



UNA LASER Newsletter
March 2021

From our Chair, Trisha Rogers



Current Campaigns Yemen

We have all been shocked to see television reports of the current suffering in Yemen and are appalled that our government is proposing to cut our funding for humanitarian assistance there. With the help of our Yemen expert, Paul Tippell, I have written on behalf of UNA LASER to the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary.

I have also written to my MP, asking him to lobby on these issues, as Ministers have to be shown letters from MPs. (Letters from the rest of us can be dealt with by officials.) You can find guidance for writing to your MP [on our website, here](#). Don't forget to include your postal address, so your MP can check that you are a constituent. Paul has provided more general guidance for lobbying MPs, which you can find [on our website, here](#). Do contact [Paul Tippell](#) directly if you'd like him to give your branch a talk on the situation in Yemen for your branch.

Overseas Development Assistance (ODA)

This also reminds us of the inappropriateness of the government planning to renege on our commitment to meet the UN recommendation of giving 0.7% GNI as ODA (aid), when the suffering of the world's poorest is exacerbated by the pandemic. The government has not yet introduced legislation to effect this change, and many MPs - on both sides of the House - are against the change, so please keep writing to your MPs on this. Our letter that you can adapt is [here](#).

Our Updated Policy Resolutions

Thanks to Peter Webster, tireless chair of our Policy Sub-committee, and to many of our members, we had a very good response to our call for new policy resolutions, which many members of the region discussed and amended at a Zoom meeting on Saturday February 27th.

The finalised resolutions are up on [our website](#). It has been suggested that branches should select at least some of these resolutions to take up with local MPs. Letters to MPs (with your postal address) that ask them to take up your issue(s) with the relevant minister is a good strategy, because Ministers have to see letters from MPs. Other letters addressed to Ministers may be dealt with by officials.

Our Spring Council: Back from the Brink? COP26 and Beyond

Our Spring Council - on 17th April at 16:00 BST, by zoom - will focus on climate change and what can be

achieved at the UN COP26 Climate Conference in Glasgow in November. We shall have speakers on the science (Dr Michaela Higgin of Reading University), the politics and finance (tbc), and activism (Suart Neaverson of the Climate Change Coalition), as well as Dorothea Christians from UNA Scotland. [Please register here](#). The conference part of the Council meeting will be followed by News from Branches and an opportunity to discuss Regional Matters.

Support for Branches

Social Media Virtual Training

Gonzalo Alvarez, in charge of the highly effective UNA Climate and Oceans, has developed techniques for using social media to network with people around your local branch area. He is kindly going to share his experience with us on a zoom virtual training session on 7th April from 7pm. He will explore how to engage interested local people in your local UNA events, including looking at how to use a UNA Facebook page effectively. He will share practical examples on screen. To register for this event, go [here](#).

Check your Entry on our Website

As discussed in the last Newsletter, branches come in many shapes and sizes, all valuable. To select just a few of the [20+ ideas we have collected](#), some have large, frequent public meetings; others meet in small groups to write campaigning letters; others focus on their work with some local schools. We want to encourage all UNA supporters to link up with branches, so it is important that the [descriptions on our website](#) are up-to-date, so people can choose the branch that suits them best. Please check that your branch is well described and has the correct contacts listed. [Let me know](#) if you would like anything changed.

Public Liability Insurance

One of the benefits of our association with UNA-UK is that all branches are covered by UNA-UK's Public Liability Insurance, which covers Trustees, Employees, Volunteers and the general public at UNA events. Please contact [me](#) or [UNA-UK](#) for full details.

Newsletters

Many thanks to Neville Grant (Editor) and to Sarah and Peter Webster for their work on this Newsletter. Please send news and announcements for the next Newsletter to [Neville](#) by 3rd May.

Emergency Fund for Asylum Seekers and Refugees Suffering from the Impact of Covid

This fund is administered by United Nations Association London Trust

Here are some examples of the kind of projects that would merit grant support. :

- Helping provide food, clothing, shelter and access to basic services for refugees.
- Providing access to services, housing, translation, legal help, education to refugees.
- Helping unaccompanied minors with legal fees.

We particularly, but not exclusively, wish to support existing United Nations Association groups who are already working in this area or wish to extend their work with their local communities in order to promote the values of the UN. Please note that no applications from individual asylum seekers will be accepted.

