



## London and South East Region UNA

### *Minutes of AGM Saturday 20th November 2021 via Zoom*

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#### **1 Attendance**

##### **Present**

*Chair:* Patricia Rogers. *Secretary:* Jane Beeley. *Treasurer:* Peter Webster.

*Members:* Swadeka Ahsun, Gillian Allard, Gonzalo Alvarez, Ambesso Ambesso, Daniela Avila, Balbir Singh Bakhshi, Brian Beeley, Heiner Benking, Josephine Biss, Dorothy Brooks-Usher, Peter Chalkley, Gian Clare, Gillian Dare, Trevor Evans, Euan Grant, Neville Grant, Peter Greaves, Terhas Hagos, John Hemsley, Keith Hindell, David Hoadley, Mary Holmes, Annesha Kar Gupta, Laurence Keeley, Caroline Langdon, Sarah Lasenby, Richard Lawson, Ian McFarlane, Rodney Mantle, Peter Marshall, Salem Mezhoud, Valeria Minisini, Marguerita Morton, Titilayo Odukale, Diana Pidgeon, Catherine Pluygers, Anita Punwani, René Smit, Suheil Shahryar, Sarita Singh, Sally Spear, Rob Storey, Bala Subramanyam, Nazli Töre, Antony Vallyon, Michael Vince, David Wardrop, Nicholas Watts, Sarah Webster, Vernon White, John Wilde, Alison Williams, Caroline Wilson and Shmuel Yerushalmi.

#### **2 Minutes of last AGM and Matters Arising**

2.7 David Wardrop corrected the spelling of Lord Ahmad's surname.

#### **3 Chair's Report**

##### 1. Zoom

Another year dominated by COVID has meant very little face-to-face contact. But we have still been active.

##### 2. UN75

In the 2 months following our October 2020 UN75 Festival – *Building a More Secure World* – we brought together the recommended actions from the workshops on Health Security, Food Security, Environmental Security, Economic Security, Digital Security and Peace and Security. Each had recommended actions for individuals, communities, nations and the international community. The resultant publication, *Urgent Actions for a More Secure World*, is available on the festival website, [www.whatnext4un.org](http://www.whatnext4un.org), as are the recordings of the workshops, conference and concert of the festival. We had planned to present the *Actions* publication to the UN Secretary-General on 10<sup>th</sup> January when he had been due to visit London to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first General Assembly meeting, held in central London. However, COVID resulted in the cancellation of his visit, so, on 10<sup>th</sup> January, we presented the *Actions* to him electronically. We also created an electronic assembly for secondary schools based on the Health and Security workshop; please contact me for a link to this.

##### 3. Campaigning

Campaigning has again been a central part of our activity. The details are all on our website

- In January we campaigned for the UK to join the UN Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.
- In March we urged the government not to cut UK aid to the suffering people of Yemen.
- In May, as well as supporting a Just Energy Transition and a Green Recovery, we promoted the Glasgow Action Plan for COP26:
  - for mitigation, limiting temperature rise to 1.5°C above preindustrial levels
  - for adaptation, enabling communities to adapt
  - for help to address climate-change-created loss and damage (social, cultural and economic).
- In May, in response to renewed violence in the Holy Land, we campaigned for actions to help bring peace to Israel/Palestine.
- In May, we supported a coalition calling for an overhaul of the UK domestic oil and gas policies.
- In May, as part of the Crack the Crises coalition and targeting the G7 meeting, we urged the rich world's leaders to ensure COVID vaccines for all, as well as to address climate change.
- In August, we promoted the work of our Working Group on Aid and Development, led by Catherine Pluygers, to press for urgent restoration of UK aid to the promised 0.7% gross national income.
- In August and October, led by our small Afghanistan Working Group, we pressed for government and international actions to mitigate the suffering – especially of women and children – caused by the international community's sudden withdrawal from Afghanistan and the takeover there by the Taliban.
- In October, in the lead-up to COP26, we campaigned for:
  - greenhouse emissions caused by military activity to be considered at the COPs
  - COP26 to deliver on loss and damage finance for poorer countries.
- In November (as members of the Climate Coalition) we have been giving on our website regular updates and suggested actions from COP26.

