



UNA LASER Newsletter, June 2020

From LASER Chair: Keeping in touch



It was good to see many of you at our Zoom Policy Conference on 16th May. Many thanks to Peter Webster and the Policy Committee for all the work that went into collecting, amending and preparing the resolutions, as well as operating the electronic wizardry that brought us together. Thank you, too, for your active participation that enabled us to carry through the democratic processes of agreeing our resolutions in spite of these difficult pandemic times. I'm sorry that some members were excluded for technological reasons, but it was good that many who might not have travelled to a London meeting were able to participate (and with minimal carbon footprint!).

The Policy Committee are now implementing the agreements of that day (such as putting the resolutions in a consistent format) before uploading them up on [our website](#). We shall then follow them up with leaders, as appropriate. I promised, too, to follow up the question on the climate change resolution about whether the UK is still investing in fossil fuel enterprises overseas. It seems we still have significant such investments, as described in [this Newsnight investigation](#).

We also agreed a resolution about our own carbon footprint:

Acting on our own Carbon Footprint

UNA London & South East Region:

1. Requests branches to acknowledge their own individual responsibility to be active participants in practical ways to contribute to reduction of their own carbon footprint.
2. Requests branches to ensure that adopted policies to mitigate increasing global atmospheric CO₂ are both practical, actionable and applied with a sense of urgency.
3. Requests branches to report annually to the LASER committee on their progress with respect to 1 & 2 above;

Calls on UNA-UK and all nationwide branches:

4. To adopt the initiative of the regional branches in the London & SE Region to make a significant statement of their intention to be pro-active in reducing their carbon footprint.

It is up to all of us to help our branches to adopt policies and behaviour to mitigate our carbon footprints (as well as adopting such policies and behaviours in our own lives). I am now looking for applicants to be our LASER Environment Officer to oversee the implementation of this resolution, reminding branches and collecting their annual Carbon Footprint reports. Please [contact me](#) if you'd like to be considered for this important role.

We have had a request from UNA-US for up to 20 Young Professionals within UNA-UK to join a Zoom conversation with some of their counterparts in the US, considering the UN75 consultation process and other UNA issues. This will probably take place in the afternoon (our

time) of Sunday 28th June (close to UN Charter Day, 26th June). If you are a UNA Young Professional and would like to take part in this event, please [contact me](#).

To help us keep in touch with the activities of the UN system at this time of crucial global cooperation, we are grateful to our Bexhill and Hastings member, Gonzalo Alvarez, for creating and managing the [UNA YouTube Channel B+H](#). You might also like to see the [UN75 anthem video](#) and take part in [their survey](#).

It is important, too, that we keep in touch and learn from each other how best to support the UN at this critical time. Many thanks to Jane Beeley for collecting our news and compiling this newsletter.

As I mentioned in the last Newsletter, I realise that this is a particularly difficult time for some of our members. Several branches are continuing to be active, sharing their meetings electronically. Others have not yet taken this step. Please [let me know](#) if LASER or I can help. You might know another member who is not as digitally connected as you and therefore even more cut off. If they would like telephone calls, again, please [let me know](#).

Forthcoming LASER events

24th October (UN's 75th Birthday)

We are in the early stages of planning, with Peace Child International and other NGOs, an event to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the UN. After this time of great insecurity, we have decided to consider aspects of security and how the UN supports and could improve them. Following some plenary speeches, there are likely to be working groups on: peace and security, health security, environmental security, economic security, digital security, food security. Please [let me know](#) if you would like to help in the planning of any of these groups. After the conference and a buffet supper, we hope to include a concert and dialogue. We would like to hold the event in central London, but realise it might have to be held digitally. Either way, do save the date: 24th October, 13:30 – 21:30.

28th November

We are planning to hold our AGM on 28th November, probably at Bermondsey Village Hall (very close to London Bridge station). We shall send more details nearer the time, but please keep the date free.

News from branches

Blackheath & Greenwich UNA

Tuesday, 16 June 8:00pm (via Zoom)

“The United Nations: Unnecessary or Indispensable?” Illustrated talk by Neville Grant

As we celebrate 75 years of the United Nations Organization, it's time to look again at its achievements – and its challenges. Neville worked for years in China on a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) publishing project, and as a professional educator, has written English books in use on four continents.

