



UNA LASER Newsletter, July 2020



From our Chair, Trisha Rogers

Welcome to this LASER Newsletter, focusing mainly on plans to mark UN75 (but including some other urgent announcements).

We are delighted that the UNA-UK Executive Director, Natalie Samarasinghe, who has been on sabbatical working with the UN75 team in New York and is returning to UNA-UK later this month, would like to have a Zoom conversation with us about UN75 plans and how we can all be involved.

This Zoom event will be on **28th July at 7:30pm**. Natalie will give us an: "Update on the 75th anniversary in the current context and also provide a flavour of the mood in NY and what we can expect in September."

Please register [here](#) for this Zoom. After registration you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

News from branches

Congratulations to UNA Westminster, led by their Chair, David Wardrop, for their imaginative marking of the 75th anniversary of UN Charter Day on 26th September (see below). LASER was delighted to support this initiative.

There will be special events from New York on September 21st, when the UN Secretary-General will bring together the UN75 global conversations. This will be broadcast on the [UNA Bexhill and Hastings Youtube channel](#).

And on October 24th we are partnering with the International Maritime Organisation, UNA-UK and Peace Child International for *What Next for the UN? Building a More Secure World*. Each evening in the week leading up to this event, we will have 'breakout' Zooms on the 6 themes: Health and Security; Food Security; Environmental Security; Economic Security; Peace and Security; Digital Security. Let [me](#) know if you would like to be part of one of these planning groups. There will be more details on this event in our next LASER Newsletter, which is due out early in September. Please send Branch News and other items for this Newsletter to our editor, [Jane Beeley](#), by **28th August**.

P.S. Our Yemen specialist, [Paul Tippell](#), has asked us for urgent action on the current humanitarian disaster in Yemen. He has written a [short briefing](#) for our website. He has also asked us urgently (Parliament is very soon to go into recess) to write to the Foreign Secretary and our MPs. [My letter](#)

[to the Foreign Secretary](#) has the salient points, but it will carry more weight if you are able to put them into your own words.



Join us on 18 July, walking the Mandela Mile – and more!

UNA members are invited to 'walk the Mandela Mile', now annually marked on 18 July, Nelson Mandela's birthdate. The original march in 2018, marking its centenary, was in Johannesburg, and led by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

The 'Mandela Mile' was conceived in London to support that event, encouraging groups to walk from Mandela's statue in Parliament Square to his bust beside the Royal Festival Hall, close to a mile. In 2019, Mandela Miles were walked in 20 cities worldwide with a livestream video linking participants on four continents. Also, the 2019 event linked to the memory of Kofi Annan who died shortly after the original march in Johannesburg.

In 2020, events are being held between 8 April and 18 July (the birthdates of Kofi Annan and Nelson Mandela respectively), a designated time period for remembering and celebrating these two legendary world leaders, whilst challenging people from all walks of life to practice greater leadership in their own lives and communities. Year round, Mandela Mile is committed to nurturing a community of natural leaders worldwide, who are inspired, ready to step up, speak out and rebuild our world.

Learn more about the Mandela Mile [here](#). Register your own Mandela Mile [here](#). It's free!



26 June Westminster UNA plants 193 national flags into giant banner to mark UN75

To mark the 75th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter in San Francisco in 1945, Westminster UNA installed what it believes to be the world's largest banner with the UN symbol on Broad Sanctuary Green and then 'planted' it with the flags of all 193 UN Member States. Broad Sanctuary Green is located between the QE2 Centre, Westminster Abbey and Central Hall Westminster which hosted the inaugural meeting of the UN General Assembly. Over the weekend, visitors could look over the installation and learn about the UN's early years from information boards.

“With every other UN75 project worldwide online, we wanted to make a statement about those earliest days when, remarkably, even as V2 rockets were falling on UK soil, diplomats from fifty nations were gathering in San Francisco to discuss and agree the Charter of the new United Nations” said David Wardrop, Westminster UNA chair.

Also displayed was the iconic Preamble to the UN Charter. Visitors learned that, meeting in London before leaving for the San Francisco conference, the Commonwealth delegations backed an inspirational proposal from Jan Christiaan Smuts, South African Prime Minister. “The draft Charter, prepared at Dumbarton Oaks needs a Preamble”, he had said, as this would make its noble provisions more readily understandable and meaningful for the millions of ordinary people who had known ‘the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind’. As adopted, the Preamble, about 200 words long, is perhaps the greatest text in modern diplomacy. It has been the Pole Star of the United Nations and of international life ever since.



I would like briefly to report that the presentation I gave for UNA Sweden (Malmo) went according to plan on Tuesday 16th June. In fact, it went much better than we originally thought as it was attended by a select group of people from UNA Sweden, London, Brighton, Eastbourne, Tunbridge Wells, Hastings and even one person joined us from the South Pacific! We had an International Zoom meeting.

The illustrated scientific talk on *Climate Change: key interactions between Atmosphere and the Oceans* focused on giving a holistic approach to Earth's natural systems, the transfer of Energy (solar radiation, heat, and kinetic energy), the capturing of Carbon Dioxide by the global Ocean and other interactions between Atmosphere and Oceans, emphasising why and how these interactions are vital for the sustainability of our Planet. We also considered the human impact over these natural interactions, mentioning some aspects of the Science and models of Climate Change and how our Global Climate is being affected with its consequences for Earth's cryosphere and biosphere.

Jane and Brian Beeley (UNA Tunbridge Wells & Wealden) sent me their impressions: “Brian and I would like to thank you for an excellent UNA Climate & Oceans presentation. We are not scientists, but through your clear explanations and vivid diagrams you made a complex subject accessible to us. We now feel much better informed about the interactions between the Earth’s atmosphere and the Oceans. It is good to learn about this important topic affecting all our lives. We also enjoyed being part of an international Zoom group. Congratulations! LASER will be proud of you!”

We have plans to organise future joint online events between UNA Climate and Oceans and UNA Sweden (Malmo). I would like to thank UNA UK staff and UNA LASER for their support in helping us promote this online event and for their constant words of encouragement.

Gonzalo Alvarez, Marine Biologist and Oceanographer, UNA Climate and Oceans



Department for International Development under threat

On 16 June the UK government announced its plan to merge the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DfID).

This merger will create a new department called the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. This decision has led to an outcry from individuals, from three of our previous prime ministers and from BOND, representing over 400 charities. And both UNA-UK and our [LASER chair](#) have written to the Prime Minister.

As UNA members I feel this is of particular concern to us as we seek to uphold the values of the UN and seek to remind those who act on our behalf to do the same. Please contact me if you have any ideas on how we can campaign on this issue and/or play our part in reversing this decision.

[Catherine Pluygers](#)



Deal UNA will be hosting an online meeting with Safe Passage who work to help child migrants stranded in Europe to be reunited with family members in this country. The meeting is on **Wednesday 29 July 2020 at 7.00 p.m.**

Tickets are available via event brite – just click on the link below to register. The talk will be by Johnny Rebourts of Safe Passage on their work and is entitled “And will they find Safety?”, including the additional difficulties for child refugees at the end of this year when the UK leaves the EU. [Here](#) is the link.



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