Normally, grants from £200 to £800 are available, with larger grants only in exceptional circumstances. For further information or to apply for a grant, please contact [the Trust Chair](#)

Women's Advisory Council of UNA - UK

Talk on 4th World Education on 30th March, 2:00pm - 4:00pm

Members, guests and supporters of WAC-UNA are cordially invited to attend virtually a short Council meeting (about 30 minutes) followed by a talk by Keyet Makonnen, a member of WILPF, Voices of African Women

Campaign (voAW). Keyet is the women's Officer for UNA L&SER, also women's Officer and Chairman for the Global South. She will talk on The importance of educating young people to be part of the thinking society in an alternative 4thworld.

Please register by 26th March by sending [here](#) your Name, Organisation, Contact Details. You will be sent the zoom link. Or you can ring 020 8959 2805 after 6pm.

Sally Spear, Chair, WAC-UNA; Rubi Bhattacharyya, Hon. Secretary: WAC-UNA

Branch news

UNA Eastbourne

Foxtrotting to Peripeteia:

2 Planets – 3 Speeds



A Climate Tragedy in the wings

About this Event

Ian Elgie, FRGS, Chair, United Nations Associate, Eastbourne, presents a unique perspective on the climate challenge facing humanity and our precious biosphere. Peripeteia means “a sudden reverse in fortune.” The issue is both simple and complex.

This presentation offers a clear vista on what is required and, who should do what to avert the awaiting climate tragedy. With work experience in the tropics over three continents, including study in Amazonia, Equatorial Africa and Borneo spanning half a century, Ian brings his first-hand knowledge of the destruction of our key biomes to those keen to think and act decisively. Wed. 17th March 1830- 1945 GMT On-line. To register, go [here](#)

Westminster UNA

Climate change challenges: the Commonwealth's path towards COP26; Webinar: 25 March, 5-6.30pm (free registration)

The Commonwealth's 54 member states are threatened by climate change. But how its many Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face their challenges can lead the way for the many others. So what experience can these bring to COP26 and share to wider benefit? What message should they take to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in June and how might its outcome link to the UN Conference in November? Our speakers will welcome dialogue from participants worldwide.

[Click here for more information and registration](#) or here to [register direct](#)

Meet the Ambassador

Westminster UNA Young Professionals are recommencing their successful Meet the Ambassador series of meetings. The format for these one-hour events comprises a short presentation by the ambassador followed by a question-and-answer session.

Details will be posted on the [Westminster UNA Future Events page](#).

International Day of UN Peacekeepers

Virtual conference and Cenotaph ceremony 27 May, from 10.30am. Details will be posted on the [Westminster UNA Future Events page](#) and the [UNA-UK events page](#).

UNA Deal

Fairtrade Fortnight

As part of Fairtrade Fortnight, Dover and Deal Fairtrade Towns Groups (which includes members of Deal UNA), together with Dover District Council, hosted a virtual meeting on Wednesday 3 March 21 with Adam Gardner, Head of Campaigns of Fairtrade foundation. Adam spoke on the topic "Fairtrade, Climate and You" the principles of Fairtrade and the effects that climate change is having on producers.

A new climate campaign asks the public to get behind Fairtrade so that farmers overseas can benefit from fairer prices and fairer trading practices. The climate crisis has hit these farmers hard, yet they have contributed the least to the climate crisis – and are among the world's most vulnerable because of unpredictable weather, natural disasters and disease.

Eileen Rowbotham of Deal Fairtrade groups said: "But without stable incomes, these farmers lack the ability to fight climate change impacts and continue to struggle to meet their immediate needs. Exploited farmers must be paid fairly so they have the power to effectively fight the impacts of the climate crisis."

Also during the fortnight, the local groups made donations of Fairtrade Footballs to local youth groups/football clubs which were well received, gave talks on what being a Fairtrade town/community means and had articles published in local newspaper and community and parish magazines. As part of Fairtrade Fortnight, Dover and Deal Fairtrade Towns Groups, together with Dover District Council hosted a virtual meeting on Wednesday 3 March 21 with Adam Gardner, Head of Campaigns of Fairtrade foundation.

Pam Brivio

UNA Canterbury

The Annual General Meeting 2020

This took place on 5th December. Valeria Minisini was elected chair, Carl Wright vice chair and Bala Chandramohan treasurer. The UN topic officers are as before, with Nigel Gregory returning to work with Valeria in the roles of Youth and Events Coordinator. The more flexible constitution meets the criteria of UNA-UK. We have exciting plans for the year ahead including, hopefully, hosting our annual Service for Peace in October to coincide COP 26.

Outline Programme for 2021, the UN Year of Peace and Trust

We agreed to continue our SDG Forum commitments and plan to work even more closely with other forum colleagues as we develop our programme for this year. The Entebbe-linked project has involved supportive engagement from both the Canterbury Society and Canterbury Business Improvement District (BID), together with officers and councillors from both Canterbury City and Kent County Councils.

