



"We the Peoples....."

The United Nations Association Bexhill & Hastings Branch



UN Culture of Peace

For our 5th annual UN DAY PEACE EVENT, against an informative UN Exhibition, we held a café style roundtable quiz to explore the question of

If the United Nations was founded for World Peace, Why is the World at War ?

On Saturday, 22nd October 2022
At St. Peter's Community Centre
Church Street, Bexhill-on-Sea, TN40 2HE
Free Registration at 1.30pm for a 2-5pm Programme

POST-EVENT REPORT **Including SUGGESTED** **WAY FORWARD for CONSULTATION**

Sheila Kesby
Peace Project Coordinator
UNA-Bexhill & Hastings Branch
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INTRODUCTION

The United Nations was founded on the 24th October 1945 when its original 51 member states had ratified the UN Charter they had signed in San Francisco on the 26th day of the preceding June. The UN Charter is an international treaty that states the purposes of the United Nations and embodies the major principles of international relations. In summary, the Purposes and Principles of the UN are as follows:

- To maintain international peace and security
- To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principles of equal rights and self-determination of peoples
- To cooperate in solving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems and in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms¹.

If it were truly the case that, in 1945, the United Nations was founded to secure World Peace, why is it that in 2022, the World is at War?

In a nutshell, the answer is that since its foundation in 1945, the United Nations has progressively evolved from a single organisation into a family of organisations now known as the UN system, which incorporates the now well-developed means of global governance. But this has not secured World Peace because also since 1945, peace has progressively become more convoluted as warfare has become more straightforward and as global problems have increased in number and complexity. At the same time, the United Nations is often ignored or corrupted by the UN's member states while it remains largely unknown to, and unappreciated by, the general public. As a result, people everywhere are struggling to live in a World at War.

We in the UNA-Bexhill & Hastings Branch (UNA-B&H) in our own small way, have tried to do something about this dreadful situation. Since 2018, we have held a series of annual Speaker/Discussion and Workshop Events to celebrate UN Day.

The Meaning of UN Day

The Charter of the United Nations was signed by 51 nations² on 26th June 1945, at the UN Conference in San Francisco, USA. After a majority had ratified the Charter, the UN came into force on 24th October 1945. In 1947, the UN General Assembly declared the 24th October as 'United Nations Day', which it described as a day

"... that shall be devoted to making known to the people of the world the aims and achievements of the United Nations and to gaining their support for the work of the United Nations, invites Member Governments to cooperate with the United Nations in securing observance of this anniversary."

Over the course of the last 5 years, the UNA-B&H has celebrated UN Day along these lines in our own small part of the world. We hold the annual UN Day Peace Event on the nearest Saturday to the 24th October. In 2022, this was the 22nd, when we introduced an experimental Active Self-Learning, Participant-led Model of Education. This meant that instead of holding our usual

¹ The fundamental freedoms are freedom of expression, freedom of religion, freedom of thought, freedom of belief, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association.

² To be accurate, only 50 nations signed the UN Charter on 26th June 1945 as Poland was unable to attend the Conference. However, Poland did sign the Charter before 24th October 1945 in time to be considered as one of the UN's original 51 member states.

Speaker/Discussion and Workshop Event, we invited people to take part in a 'UN Treasure Hunt Quiz' around an Informative Exhibition.

The Aim and Objectives of UN Day 2022

The Aim was to introduce and test our Active Self-Learning, Participant-led Model of Education

The Objectives

- 1) To help people understand how the UN affects their daily lives and how people in their local communities suffer the fallout from bad decisions and mal-functions of the UN Security Council (UNSC). Such as economic & social hardship and dealing with refugees struggling to land on our shores, traumatised and exhausted from the war zones in which Britain – along with the other four permanent members of the UNSC - is involved as a military combatant in form or another, on one side or the other.
- 2) To thus inspire people to want to know more about how the UN works and how they can be a part of a motivated, informed and organised civil society organisation (e.g the UNA) to influence their government (through better informed campaigning & voting behaviour) to make the UN work how it is supposed to work according to its Charter - an international treaty.

The Informative Exhibition

We had hired the large hall in St. Peter's Community Centre so as to give ample space set up tables & chairs café-style for the participants in the middle with the stalls of the informative exhibition around all four sides. The larger hall also provided enough space to avoid overcrowding for hygienic purposes.

A team of seven members of the UNA-B&H Branch worked together to design and put together the exhibition as noted below. In addition, we had valuable assistance from Hilary Evans (UNA-Twickenham & Richmond) David Wardrop (UNA-Westminster and UNA London & SE Region) and from Cllr. Polly Gray from our local Rother District Council.