To participate **Join Zoom Meeting just before 8.00pm: Click on**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86801800967?pwd=NnA1VmpBVmk1UGVhM09SNm9QWEVvZz09>

Meeting ID: 868 0180 0967

Password: 192760



Luxorchildren with Wendy& Saleh



Luxor children with Wendy

GSN 2 – Greenwich Social Network Phases1 and NOW 2: a report from Wendy Higgs

In December 2018 at a meeting of the Executive Committee of Blackheath and Greenwich Branch it was proposed that **GSN's** work was completed and its final summary and review of its value be written after 10 years. However, after initially discussing this with Neville Grant, I made a proposal to the Committee which was accepted and **GSN 2** was agreed. **Both GSN 1 and GSN 2** were/are **Activity Support groups**.

The stated aim of **GSN 2** was to help improve the lives of 'working children' of Luxor. My co-worker Saleh Gamal and I plan that this will continue.

GSN2- Now has another Very Exciting project on hold for Covid -19 but hoping to start in either September 2020 or January 2021 after considerable preparation. Our aim is that when these young children, mainly boys but as many girls as possible, are in their teens they will have more options for ways to make a living and /or for their lifetimes' interests.

We will be in effect supporting school attendance, students getting the most out of school with the support of parents/care givers. Next term Saleh and I will be in touch with teachers with our proposals for providing school uniforms – four pieces for £15 and paying for the students' subject workbooks at a possible cost of £10.

Primary school is from 6 -10 years old and at first we will support a pilot project for fifteen to eighteen 'working' children. Our thoughts at present are that in their five years of school they would aim to be good or very good readers; good or very good writers; have basic numeracy skills; and we would try to support a student who had a particular interest in a subject; or in sport, as assessed by their teachers.

Children are not taught digital subjects in school and we have a qualified IT teacher who will without payment teach 8 -10 year olds the Android system and we will seek donation of old discarded phones, tablets soon. In the secondary school for ages 11 -15 we hope to teach Windows or similar as used then.

Saleh and I have a good relationship with the children and look for other suitable volunteers.

MEALs + Luxor as we are known there, is now twinned with two Rotary Clubs in Cairo which allows us to receive donations as they are a registered charity. We are working with their knowledge and guidance. We are very grateful for their knowledge, expertise and support. As yet we do not have a registration.

We are most grateful too for financial support from the UNA LaSER Trust. Some funding is pending from Oxford Rotary Club.

More specific (but easy reading!) information on the proposals for the **GSN 2** project and our coloured flyer are both available from wjhiggs@gmail.com

I welcome your comments on the project and any fundraising ideas you may have, or suggestions on collecting unused Android items. All would be gratefully received.

Wendy Higgs

31.05.2020



As planned, the branch held a small but useful working meeting by zoom on the 18th March. We focussed on details for our proposed meeting with the officers of the municipality of Entebbe, later in the year. This is part of our commitment to explore how best to effect the behavioural changes necessary for achieving the SDG Goals by 2030.

BalaChandramahon, our lead for the project, has emphasised that a paradigm shift is necessary to recognise problems and issues as global, cutting across both the rich and the poor within our society and the nations of the world. The current pandemic is reinforcing a growing public recognition of our environmental challenges and might provide an opportunity to capitalise on these necessary changes. Our plan for a North-South dialogue aims to provide the possibility for exploring how we and our partners in Uganda are addressing these issues at local level. As yet, the UK government does not appear to have provided direction or funding to encourage such local transformational activity, unlike governments of many developing and developed nations.

UNA Canterbury's project hopes to act as the link for Canterbury SDG Forum members, their identifiable working groups and associated council, business and wider community groups, to share in our partnership with Entebbe. This follows on from an earlier meeting of the forum with the designated SDG officer from Sint-Truiden, Belgium two years ago. Also in the run up to the local council elections last year, the forum members were active in ensuring that all

prospective candidates were alert to the SDG Goals. The resulting new council has been more responsive to these issues, not least in recognising the climate emergency; it is now working with the newly formed Climate Action Partnership.

