



UNA LASER Newsletter September 2021

From our Chair, Trisha Rogers



Campaigns

Afghanistan

We have [shared ideas](#) on how to mitigate the distressing consequences in Afghanistan of the withdrawal of international troops and the Taliban's takeover. We would welcome your [joining a working group](#) to guide LASER's further action on this issue.

UNA-UK has suggested [here](#) some possible individual actions, including supporting relevant UN agencies; lobbying your MP on key UK actions; and hosting an Afghan refugee.

Restoration of UK Aid to 0.7% GNI

The LASER Working Group on Aid and Development is building a network of volunteers to support its work and would welcome more members. [Here are details](#).

Build up to COP 26 (UN Climate Change Glasgow Conference)

The Big Green Week: *The Fight that Unites* and Global Goals

LASER is a member of [the Climate Coalition](#), which is coordinating, from 18th to 26th September The Big Green Week (BGW), the UK's biggest celebration of Action on Climate Change. Themed the Fight that Unites the week stresses that people from all walks of life are united by climate change and need to come together to fight this challenge. See on [this map](#) which of the 3000+ local events are near you and do add your own!

The week coincides with the Global Goals Week, marking the 'birthday' of the Sustainable Development Goals. This is a great opportunity - for individuals and branches - to engage with local schools. The schools' [Global Goals Week Action Plan](#) has suggestions, which include climate change themes that could be part of BGW.

AGM on 20th November

Our AGM will be on 20th November, probably in-person at [Bermondsey Village Hall](#), London

SE1 3TD (very close to London Bridge station) from 12:00 to 17:00. Please book this in your diaries now: there will be more information in the next Newsletter. **We apologise for the fact that the wrong date was sent out earlier.**

Sharing Information

Our website

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 to help people choose the branch(es) 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.

Newsletters

We are grateful to Neville Grant for his editing of our Newsletter. He has now had to stand down for health reasons and we wish him a speedy recovery. If you would like to volunteer to help edit this Newsletter, please [contact me](#). We continue to be grateful to Peter and Sarah Webster for their work in sending out the Newsletter. If you have experience of Mailchimp and would like to help in this, please [contact us](#). Please [send me](#) material for the next Newsletter **by 11th October, 2021**.

Recent Events

Summer Council

Congratulations to UNA Twickenham and Richmond (TRUNA) for hosting this excellent event on *The UN: Past, Present - and Future?*.

- David Wardrop (UNA Westminster) spoke on ***UN past;***
- Former LASER President, Professor Christine Chinkin, spoke on ***UN Present: UNSC resolution 1325, Women Peace and Security;***
- Professor Paul Ekins spoke on ***UN Present: Climate Change;***
- Eminent UNA LASER member, Professor Sir Richard Jolly, spoke on ***UN Future?: Effectiveness and Challenges;***
- ODI Director, Dr Sara Pantuliano spoke on UN Future? ***Meeting the Founding Principles, Strengthening Participation and Accountability.***



Welcome United Nations Green!

On Saturday 21 August, Westminster UNA held a Welcome United Nations Green party, enabling UNA members and friends to meet in person at last. Also present were members of the diplomatic community and refugees and asylum seekers from nearby hotels.

United Nations Green lies between Westminster Abbey, the QEII Centre and Central Hall Westminster. As the host of the first meeting of the UN General Assembly seventy-five years ago, Central Hall Westminster has a unique place in UN history and, for this party, kindly opened its doors to visitors for the first time in the COVID era, organising a fascinating display of memorabilia of the UN's opening session in 1946.



The centrepiece of the event was the Flags of the World display, featuring the world's largest UN75 banner into which was planted the flags of all nations. The day included a peace-dove release, SDG hopscotch and a Learn about the UN treasure hunt with attractive prizes. Sales of the ever popular I'm the Peacekeeper teddy bear were brisk. Many visitors signed the UN Green Declaration which marked three important UN International Days relating to Victims of Terrorism, Victims of Acts of Violence based on Religion or Belief, and Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition.

There were three short presentations, on the upcoming Decade for Indigenous Languages, the work of the Climate Coalition, and Equity in Sport. Further memories of the day on video are being prepared and will be posted on [Westminster UNA's website](#).

Westminster UNA hopes to host future events on United Nations Green, which is already becoming a London landmark. Three months ago, it attracted 20,000 visitors on Google Maps, but in August this figure has now risen to 150,000.

Future Events

Global

UN75 Response by UN Secretary-General

UN75 has been marked all over the world, including by the LASER *Building a More Secure World* festival in October, which culminated in *Urgent Actions for a More Secure World*, with proposed actions for individuals, communities, nations and the international community. We presented this to UN Secretary-General António Guterres on **10th January**, the 75th anniversary of the first meeting (held in London) of the UN General Assembly.

More information about some UN75 activities around the world is [here](#). In response to the various recommendations that have been put to him, as well as to the Global Listening Exercise, on 10th September, at the UN General Assembly, the Secretary-General will respond with his recommendations to advance our common agenda.