#### 4. Regional Councils

**Our Spring Council** (*Back from the Brink? COP26 and Beyond*) looked at science (Dr Michaela Higgin), toolkits and commitment ceremonies (Nigel Dower, UNA Aberdeen) and activism (Stuart Neaverson) linked to Climate Change and COP26.

**Our Summer Council**, run by Twickenham and Richmond UNA (TRUNA), led by René Smit, focused on the *UN: Past, Present – and Future?* The speakers were David Wardrop (on the Past), Prof Christine Chinkin (on UNSC 1325, Women, Peace and Security), Prof Paul Ekins (on Climate Change), Prof Sir Richard Jolly (on UN effectiveness and challenges), and Dr Sara Pantuliano (on principles, participation and accountability).

#### 5. Contributions

LASER is very much a team effort and I should like to thank the many who have contributed to our Region's activities.

- Branches have been very resourceful in running a wide range of mostly virtual activities and campaigns. I will highlight here a few especially noteworthy features:

- our new member, Luton Branch, is imaginative in involving local dignitaries (mayors, MPs, Lord Lieutenants, religious leaders, academic leaders) in their virtual events.
  - Westminster Branch – after years of unknotted tangles of red tape – launched the newly named UN Green in the heart of London.
  - Several branches – notably Tunbridge Wells & Wealden and Climate & Oceans – have successfully involved more young people in their events.
  - Many branches have helped to build up awareness of climate change and momentum for political activity in the lead-up to COP 26, including Streatham and Clapham coordinating a COP correspondents’ group.
  - Eastbourne has been ahead of the climate change curve in its promotion of scientifically analysed Mvule tree-planting in Uganda .
  - A subcommittee is working on ways to support branches (mainly by learning from other branches, such as in techniques to find new helpers). If any branch is having difficulties, please contact me and we will try to help.
  - Gonzalo Alvarez ran a branches’ training session on effective use of social media.
- Thank you to the Executive Committee for all their support.
  - I should like particularly to thank Peter Webster, our indefatigable Treasurer, who has not only managed the money effectively (much more work than usual this year as we had large grants from the FCDO and Polden-Puckham for our UN75 Festival), but also led a successful Policy Conference and helped many meet the technical challenges thrown up by our new zoom-centred activities (while still holding down a demanding fulltime job). He also gave an [excellent presentation](#) to the UNA Groups’ meeting in May showing the many ways in which LASER was supporting work towards COP26. There will be a link to this in the minutes of this meeting.
  - Jane Beeley has found time, as well as chairing the Tunbridge Wells and Wealden branch, to be an efficient and eagle-eyed Regional Secretary.
  - Neville Grant helped edit the Newsletter for much of the year.
  - Sarah Webster has helped manage the Mailchimp mailings of the Newsletter.
  - Catherine Pluygers, my predecessor, who has founded the LASER Working Group on Aid and Development, to campaign for the restoration of UK aid to 0.7% GNI. She has also built strong links with Rotary International, who have a lot in common with us and whom I think some branches might find a useful source of support in running the branch. (It’s generally more successful to tap someone on the shoulder and say “I think it would be great to have you in our team” than to put out a general advertisement.
  - Annesha Kar Gupta, as well as being our Environmental Officer, has helped keep our website up to date
  - You – all our members, who are the lifeblood of the organisation,

We should welcome a range of further contributions, such as with the website, with editing and mailing out the monthly newsletters, with leading on various campaigns, with branch support, with engagement with young people, with suggesting and leading other regional roles. Do get in touch with me to take this further.

#### **4 Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer, Peter Webster, presented [the year's accounts](#) (up to 30th June).

The accounts had not yet had a formal examination.