The Canterbury Climate Action Partnership (CCAP) is chaired by our member and UNA Elected Trustee Carl Wright. CCAP brings together local civil society, youth and faith groups, our universities, business and, significantly, senior city and county councillors. Its overall aim is the promotion of Zero Carbon in our District and it has since its establishment in 2019 undertaken an active programme of reaching out to public; advocacy, especially in respect of influencing our local governments; and supporting its partner organisations to undertake practical small scale projects on climate action such as recycling, tree planting and running a repair café.

Despite the Covid-19 emergency, CCAP has continued to engage actively, mainly through Zoom conferencing of its Board and among individual partners. Its dedicated website is now up and running and it has produced a public leaflet on the climate emergency. It has had initial successes in winning some small financial bids. It is currently preparing policy papers looking at how the envisaged Covid Recovery can take on a 'green dimension' and in particular address climate change, as advocated by the UN Secretary-General. In this context CCAP is also developing policy positions on seeking to influence important City and County strategies such as the forthcoming Canterbury District Local Plan. Its next Board meeting in July will entail an in-depth exchange with the Canterbury Business Improvement District (BID) and its members to discuss how business is addressing climate action.

As with the Canterbury SDG Forum, where UNA Canterbury has also played an important role, our engagement with CCAP provides a practical way for UNA to work with like-minded local community groups, as well as key local institutions such as universities and local government. This wide-ranging partnership strategy means that UNA, rather than looking inwards among a relatively small membership, is looking outward and playing an often significant local role on key global issues such as climate change or SDG implementation.



We are planning a further zoom meeting in July. We will review the UN75 People's Forum meeting of May, exploring the implications of their declaration and plan for global action to our own plans and responsibilities.



Unfortunately, it is looking less likely that our planned annual Peace Service will be held in October this year. We will look to hold the Cathedral service in January 2021 instead, if possible, and so celebrate the UN75th Anniversary closer to the signature date.

Michael J Vince, Branch Secretary, UNA Canterbury

Mob. 07511583446 Email: UNA-CB@myphone.coop

DEAL UNA

Prior to lockdown, Deal UNA had been planning a public meeting with Safe Passage about the plight of child migrants stranded in Europe; this had originally been planned for the latter part of 2019 but unfortunately had to be postponed.

In 2018 the branch held two successful meetings on the subject of the plight of child refugees; the first meeting was the showing of a film "**Calais Children – a case to Answer**" about children left behind when the camps had been closed in Calais and Dunkirk. The second film

was **"Into the Arms of Strangers"**, shown to mark the 80th anniversary of the arrival of the first kindertransport. Both events were well supported and we were able to make donations to Safe Passage.

The current crisis has meant that we have not been able to proceed with our plans for a public meeting with a speaker from Safe Passage and we had planned to invite the new Bishop of Dover, Rose Hudson Wilkins, as she has shown an interest in the subject.

Once it is known when we can get back to organising such events, we will hopefully get up to speed quickly and get plans in place. Alternatively if lockdown does persist, perhaps a virtual meeting might be possible. I'm sure Safe Passage and the Bishop of Dover are doing such meetings already.

Our annual activities include a fund raiser in Deal when donations to UNICEF/MSF are made. This year's fundraising event, due to be held this month, has been cancelled (but I hope we can hold it later in the year).

And an annual Hiroshima Day event is held in the churchyard of St George's Church, where we have a memorial and a tree; we hope that this event with music, poems, personal contributions and flowers will be able to go ahead. It is always well attended.

In conclusion, I would like to add that I attended the Zoom Policy Forum organised by UNALaSER on Saturday 16th May this year and think this might be a way forward for future meetings. It is not always possible to travel to meetings and this was an opportunity to hear a wide-ranging discussion from many people. I appreciated the opportunity.

Pam Brivio – Deal UNA

Eastbourne UNA



Join UNA Eastbourne and plant the Mvule tree which captures CO2 and turns it into a rock

URGENT – START CAPTURING CARBON NOW – but how?