Branches

Canterbury

Democracy at Home and Abroad: On **11th September at 10:30**, UNA-Canterbury invites LASER members to the **online seminar** *Democracy at Home and Abroad*, considering the gap between policies and practice in the UN concern about The Rule of Law and Democracy. **Professor Richard Norman** will consider *The Impact on Democracy of the City Council's Plan to Return to a Committee Structure* and **Dr Farid Qurashi** will speak on *The Position & Politics of Muslim Communities In Western Democratic States*. Please [email here](#) for the zoom link.

UN Flag-raising ceremony: On **24th October at 11:00** all are invited to attend the UN Flag-raising ceremony at Dane John Gardens, Canterbury, with the Lord Mayor.

Cathedral Peace service: On **24th October at 17:30** LASER members are invited to join, in-person, the annual Peace Service in Canterbury Cathedral, with its procession of peace-makers. The service will also launch the *Canterbury Climate Action Week* in the run-up to COP26 in Glasgow the following week.

Harpenden

Climate Change and Agriculture: On **11th September at 11:00**, Harpenden UNA is hosting an **in-person meeting** at the Park Hall, Leyton Road, Harpenden AL5 2LX. Professor Angela Karp, Director and Chief Executive of Rothamsted Research, will speak about *Climate Change and Agriculture – What are the actions we can take now?*

Professor Karp is the first female director since the Institute was founded in 1843. In her previous role of Director for Science Innovation, Engagement and Partnerships, she developed new initiatives for collaborative innovation and has been the prime lead in developing the SHAKE Climate Change programme.

The event will be Covid-compliant, with social distancing, suitable ventilation and no refreshments. Entry will be limited to 60 attendees not showing any signs of Covid-19. You can sign up in advance by emailing [here](#).

Streatham & Clapham

COP Correspondents Climate call. On Sunday **12th September 2pm**. An opportunity to hear the latest developments in the preparations for the COP26 meeting in Glasgow and to discuss letter-writing to MPs and others. See the COP Correspondents web page on [this link](#), and all are welcome to join the meeting on [this link](#).

Westminster

60th anniversary Dag Hammarskjöld's death: On **16th September 17:00 - 18:30** UNA

Westminster is co-hosting, with the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at London University an **online meeting** to mark the 60th anniversary of Dag Hammarskjöld's death, titled *The UN Inquiry into Hammarskjöld's death: Last chance to reach the truth?* Speakers will include:

- Dr Henning Melber, Emeritus Director, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation
- Asa Theander, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Sweden (tbc)
- The Rt. Revd. Trevor Musonda Mwamba, Former Bishop of Botswana
- Sydney Sekeramayi, Former Minister of Defence, Zimbabwe (tbc)
- David Wardrop, Editor, HammarskjöldInquiry.info.

The meeting will be chaired by the Rt Hon Lord Boateng, Former High Commissioner to South Africa. For further information and to register, go [here](#).

Celebrating Indigenous Languages – Defending Endangered Languages: On **10th December**, UNA Westminster will join with the Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL) (celebrating its 25th anniversary) to celebrate both indigenous languages and the work of the UN in that area. The details will be announced later, but book the date in your diaries now!

The 25th anniversary of FEL will also serve to launch the UN's International Decade of Indigenous Languages. The FEL Jubilee will take place on 10 December, International Human Rights Day, to draw attention to language as a human right and to remind us that linguistic rights are central to the protection of all human rights.

There is now a better understanding of the importance of language diversity which, like cultural diversity and biodiversity, is of the utmost importance for the survival of humankind. Like endangered animal and plant species, endangered languages constitute one of the greatest challenges of the next decades. Of the languages in danger of extinction, the majority are indigenous languages.

A worldwide effort to document and preserve these languages includes the UNESCO Atlas of Languages in Danger (produced by FEL), an interactive online mapping exercise which indicates the varying degrees of threats facing half the estimated 6000 to 8000 languages of the world.

Climate and Oceans



On **2nd October, 10:00 - 16:30** UNA Climate and Oceans is joining with partner organisations for the **Ocean Symposium Sussex 2021**. Participants can join **in-person** at the Hastings Museum Durbar Hall or **online via zoom**, marking the start of the *UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development*. There will be world-class speakers, young presenters, local and global science, and films.

Attendance costs £5.80. For further information and to register for in-person attendance, follow [this link](#); for online attendance, follow [this link](#).

London UNA Trust Emergency Fund for Work with Refugees

The London UNA Trust has launched a fund to assist with projects that are of benefit to refugees in the context of the Covid pandemic. Requests for support for unaccompanied minors and children are particularly welcome. Applications from individual refugees are not accepted. Here are some examples of the kind of projects that would merit grant support.

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

Grants are from £200 to £800. Please [consult with us](#) first if you wish to apply for a grant larger 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. If you are aware of other UNA members involved in this work that we can reach out to, we would be pleased to hear.