April 22nd, UN Earth Day meeting: Air Pollution & Working for Air Quality! with Professor Stephen Peckham (UKC) and Richard Bourne OBE (Rampton Institute). A zoom meeting 5.30 - 7.00 pm, joining details to follow

July 10th: Our Saturday Summer meeting will focus on UN World Populations Day (11th July). If this is a face to

face meeting, this will include the annual Strawberry tea.

Plans for events later in the year will be announced in a later Newsletter.

Canterbury-Entebbe SDG Link

Despite Covid19 restrictions, our group has been able to focus on the SDGs through a zoom meeting. We are using a multi-stakeholder approach within the partnering cities. Activities are focussed on three major groups: the state; business; and civil society/voluntary sector.

Our partners are in the process of forming a sub-group focussed on Entebbe businesses. Paul Kimuli, our Entebbe Lead writes, "About the Meeting, I met the Coordinator yesterday and the sub group meeting is being organized for the 24th February in the morning. We shall be introducing the Idea of partnership, the SDGs and the BID concepts that will be nurtured along the way. We have people from the various sectors that constitute the Entebbe Economy attending the meeting and have agreed to conduct a face to face meeting.

Kent Business Summit

Dr Chandramohan (Bala) participated in the Kent Business Summit 2021 and plans to build on these contacts for future grant applications and in mobilising local support. Bala has also been in touch with the Schools Liaison Group of the SDG Forum and the Canterbury Society regarding schools collaborating on climate change issues in the two cities.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)

CHOGM is due to take place in Kigali, Rwanda from 21st June 2021. The theme is about Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming.

UNA-CB's work with Entebbe directly involves two Commonwealth cities in the UK and Uganda. We will encourage our partner to showcase the city-to-city link at a suitable event/forum. The link, based on UN SDG No. 17 (Partnerships), allows potential for future developments of North-South, South-South and Triangular partnerships, as envisaged in the targets within and beyond the 54 member countries of the Commonwealth.

Climate Action in Canterbury

On February 24th, CCAP chair Carl Wright ran an evening of talks and discussion which included Cllr Dan Watkins, chair of the Council's Climate Action Working Group speaking on the journey to net zero; Nicholas Thurston, Climate Action Officer talking of the pathways to net zero emissions and their Climate Action Plan. Hannah Reid of Kent Wildlife Trust, spoke of nature-based solutions to tackling the climate and nature crises. David Mikhail of Mikhail Riches, the award winning architects of a social housing project in Norwich, spoke of building these new zero-carbon homes in Norwich and York.

Living Mask Free on a Healthy Planet?

UN Earth Day April 22nd: The COVID-19 pandemic is a consequence of our exploitative and unhealthy relationship with the planet. Air Pollution has been identified as a causal factor in a significant number of covid-related susceptibilities and deaths. UNA Canterbury's meeting on April 22nd is about both Air Pollution & Working for Air Quality. Professor Stephen Peckham (UKC) and Richard Bourne OBE (Ramphol Institute) will be speaking. The zoom-based meeting will run from 5.30 – 7.00 pm. Details will be circulated later.

Professor Peckham is Director of the UKC Centre for Health Service Studies (CHSS) and Professor of Health Policy at CHSS and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Mr Richard Bourne (OBE) is Senior Research Fellow at The Institute of Commonwealth Studies and Advisor to the Ramphal Institute, was the Founder Director of the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit, in 1998.

The Coalition for the UN

WE NEED results from the three year action plan that the UN2020 project and its partners presented to the General Assembly last year. They note that "at this time when nationalism is on the rise and multilateralism is

being called into question by powerful governments, we are faced with an increasing number of global threats that require greater international cooperation across borders, sectors and generations.” They ask, “What will the future look like if the major trends of climate change, military conflict, and inequality are left unchecked in the absence of global cooperation?” And, with regard to, “Renewing multilateralism: we need bold collective action more than ever.” You are invited to support their activity [here](#) or [here](#).

Update on the UN Peace Service

We have a provisional date for the service in Canterbury Cathedral: UN Day - 24th October. Since we feel this is the most likely date, we are making outline plans. The main theme will be an extension from our 2019 service and will deal with the major concerns of Global Warming and Possible Solutions. We hope for a big youth contribution this year, and will seek to encourage a more youthful congregation. We also hope to provide a link to the COP26 conference in Glasgow. Anybody who feels they would like to contribute to the Service with ideas, potential contacts, publicity or any other help please contact [Valeria](#)