Climate change mitigation requires two major actions:

1. **Reducing carbon intensive consumption patterns** – individually, commercially, nationally and globally – ranging from individual decisions such as eat less red meat to National and International government policies for increased renewable energy sources.
2. **Carbon capture** – techniques and systems to take excessive atmospheric carbon out of the atmosphere.

Is the UNA-UK and its large branch membership doing enough on these two major actions in practical, actionable and measurable ways?

As Chair of the UNA Eastbourne I am aware of many talks, reports and discussions by the UNA-UK and branches on the issue of climate change – but am not aware of the current activities by branches and Headquarters which show practical action on Carbon Capture.

If any branches are actively looking to a practical way to engage in carbon capture may I make my appeal now to ask branches to at least consider giving their support to the UNA Eastbourne's own well-established MVULE PROJECT FOR CARBON CAPTURE. The scheme is simple, efficient and very cost effective. For details go to our website: <http://www.unaeastbourne.org/carbon-offset-scheme.html> and look under projects.

This May alone we have funded the planting of 12,600 tropical hardwood trees in Uganda during the first rains of 2020: 9,000 *Melicia excelsa* (Mvule); 1800 *Terminalia superba* and 1800 *Maesopsis eminii* (the latter two are important companion species that grow well with Mvule).

It is generally considered that planting trees is the one of the most practical methods for absorbing carbon sequestration. The question is, however, which species of trees is most efficient and where to plant to be most effective. These questions have been carefully researched by our branch over many years and we have been delighted to now know that the *Melicia excelsa* tree, widely known as Iroko, or Mvule (in East Africa) is according to scientists the exceptional tree for capturing carbon and turning it into a rock. The tree is known as the 'Tree with Stones'. Of all the Equatorial rainforest regions of the world Uganda has one major advantage – it is on a plateau giving the country some 3-4°C lower temperature than is typical for such regions. Our website gives full details on why this is important.

I am happy to answer any questions from branches into the cost of supporting the Mvule Project for Carbon Capture – and when the COVID-19 lockdown is over – I would be happy to address any branch on our scheme. In the meantime, please look at the details on our website and look especially at the scientific evidence we use to justify our scheme.

Ian Elgie, Chair UNA Eastbourne.

28th May 2020

Tunbridge Wells & Wealden UNA

We regret that it has been decided to cancel the Tunbridge Wells MUNGA, organised annually by Beverley Johnstone and held in the Town Hall for the past thirty years or more. This normally involves sixth formers from about twelve local schools. Although it was not due to take place until late Autumn, because of their absence from school during Covid 19, on their return the teachers and pupils will need to prioritise catching up with the school curriculum and exam preparation, and will not be able to spend time preparing for a MUNGA. It will resume next year. The UN flag, which normally flies above the Town Hall on MUNGA day, will instead be flown on the 75th anniversary of the UN.

Similarly, with equal regret and for the same reason, we have to report that in the Wealden area the Uckfield College MUNGA, scheduled to be held next month, will not now take place. This too has been postponed until next year. As usual, Trisha Rogers, Chair of UNALaSER, will be President.

Jane Beeley, Chair, Tunbridge Wells & Wealden UNA

UNA Wandsworth

Finding a way round lockdown

As the lockdown continues, it was decided that we should find some way of conducting this year's AGM while keeping our members involved. We had thought that perhaps a Zoom meeting might work but after a few phone calls it was obvious that some were not keen or able to. With no other option it was agreed between Catherine Plugers (Vice Chair), Meena Storey (Hon Sec) and I, that email/postal correspondence was the best way forward. So, as a starting point, Meena and I split the job and telephoned the slate of existing officers and committee members. We confirmed with each of them that they were prepared to carry on provided, that is, no one else wanted to stand. There was one change. Then came the usual agenda. We circulated the minutes of last year's meeting, asked for matters arising; annual report for our season 2019-2020; Jo Stocks (Hon Treasurer) accounts and report. We asked if there were changes to membership of our little planning committee. All this is to be ratified at a later date after lockdown.

Now it came to dates, subjects and events for next season's meetings. At normal AGMs, this involves much discussion but, with no other option, Meena, Catherine and I held an informal telephone discussion. As a result, we agreed possible dates for our events and Meena provisionally booked the venue. Obviously, depending on what happens over lockdown, we might be forced to make changes. We felt it best to leave choice of topic areas to a later date as this is usually a good talking point among members and we do like to invite as many ideas as possible.

