as a reminder that Royal Greenwich is not alone, and that positive change can happen despite a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen strangers turn into friends with the help of the community hub, our environment champions keeping the streets clean and heartwarming messages on our Residents' Rainbow trees."

To find out more about United Nations Day and why it is so important in times like today to support each other head to: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/un-day>

Deal UNA



To mark United Nations Day and the 75th Anniversary of the organisation, Deal UNA recently met at the Peace Tree in St George 's Churchyard, High Street, Deal.

The original Peace Tree was planted in the 80's by the then Deal UNA group. On Saturday we were pleased to be joined by Stephanie Hayman whose mother, June Garside, was a member of the group. Ms Hayman laid flowers and read the Preamble of the United Nations Charter which was a very moving occasion.

A brief resume of the achievements of the UN was read out and tribute paid not only to the peacekeeping activities for which the UN are known, but to their work via groups such as UNICEF, World Health Organisations which make the world a better place.

The organisation works on a broad range of fundamental issues, from sustainable development, peace and security, food poverty, human rights, disaster relief, etc. An example of the work of the UN is the announcement that the 50th country has just ratified the UN's nuclear weapons ban, meaning that the 90-day countdown has started until the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons enters into force. We were pleased to be joined by the Mayor of Deal, Eileen Rowbotham, who rededicated the peace tree and said:

" I first joined the local United Nations Association in 1980, meeting dedicated people, most of them ex servicemen, who had fought and seen the devastation and horror of war. As WW2 veterans they worked and campaigned to promote peace through the United Nations Organisation. On the anniversary of VE Day in 1995, I was the Mayor of Deal and the local UNA Group helped plan the service. To have a relative of one of those members with us to read the preamble twenty five years later was very moving."

For further information about Deal UNA please contact 07772471905.

Tunbridge Wells & Wealden UNA

The UN flag was flown above Tunbridge Wells Town Hall each day during the week leading up to Saturday 24th October, UN Day, and continued to be flown over that weekend.

Jane Beeley, Chair UNA, Tunbridge Wells & Wealden

Twickenham & Richmond UNA Marking UN75 in Richmond Borough

What a joy it was to be able to mark the UN's 75th anniversary **in person** at our annual UN Day Civic Service, held this year at Teddington Methodist Church. Zoom and similar online platforms have provided a wonderful way of keeping in touch with important issues and with each other during the last few months but they can only ever be a second-best to the real thing!

We received a very warm welcome from the minister, the Rev David Innes, who had expressed regret in advance that the length of the service, the number of visitors who could be accommodated and socialisation afterwards would all have to be limited to comply with Covid-19 restrictions. In the event, 15 members of TRUNA joined the usual congregation, together with Twickenham MP Munira Wilson and Borough Councillor Ben Khosa and his wife. Also present was Derek Smith, whose contribution to UNA has been immense during his 67 years of membership, first within the Wandsworth branch and, since 1960, in what is now Twickenham & Richmond branch.

The service began with the ceremonious presentation of the UN flag, and this was followed by a celebration of the UN ideals of peace and justice, with thoughtfully chosen hymns (sung only by a small choir) and readings. Munira Wilson MP movingly read the inspirational Preamble to the UN Charter. TRUNA member Dr Martin Barber, formerly a very senior UN official with extensive experience in humanitarian affairs and peace operations, spoke briefly and eloquently about the great value and achievements of the UN, correcting misleading impressions about its effectiveness. It is true that the Security Council is failing in its remit. However as an international forum much has been accomplished in the last 75 years. A key point was that the UN followed the lead of the League of Nations 100 years ago in declaring itself to be an independent forum beholden to no national governments.

The Minister fleshed out the message with numerous examples of UN humanitarian and other works, suitably illustrated on the two large screens, and quoted Dag Hammarskjöld's famous words that the UN, 'was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell'. A retiring collection was taken for UNICEF.

TRUNA is grateful to David Innes and his congregation for creating an occasion of inspiration and hope, and to TRUNA's Brian King for all his work in organising the event.

(Sadly, we weren't so successful with our plan to reinstate a former tradition of having the UN flag hoisted on the civic flagpole for UN Day. The Council readily agreed but on the morning of hoisting discovered that their flag was missing from the store!)