- About the United Nations (Sheila Kesby: UNA-B&H)
- War & Peace and Human Security (Sheila Kesby: UNA-B&H)
- The UNSC's Failure to Maintain International Peace and Security (Hilary Evans: UNA-Twickenham & Richmond Branch)
- The Human Fallout of Warfare – Refugees (Barbara Rogers: UNA-B&H)
- The global Peace Pole Network – messaging '*May Peace Prevail on Earth*'. (Marie Miller: UNA-B&H and Bexhill Quakers)
- The UN Culture of Peace and Human Development (Sheila Kesby: UNA-B&H)
- Learning from History – Language and Communication (Mike Wade: UNA-B&H)
- The Environment and Climate Change (Sheila Kesby & Barbara Echlin: UNA-B&H)
- The Declaration of Climate Emergency by Rother District Council (Cllr. Polly Gray)
- Think Global, Act Local for Health (Greta Vipond: UNA-B&H)
- Think Global, Live Local (Laurence Keeley: UNA-B&H)

The UN Treasure Hunt Quiz

This is not a quiz in the sense of 'A' level exams or TV quiz shows. In addition to the questions being incorporated in a Quiz & Information booklet (given to each participant on registration) the answers could be found through viewing the exhibits and talking with the stall holders. Also, participants could use their own lap-tops, iPads or smartphones to search for answers.

The Programme (free registration at 1.30pm for 2 – 5pm programme)

Due to slow registration we delayed starting until 2.15pm. But this did little good as ultimately we had another low turnout of only about 25 people. However, we still went ahead as planned.

The event was very ably opened and subsequently chaired, by a new chairman for us – Michael Ensor (formerly a councillor on East Sussex County Council and Rother District Council). After the welcome and explanation of the meaning of UN Day, Michael asked everyone to please stand for the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations.

The Rev'd Stephen Need³ read the Preamble exactly how it should be read. The Rector brought out how "*We the Peoples of the United Nations*" have a responsibility to ensure that our governments seek to fulfil the UN's promise to promote the kind of peace so sorely needed in the wake of two world wars.

With the right ambience thus set, Michael Ensor then called on Sheila Kesby (UNA-B&H) to explain how to use the exhibition to answer the questions in the Quiz & Information booklet.

For the next hour, which included the serving of tea & light refreshments, participants duly toured and studied the exhibition and had a go at answering the questions. Some questions were factual, while others were more open to discussion.

Café Style Round Table Session

The purpose of this session was for the exhibitors to give the answers to the questions related to their own exhibit that would, in some cases, lead to comment and discussion with the participants.

Although this session went fairly well as a first try-out of a new model, it also revealed the major error in planning, as will doubtless be obvious by now. There was far too much material in the quiz and exhibition for a half-day event. In retrospect, we have addressed this problem in the suggested way forward. Meanwhile, on the day, we dealt with it by cutting back on giving the answers to all the questions. Since Sheila Kesby had provided three exhibits, she was the one to do most of the cutbacks in order to allow time for the other exhibitors. As a result, even with going over time until about 5.20pm, the timing for, and the quality of, the discussion were reduced, which has affected how well we achieved our aim and objectives.

Achieving the Aim and Objectives of UN Day 2022

Since the **Aim** was only to introduce and test our Active Self-Learning, Participant-led Model of Education, it can be said that we achieved that. But it must also be said that we found a lot wrong with it, not least in regard to its rather grand sounding title (!). However, there was enough positive feedback from the participants (see objectives) to indicate to it as the idea in itself is worthwhile, we should work on developing and refining our new model of education.

The Objectives

- 1) We did not cut back on the answers and discussion that were designed to help people understand how the UN affects their daily lives and how people in their local communities suffer the fallout from bad decisions and mal-functions of the UN Security Council (UNSC).

³ The Rev'd Stephen Need is the Rector of St. Peter's Church and Bexhill

Therefore, after giving an outline of the structure and function of the UN System, the failures of the UNSC were explored, which highlighted how its latest failure i.e the War in Ukraine, had triggered, or aggravated an existing, cost of living crisis. In addition, we noted the number of other wars going on around the world that is causing the current refugee crisis. The difference between refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants was clarified.

- 2) Judging by the response from most of the participants both on the day and by email afterwards, the 'treasure hunt quiz' model was popular and did inspire and enable people – including UNA members – to learn more about the UN. The participants had taken home the numerous free handouts and discussion papers on offer, as well as purchasing some of the books available as part of the Think Global, Act Local for Health Exhibit. Also, some participants had, or intended to, passed some of this information on to others.