All this involved a deal of email and telephone interaction but, it worked after a fashion. The main point being that it kept us all in touch with one another and let our membership know that this branch is still alive and well.

Rob Storey, Chair, Wandsworth UNA28/5/2020

Westminster UNA

The show must go on! (1)

26 May Westminster UNA marks UN Peacekeepers Day despite pandemic shutdown

The 2020 annual conference and diplomats' wreath-laying ceremony to mark the International Day of UN Peacekeepers was cancelled but important elements were salvaged.



Keynote speaker

This year's keynote Folke Bernadotte Memorial Lecture, to mark the twentieth anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace & Security), was to be presented personally at RUSI by Brigadier Maureen O'Brien, the second most senior officer in the Irish Defence Forces (IDF), and now serving as Acting Force Commander of the UN Disengagement Observers Force (UNDOF) based in the Golan Heights, between Syria and Israel. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to all UN Peacekeeping missions to extend to at least the end of June so Brigadier O'Brien's address was delivered in her headquarters and can be [seen here](#).

On 26 May, a small wreath-laying ceremony was held at the Cenotaph. Wreaths were laid on behalf of the government by Lt-Col Steven Neville, previously serving with MINUSMA in Mali, and on behalf of HM Armed Forces by Wg-Cdr Cat Davison, previously serving with UNMISS in South Sudan. Wreaths were also laid by Tim Landy, Chairman of the UN Veterans Association, and by Bryony Pike, Finance & Events Coordinator, UNA-UK. The event was coordinated by Westminster UNA.



Wreath-laying at the Cenotaph, 26 May

The annual conference and ceremony, initiated by Westminster UNA in 2004 and now co-organised with UNA-UK and RUSI, is the world's oldest and largest event to mark this important UN anniversary.

Here is a link to a report from UNA-UK: <https://www.una.org.uk/news/una-uk-rusi-and-una-westminster-mark-international-day-un-peacekeeping>

The show must go on! (2)

On 26 June, the United Nations marks the 75th anniversary of the signing of its Charter in San Francisco. To mark the day, Westminster UNA has secured permission to insert the flags of all 193 UN Member States into a giant UN symbol on Broad Sanctuary Green, in front of the QE2 Centre, facing Central Hall and Westminster Abbey. The display will last from Friday 26 June to Sunday 28 June.

The proposed change of name from Broad Sanctuary Green to United Nations Green, together with installation of impressive black granite plaques, has been endorsed by the FCO and the City of Westminster, and awaits the go-ahead from the Dept of Communities, Housing and Local Government on plans for the possible decant of the House of Lords to the QE2 Centre in 2025.

The show must go on! (3)



Final V2 lands on Orpington, Kent

On 26 June, we mark the 75th anniversary of the signing of the UN Charter in San Francisco. At a time when many believe that the UK government prepared poorly as the COVID-19 pandemic began to take hold, let us recall what happened in 1945. Less than one month after the last V2 landed in Orpington, Kent, delegates from fifty nations had already arrived in San Francisco to agree the UN's Charter. Following diligent preparatory work, without which the task would have taken years longer, especially as the Iron Curtain was soon to divide Europe, they showed the necessary degree of foresight even during the darkest days of the war. We have so much to learn from them!



Signing the UN Charter, San Francisco, 26 June 1945

Other Events and Initiatives

UNA Climate and Oceans

The United Nations Association Climate and Oceans has been invited to give a Webinar conference for UNA Sweden (Malmo) in June 2020.

The topic will be: "Climate Change: Key interactions between Earth's Atmosphere and the Oceans". In the last few weeks we have been testing the online technology, including sharing slides through Zoom app with the UNA host in Sweden, so all the preparations are well underway.

Here is the poster we have created for this online event.

Date: To be confirmed



<https://fn.se/malmo/>



Host: Bengt Skarstam
UNA Malmö,
Agenda 30



Speaker: Gonzalo Alvarez, DTh, BSc,
BA Hons
Marine Biologist and Oceanographer
UNA Climate and Oceans



WEBINAR about:

Climate Change: key interactions between Earth's Atmosphere and the Oceans. - An Introduction.