Brian King and Hilary Evans
31 October 2020

Westminster UNA

In marking UN75 on Saturday 24th October, this table shows which European countries appeared to encourage support from civic authorities and which appeared not to.

"Europe turns blue for UN75"

Of the UK's 29* 'iconic buildings' which turned blue on UN Day, 23 were in Northern Ireland. The line of communication between the FCDO and the Local Government Associations might need addressing. For instance, as we approach the original start date for COP26, the cities below might well have been agreeable:

Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy

London	Greater Manchester	Birmingham	Leeds
Glasgow	Cornwall Council	Durham	Edinburgh
Liverpool	Bristol	Cardiff	Leicester
Northumberland	Newcastle Upon Tyne		Nottingham
Sefton Council	Milton Keynes	Southampton	Sunderland
Aberdeen	North Tyneside	Gateshead	<u>Stockton-On-Tees</u>
Bath & North East Somerset	Hartlepool	Oxford	South Tyneside
Knowsley Council	Dumfries And Galloway Council		Poole
Middlesbrough	Redcar And Cleveland	North Ayrshire	Darlington
Stirling	Aberdeenshire	Peterborough	<u>Mold</u>
York	Kirklees	West Lothian Council	Llandoverly
Fife	Brighton & Hove	Dundee	

Or these?

UNESCO Creative Cities

Bradford	Bristol	Dundee	Norwich
Nottingham	Edinburgh	Liverpool	Glasgow
Manchester	York		

UNESCO Learning Cities

Belfast	Bristol	Swansea	Wolverhampton
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All this concentrates the mind on how we mark the Secretary General's visit to the UK in January OUTSIDE the Westminster bubble. In marking VE Day, the UK and European governments showed excellently and elegantly what CAN be done within COVID constrictions. With about two months to go, Saturday's 'dress rehearsal' suggests we have some way to go.

David Wardrop, Chair
Westminster UNA

(These also turned blue: FCDO; Canadian Embassy; Manchester Central Complex; SSE Hydro (Glasgow); Wales Millennium Centre; and Hadrian's Wall at Brampton).

Other News from Branches & Special Groups

Breakthrough for nuclear ban treaty

There was jubilation amongst ICAN UK Partners on UN Day this year when the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), supported by two-thirds of the UN's membership when it was adopted in 2017, received its 50th ratification. It will now enter into international legal force on 22 January 2021.

This ground-breaking Treaty bans the production, testing, possession and use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and prohibits those nations which have signed up to it from allowing nuclear weapons to be based on their territory or from assisting or encouraging others to acquire such weapons. It will sit alongside the other major global treaty on nuclear weapons, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Together they will drive forward the international community's shared vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, sending a clear message to nuclear-armed nations that inaction is no longer acceptable; real progress towards disarmament must be taken now.

The UK refused to participate in the negotiation of the Treaty and does not intend to join, so will therefore not be bound by the Treaty's obligations. However, its entry into force will mark the beginning of the end of the military hegemony of the nuclear armed powers, as nation after nation asserts its right to live in a world free of the threat of nuclear annihilation. Our government must be persuaded to reconsider its outdated position or risk increasing international isolation and stigmatisation as a nuclear pariah. It is likely to find, too, that the financing of these now 'controversial' weapons becomes increasingly difficult as global financial institutions refuse to invest in them.

ICAN UK Partners is a network of around 18 organisations which have come together to support and promote, in this country, the work of Nobel Peace Laureate 2017, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). UNA-UK is a leading partner and one of three co-recipients of a recent Rowntree grant awarded to drive forward this work.

It is very fitting that, as part of the UN75 celebrations, the UN Secretary General will on 10 January 2021 visit Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, venue for the first meeting of the UN General Assembly. And the first resolution passed in January 1946? To ensure '*the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction*'!

Hilary Evans, Twickenham & Richmond UNA

UNA Wandsworth and UNA Twickenham & Richmond joined with UNA Climate and Oceans and UNA Harrogate

in organising a most topical, informative and interesting Zoom meeting on:

Climate Crisis: Can the Blue Planet Survive?

On 3rd November 2020 from 7.00 pm.