But in regard the second part of this objective –

to learn how they can be a part of a motivated, informed and organised civil society organisation (e.g the UNA) to influence their government (through better informed campaigning & voting behaviour) to make the UN work how it is supposed to work according to its Charter - an international treaty –

This was in no way achieved.

In addition to the lack of time, the second part of the objective 2) was too ambitious for an experimental event. But it is one of things that we can include in our Suggested Way Forward.

SUGGESTED WAY FORWARD FOR CONSULTATION

The Low Turnout and Publicity

From the way of the world right now, it seems as if peace is difficult and war is easy. It also seems that 'war & peace' is the business of governments and there is little 'we the peoples' can do about it. Whereas, there is a lot more we can do for other issues such as poverty, poor health and social care and climate change. Also, these other issues get a lot more news coverage and gain celebratory patronage.

These are reasons we routinely give to explain why peace events attract fewer people than environmental events. But, if that was ever the real reason, it is not now the whole reason.

Before the Covid-19 Pandemic, most groups were losing numbers to their routine speaker events. And after the Pandemic, numbers at in-person events were even lower. Most likely because, in addition to still being wary of the risk of infection, people have become used to the convenience of Zoom and its obvious advantages. Certainly, before Covid, UNA-B&H used to get around 40 people to its peace events, but after Covid this had dropped to around 25, as indeed was the case for our UN Day 2022 event. Another reason for the low turnout may be that people were put off by the quiz and active self - learning model. Maybe, they preferred the relative ease of the passive learning model offered by speaker meetings.

We could at this stage, spend time on improving our publicity. But since it is unlikely that we will celebrate UN Day as we have done in the past ever again, this would be a waste of time. Until we have discussed and agreed how we are going to develop our experimental model of education, we don't know what kind of events we will be advertising.

Developing the Active Self-Learning, Participant-led Model of Education

The purpose of our **Peace & Human Security Programme** is to inspire and guide people to improve their knowledge and appreciation of the United Nations, so as to enable them to better support the UN Member States to abide by the international law embodied in, and generated by, the UN Charter.

So far, all we have done is to hold annual UN Day Peace Events that now – after Covid-19 - attract fewer people each year. Therefore, these events are not 'cost-effective' in terms of balancing the amount work we put into them with progress made in achieving our purpose. However, we should not down play the contribution toward this end made by the people who did attend UN Day 2022. Most of them well-participated in new Quiz/Discussion format of the day, which has given us some positive ideas and much encouragement to further develop our new model of education.

SUGGESTED LIST OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

1) Construct a 2-Year Project to Consolidate UNA-B&H Peace & Human Security Programme worthy of application for funding to a Grant Awarding Agency

- 1.1. Draft a concise UNA-B&H Peace Policy Statement based on the accumulated outcomes of the 5 annual UN Day Peace Events to be confirmed by the membership at the UNA-B&H AGM in February, 2023.
- 1.2. Prepare a Strategy for Action on the Peace Policy Statement that a) uses the resources created by UN Day 2022 (see No. 2 below) to contribute to public education about how the UN System works and how it is supposed to work and b) considers how to use the Statement to lobby Parliament.
- 1.3. Try again, having failed the first time, to improve inter-group collaborative working for peace in Rother, Bexhill and Hastings. This includes UNA and non-UNA groups.
- 1.4. In preparation for achieving the ultimate aim of an annual 'One World Festival' (see 1.5 below) we should celebrate UN Day 2023 on 21st October with a modest event to review progress with the Strategy for Peace Policy Action. Also, test the currently shelved idea of holding a UN/UNA church service for world peace on the nearest Sunday to UN Day (i.e 22nd October in 2023) with a view to this becoming a regular part of the church's calendar on par with Remembrance Sunday.

It should be noted that some other UNA branches are already doing this.

- 1.5. Celebrating UN Day 2024 as a weekend event – 20/21 or 26/27 October - with a full scale 'One World Festival' showcasing the UNA and other groups, including missions, that are working towards the common goal of making the world – on all levels – a better place – in all aspects – to live in for all peoples, animals and other lifeforms. Although Saturday would be the main day, the Festival would carry over to the Sunday morning and end with a full scale UN/UNA Church Service for World Peace.