June 2020
Time: 18 - 19
Link: <-dknfaoweihf

Women's Advisory Council of United Nations Association – UK



Dear Members, Visitors and Supporters,

You are cordially invited to attend this WAC-UNA's Ordinary Council Meeting, as below. We have an excellent speaker, not to be missed!

We do hope you can join in - and tell your friends.

WACUNA (WOMEN'S ADVISORY COUNCIL of UNA – UK)

Members, Guests and supporters of WAC-UNA are cordially invited to attend a short business meeting

- followed by a speaker who will speak on

SUBJECT: "Cries Unheard".

SPEAKER: SreepriyaBhowmik is the founder Director of British Education Support Services (BESS UK) - BA (Hons), MA SEN; Dip.RSA; RQTU; CPT3A; SpLD APC. This has a Multidisciplinary approach. She will be speaking on “The Effect ofUndiagnosed Learning Difficulty on the Mental Health of Young People and Adults”.

DAY: Thursday 9th July 2020

TIME: 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. (there will be two 10 minute breaks at 40 minute intervals)

VENUE : This will be a Zoom meeting. If you register as below, you will be sent suitable information and a link.

BOOKING YOUR PLACE – You mustregister before Monday 6.7.20.

and send the attendance slip below, ASAP, to **Mrs Rubi Bhattacharyya.**

Once registered you will be sent further details.

For the meeting on Thursday 9th July 2020

NAME

Organisation

Contact details (**e-mail** or phone number etc.)
.....

Iwill / will not Attend the meeting on Thursday 9.7.20

Details of any friend(s) you are
bringing.....

.....
Please complete this form and send it **before Monday 6.7.20** to:-

Mrs Rubi Bhattacharyya, Hon. Secretary, e-mail: rubirani@yahoo.co.uk

Tel. 020 8959 2805 after 6 p.m. or post to 5 Reddings Close, London, NW7 4JL

We look forward to seeing you at the meeting and hope you will enjoy the discussion.

With thanks for your support and best wishes,

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

A personal statement from a LaSER Committee member

Statement in regards to structural racism in the United States and worldwide

On behalf of my fellows and in the name of peace, the traumatic displays of institutional racism and violence taking place in the United States in this time must be condemned!

Nevermind *who* killed George Floyd, but let us take up the charge that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called for. Let us ask instead WHAT killed George Floyd? What killed George Floyd was 500 hundred years of enslavement; it was 100 years policing for violence' sake; it was 50 years of surveillance and destruction in the name of European-supremacy and it must

stop today. George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Trayvon Martin, Mike Brown, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless others lost their lives for nothing more than being African-descended. As an African, I cannot stand aside and watch my brethren in America or in the UK, or in France, or in China continue to be mistreated and de-humanised any longer.

In 1969, the United Nations ratified the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, and yet 51 years later I have to watch George Floyd's last breath leave his body below the brutal knee of a racist on-duty police officer. It is American tax dollars that commission that heinous murder. It must be condemned! The Civil Rights Movement called for an end to all forms of racial discrimination. Since then, we saw the economic, political, and social regression of African and Caribbean countries. We saw and continue to see the brutal mistreatment and institutional enforcement of anti-Blackness throughout the global north. We have been condemned to a third world, where we cannot be seen as human. This cannot continue any longer. We need to do something.

In 2015, the United Nations declared the next decade, *The International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024)*. Now it is time to put money behind this declaration. This is our opportunity to do the work to alleviate the strife of African-descended people throughout the world. We need to give economic empowerment to Africans and African-descended people throughout the world. We need to give free educational access to all people. We need to give the tools and resources that have been actively suppressed in our African nations and Black communities (libraries, energy, power, counselling, and more). We have a duty to stand up for what is right. We have to stand up for human rights. We have determined that there are universal human rights. These rights have been and continue to be denied to African-descended people in the United States and abroad. We need to stand up and make a plan for elevating human rights for all African-descended people.

Silence is violence. Silence and inaction won't be tolerated any longer.