Speakers were Dr Gonzalo Alvarez, who spoke on 'Climate Crisis: Can the Blue Planet Survive?' and Dr Alan Bullion, who spoke on 'Climate Crisis: Global Food Security'

Give a UN Peacekeeper Bear for Christmas



Peacekeeper teddy bears first appeared on the steps of 10 Downing Street in 1993 along with then Prime Minister John Major. The very first Peacekeeper bear was presented to Kofi Annan, then in charge of UN peacekeeping, and tens of thousands have been bought by UN peacekeepers' families in the UK and also by those serving with contingents from the many countries serving at the time in Bosnia. Our bears are now worldwide and even 'invaded' Russia as the entire Band of the Russian Black Sea fleet bartered vodka and items of their uniforms when they visited London. And, yes, they are women peacekeeper bears too!!

For your bear,

Either Send cheque for £14 payable to

UNA Westminster to UNA, 61 Sedlescombe Road, London SW6 1RE

Or online transfer to

Bank HSBC

Clearing Code 40-02-06

Account No 61181602

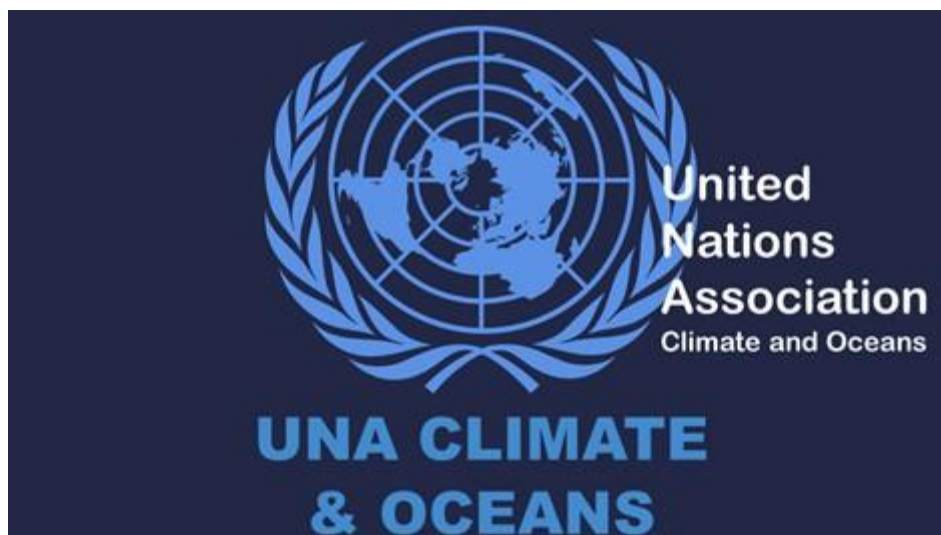
Account Name UNA Westminster

Reference Your full name

AND send confirmation of your payment and mailing address to

UNA Westminster to UNA, 61 Sedlescombe Road, London SW6 1RE

UNA Climate and Oceans



On Thursday the 8th of October 2020, Gonzalo Alvarez - Chairman of UNA Climate and Oceans - gave a Zoom presentation to the members of the Sussex Marine and Coastal Forum regarding the aims and the implementation of the **UN Decade of Ocean Science (2021 - 2030)**. The Forum was attended by Officers of UK Government Agencies, such as the Environment Agency, Marine Management Agency, Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, Natural England, The Crown Estate, East Sussex County Council, South Downs National Park, and Chichester Harbour. Also present were Academics from the University of Brighton, Staff from NGOs such as the Sussex Wildlife Trust, the Marine Conservation Society, the World Cetacean Alliance. The private sector was represented by Rampion Energy. The powerpoint presentation was well received by the members of the Forum and generated lots of interest. The presentation also mentioned **UN COP 26 in Glasgow 2021**.

For more information about UNA Climate and Oceans, please visit [our website](#)

News from London UNA Trust

Emergency Fund for Refugees suffering from the impact of Covid 19, administered by the London UNA 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 email [Catherine Pluygers](#), Chair London UNA Trust.

If you would like to contribute a donation to help the London UNA Trust make these and other grants, then please email [Catherine Pluygers](#) for details of the Trust's bank account. Thank You.