2) Break down the 2022 Exhibition into its Component Parts

2.1. Break down the Exhibition according to topic & ownership as follows

Ownership by UNA-Bexhill & Hastings Branch

- About the United Nations
- War & Peace and Human Security
- The Human Fallout of Warfare – Refugees
- The UN Culture of Peace and Human Development
- The Environment and Climate Change

Ownership by the Exhibiter

- The UNSC's Failure to Maintain International Peace and Security (Hilary Evans: UNA-Twickenham & Richmond Branch)
- The global Peace Pole Network – messaging '*May Peace Prevail on Earth*. (Marie Miller: UNA-B&H and Bexhill Quakers)
- Learning from History – Language and Communication (Mike Wade: UNA-B&H)
- The Declaration of Climate Emergency by Rother District Council (Cllr. Polly Gray)
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- Think Global, Live Local (Laurence Keeley: UNA-B&H)

2.2. The whole UN Day 2022 Quiz & Exhibition can be repeated as a one-day event, if the opportunity arises or if the UNA-B&H is invited to do so by another organisation.

2.3. At the same time, UNA-B&H may offer all or parts of its owned exhibits as a tailor-made UNA event to other organisations.

2.4. Also, at the same time, but separately, the other Exhibitors will be free to offer their own exhibits as a non-UNA event to other organisations.

3) A on-line UN Resource Centre and a Branch Website

3.1. Put the on-line UN Resource Centre – *Discovering the United Nations* – on hold for now.

As according to the project description for UN Day 2022, Sheila Kesby and John Lynes did set up a rudimentary website dedicated to learning about the UN. But this did not reach even an experimental stage due to lack of time and a number of other difficulties. This has given us pause for a rethink about the whole idea, especially as we have received an offer of help from David Wardrop and the UNA-London & South East Region (UNA-LaSER).

3.2. This experience, plus the difficulties we have with advertising events, indicates that UNA-B&H needs an ordinary branch website, as most other active branches already have. Therefore, UNA-B&H should first set-up its own website with the assistance of two of its own members (John Lynes and Laurence Keeley) and other branches such as David Wardrop's Westminster Branch. Meanwhile, David has offered us a small space on UNA-Westminster's website for anything that we need to get urgently on-line.

3.3. Secondly, since UNA-LaSER has already asked to be kept informed about what we do next with UN Day 2022, UNA-B&H should approach the Region to see if the proposed UN Resource Centre – *Discovery the United Nations* – could become a regional project. And if so, the project may not need a separate website. UNA-LaSER has just extended its

own website to include a section entitled 'What Next for the United Nations' on which, we have also been offered space. Therefore, it might be possible in time, to merge the UNA-B&H idea for an on-line UN Resource centre with UNA-LaSER's ambitions to extend and expand its own website.

In Summary, this list is not meant to be exclusive nor exhaustive.

It is just meant to set the scene for discussion and consultation about how to make good on our investment of time, energy and research put into UN Day 2022, so as to assist UNA-B&H to decide what it does next with its Peace & Human Security Programme.

IN CONCLUSION, as you might be preparing to take part in this consultation, think on this.

At the same time (the last two weeks of October) as the UNA nations, regions and branches are celebrating UN Day, four out of the P5 are engaged in testing their nuclear arsenal, while more latterly, China is rising above and beyond its economy with ever increasing war-like tendencies.

From the 17th – 30th October, Britain, France and the USA led NATO in the annual exercising of its nuclear deterrence in north-west Europe. During the same time period, Russia notified the United States that it intended to begin its annual exercises of its nuclear forces on 26th Octoberⁱ.

NATO describes itself as a nuclear alliance with the fundamental purpose to preserve peace, deter aggression and prevent coercion. Assumedly, in respect of its stated purpose, NATO claimed that this year's testing of its nuclear capability was simply the routine annual training activity and was not linked to the War in Ukraine or, for that matter, to any current world eventⁱⁱ.

This portrayal of the beliefs and actions of the P5 is contrary to those of the UN General Assembly that on 22nd January 2021, entered its UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons into force, thus making nuclear weapons illegal under international law. Furthermore, the beliefs and actions of the P5 have been contrary to the UN Charter since they started the Cold War in 1947.

Meanwhile, the Reform of the UN Security Council appears to have fallen off the agendas of the UNA Policy Conferences. Even in 2022, when the P5's reaction to the invasion of Ukraine by Putin's Russia indicates that the Council has failed in its primary purpose to maintain international peace and security.

We should take this into account as we prepare to formulate the UNA-B&H Peace Policy Statement, which will be based on the accumulated outcomes of our five annual UN Day Peace Events. Also, once confirmed, the Statement will govern our proposed 2-Year Project to Consolidate UNA-B&H Peace & Human Security Programme.

REFERENCES

ⁱ [Russia notifies U.S. it will carry out expected nuclear drills](https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense)
[https://www.reuters.com › business › aerospace-defense](https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense)

ⁱⁱ [NATO's annual nuclear exercise gets underway, 14-Oct.-2022](https://shape.nato.int/news-archive/2022)
[https://shape.nato.int › news-archive › 2022](https://shape.nato.int/news-archive/2022)