In Action and Solidarity,

Keyet Makonnen

UNA LASER, Global South Action Committee, FOCUS ON AFRICA02 June 2020

People

New appointment of former UNA LaSER executive committee member

Kishan Manocha has been appointed Head of the Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department at the Organisation for Security and Cooperation's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw.

ODIHR provides support, assistance and expertise to the 57 participating States of the OSCE and civil society to ensure fair and free elections and to promote democracy, the rule of law, human rights and tolerance and non-discrimination.

In his new role, Kishan will lead ODIHR's work to combat racism, xenophobia, all forms of intolerance and discrimination, including on grounds of religion or belief, and hate crime.

He invites you to register to attend this webinar on 11 JUNE at 3:00 pm Brussels time:

<https://mailchi.mp/820518dc01d0/covidforbgender?e=190c6b0191>

Xavier Perez de Cuellar UN Secretary General 1982- 1991

Died March 2020 aged 100

By Keith Hindell

Perez de Cuellar was a fortunate Secretary General. He did not campaign for election yet was elected from a field of seven candidates. In his first term he achieved little but his second term coincided with the disintegration of the Soviet Union which melted the ice in the Security Council. This enabled the UN to play a decisive role in ending the Iran /Iraq war in 1988, in easing the Russians out of Afghanistan and Cuban troops out of Angola which in turn was a necessary quid pro quo for South Africa's withdrawal from Namibia. On his last day in office his Peruvian colleague Alvaro de Soto acting for the UN, brought peace to a horrible civil war in El Salvador.

Perez de Cuellar had had 40 years of experience in the diplomatic world before he was elected by the Security Council. He had served in half a dozen countries including France, the Soviet Union and Venezuela as Peru's ambassador. He also knew the UN well as he took part in the very first General Assembly in London in 1946. Much later he was appointed UN Under Secretary General for Special Political Affairs by his predecessor Kurt Waldheim. So by 1981 he was a well-known figure at UN headquarters, though until there was deadlock in the Security Council for the next SG in November none would have thought of him as a runner. Yet clearly he nursed more secret ambitions that surprised everyone, as happened again after he left the UN when he ran for President of his own country, though this time without success.

Three months into his first term, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands and the UN Security Council immediately endorsed Britain's right to self- defence which is clearly spelt out in the Charter. For a time PDQ, as we journalists called him, endeavoured to mediate a ceasefire and a more permanent solution. It came to nothing in part because the Argentines overplayed their hand. They were no better at diplomacy than they were at warfare. Alexander Haig, then Secretary of State in Washington, who also tried to bring about a peace, called their military leaders "a bunch of thugs".

During this whole affair the American Ambassador at the UN, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, urged the White House to remain neutral thereby enabling, she thought, the US to retain its influence in Latin America. Yet right after the conflict she delivered a remarkable compliment to Perez de Cuellar. "The UN's record in dealing with this conflict is commendable. We can be proud of it; proud especially of the Secretary General". Five months later she described him as a man of great intelligence and high integrity: "he is an unusually fair and reasonable man." These were astonishing comments from someone who didn't really like the UN at all.

As the BBC's UN Correspondent I travelled with him and his team to South Africa in 1983 when he tried to ease De Klerk's government out of Namibia which they had been given as a mandate by the League of Nations in the 1920s. He was unassuming, approachable and certainly someone who preferred private negotiations to flamboyant mega-phone diplomacy. However, on the way home we stopped in Angola where the plane was unexpectedly greeted by a large crowd. Off the cuff he made a rousing speech in Portuguese there and then, showing that being a good linguist was just one of his talents.

In retirement from the UN he wrote his memoirs "Pilgrimage for Peace", which is well worth reading. Characteristically he repeated his view of elections for the UN SG: "to maintain impartiality, no person should ever be a candidate". More sombrely he wrote: "while we speak incessantly of peace, our actions tell a very different story." It was based on 45 years work as a diplomat.



Copyright © 2020 London and South East Region UNA, All rights reserved.

You have been added to this mailing list as you are a member of the London and South East Region UNA

Our mailing address is:

London and South East Region UNA

30 Culverhouse Gardens

London, SW16 2TX

United Kingdom

[Add us to your address book](#)

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