- The big event was the *What Next for the UN?* online event where you see £15,500 income and expenditure totaling just under £15,000 leaving a fund of £580 for continued promotion of the event and the ideas arising
- Trisha is to be congratulated for raising £10k from the FCDO and £5k from Polden Puckham. We were also very grateful a donation of £500 from Eirwen Harbottle.
- Otherwise, the impact of Covid has been that we had no meeting expenses as we were able to use the Zoom subscription purchased as part of *What Next for the UN?* We are grateful for the individual donations received and to people contributing when signing up for regional events through Eventbrite as well as the Campaign Fund contributions from branches. We reduced the sum requested to 50% of that sought previously.
- We should also note the UNICEF collection by Dartford and District branch which continues the great tradition across many decades of raising funds for UNICEF and UNA, and Dartford are to be congratulated for keeping this going longer than any other branch has been able to.
- The Executive Committee also agree to transfer the balance of £1,167.17 from branch closures and other small historic funds to the general fund, but to offer grants to new start-up branches out of general funds when the need arises, rather than maintain a ring-fenced branch closures fund.

Peter expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Alan Palmer, who had formally examined the previous seven years' accounts.

Acceptance of the accounts and report was proposed by Jane Beeley and seconded by Michael Vince. This was passed unanimously.

#### **5 Policy Committee Chair's Report**

**5.1** As Chair of the Policy Committee, Peter Webster reported that a Policy Forum took place via Zoom on Saturday 27th February.

**5.2** In addition to the resolutions presented by branches in the weeks leading up to this event, the Policy Committee also encouraged further consideration of several outcomes of the [What Next for the UN?](#) event organised in October last year to mark the UN's 75th Anniversary.

**5.3** Seventeen resolutions were proposed. As finally agreed after discussion and some amendment, these were sent to the relevant government departments (mostly to the Foreign Secretary). This year the Committee had received a particularly full response from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The [resolutions agreed](#) are displayed on the LASER website, as is the [FCDO letter](#).

#### **6 Environmental Officer's Report**

This report is based on a survey of branches in accordance with the Carbon Footprint Reduction Resolution agreed at the 2020 Policy Conference. Of those approached, seven branches and UNA LASER had responded to Annesha Kargupta, the Environmental Officer. [Here is a link](#) to her full report:

#### **7 Resolution for amendment to the constitution**

A change to the constitution was proposed. The purpose of this resolution was to make room for more members but it should not mean that those who are already members would be

disadvantaged. [Here](#) is the text of the resolution, which, after a short discussion, was adopted.

### **8 Awarding of the Steven's Trophy.**

There were two nominations for the Stevens Trophy for 2021, namely Westminster branch and UNA Climate and Oceans. Neville Grant gave the citation for Westminster and Jane Beeley gave the citation for UNA Climate and Oceans. Both nominations were agreed unanimously. Trisha thanked David Wardrop and Gonzalo Alvarez for their inspirational achievements.

### **9 Elections**

(Representatives of the branches that have been awarded the Stevens Trophy, namely Gonzalo Alvarez and David Wardrop, are automatically on the Committee.)

The following were elected via Zoom:

Chair: Trisha Rogers Treasurer: Peter Webster Secretary: Jane Beeley

Continuing Committee members: Neville Grant, Salem Mezhoud, Catherine Pluygers, René Smit, Rob Storey and Antony Vallyon.

Two new Committee members: Valeria Minisini and Suheil Shahrya

### **10 AOB**

**10.1** Reports for inclusion in the next newsletter should be sent to Trisha by 24 November.

**10.2** The next Executive Committee meeting will be on 26 November.

**10.3** Normally one of the LASER branches hosts either the Spring Council or the Summer Council. Those interested in doing so in 2022 are invited to express their interest, choose a topic on which to focus and let Trisha know.

**10.4** David Wardrop congratulated Trisha on her comprehensive Chair's report.

**10.5** Gonzalo Alvarez would welcome advice on how he might assist a young Afghan youth activist who is a member of UNA Climate and Oceans. The young man, who fears his life may be in danger because of his activities, seeks help to leave the country safely. Trisha will advise Gonzalo on who he might contact.

### **11 Presentation from President – Sir Peter Bottomley, MP**

Sir Peter had submitted a recording of his presentation, as regrettably he had been admitted to hospital the previous day. However, the sound quality on the recording was poor so attempts to play it were aborted. Trisha Rogers will include the text of his talk in the next LASER Newsletter.

**Patricia Rogers Chair**

**Jane Beeley Secretary**