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***The Laser Pulse***  
The Newsletter of UNA LASER

**2023 Issue No. 6**

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## From Our Chair



**Trisha Rogers**

Thank you, UNA Canterbury, for hosting an energising LASER Summer Council, examining refugee issues, locally, nationally and internationally. We were delighted to meet some inspiring refugees as we learned about the remarkable range of support provided by local voluntary organisations, helping these traumatised people with their legal, practical and emotional challenges. Elizabeth Ruddick from UNHCR then reminded us of the global framework for such activities, based on the [1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees](#), updated in the [2018 UN Global Compact on Refugees](#), which recognised that

“sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation”. It was salutary to be reminded that more than three quarters of refugees are hosted in low and middle income countries, the vast majority of refugees staying in countries neighbouring their own.

The fact that France and Germany each receive more than twice the number of asylum seekers of the UK also contradicts the ‘UK invasion’ rhetoric being used by government ministers. Both the 2022 *UK Nationality and Borders Act* and the currently debated *Illegal Migration Bill* include several breaches of our commitments under International Law, such as criminalizing and penalizing or making stateless some asylum seekers. Those of us committed to the UN framework and to international cooperation must ensure that our government meets its obligations in supporting those seeking asylum here. We can [join campaigns](#) on these issues.



We were reminded, too, of the strong links between LASER's current issues of concern. In particular, climate change is often a driver of both displacement and of conflict, adding an urgency to meeting our commitments under the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (see our campaign below). The continuing reduction of our overseas aid budget drastically endangers our meeting our obligations both for refugees and for climate change mitigation, as well as for providing humanitarian assistance and life improvements for the world's most disadvantaged people. Please continue to support [our aid campaign](#).



## Campaigns

### The Lead-Up to COP28



The recent resignation of Lord Zac Goldsmith, whose ministerial portfolio included Energy, Climate Change and the Environment, reminded us that the government is slipping on its climate change commitments. [Briefed here](#) by our Campaigns Officer, Valeria Minisini, we must all urge [our MPs](#) to keep up the pressure to:

- phase out fossil fuels;
- protect global food systems;
- connect the climate and biodiversity crises;
- meet our commitments to recognise the needs of all people (particularly the world's poorest and most vulnerable) in the mitigation of climate change

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## Environment

Huge congratulations to those who took part in this year's Great Big Green Week, the UK's biggest celebration of community action to tackle climate change and protect nature. This [highlights video](#) shows the breadth of activity throughout the week, which might inspire you for future action!



## Branches

### Activities

Areas of recent branch activities have included: work with schools; addressing hunger around the world; the needs and rights of asylum seekers, human rights at sea; biodiversity; local carbon footprints; peace-making and peace-keeping; Israel and the Palestinians; SDGs. Most of these were speaker events, but there were also Model United Nations General Assemblies, campaigning meetings, film sharing and debates, as well as some remarkable articles on websites like [these of UNA Westminster](#). Congratulations on an impressive range of expertise, awareness raising and action! [Let us know](#) of other activities that you'd like to share.

### Governance

Branch governance is another important focus of concern. A crucial task that is easily neglected is **succession planning**. Some branches find that working with local branches of like-minded organisations – both those focusing on particular issues (like Amnesty, Oxfam, Campaign Against the Arms Trade, Refugee Council. or Friends of the Earth) and those focusing more widely on international affairs (like Rotary, faith and belief groups or local colleges and universities) – can be an effective way of engaging new people, possibly as committee members and future leaders. Do [contact us](#) if you would like support in taking any of this forward.

## Events

### LASER AGM

Her Excellency  
**Fatou Bensouda**



We shall hold our AGM on **28<sup>th</sup> October** in **Bermondsey Village Hall** (very close to London Bridge station), as well as on zoom. We are delighted that we shall be hearing from our new President, **Her Excellency Dr Fatou Bensouda**, who is Gambian High Commissioner and former Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. Save the date!

### UNA Warwick

On **8<sup>th</sup> July, 12:15 – 13:45**, Warwick District UN Association are holding their postponed meeting on **Burma (Myanmar)**. The speaker will be **Zoya Phan** of the Burma Campaign who will raise awareness of human rights abuses and the oppression of Burmese people by

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the military junta. This hybrid meeting will take place at **Leamington Spa Baptist Church (Warwick Hall)**, Chandos Street, CV32 4RN or [by zoom](#). Please feel free to bring your own lunches. Tea/coffee/biscuits will be provided.

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## UNA South London Branches

Supported by the London UNA Trust, on **10<sup>th</sup> July, 15:30 – 17:30**, the South London UNA Branches, with Women, Peace and Participation (WPP), the Afghan Women's Coalition for Change (AWCC), the Gender, Justice and Security Hub (WPS LSE) and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security (APPG WPS) are hosting a hybrid meeting on ***The Future of Women, Peace and Security in Afghanistan*** to consider the support for women's participation in the current socio-political and humanitarian processes in Afghanistan. The meeting will be held in the **House of Lords**, Committee Room 1 (hosted by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger; access through Cromwell Green Entrance) and online. For further information, email [here](#). Please [register here](#), indicating whether you would prefer to join in person or online.

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## UNA Westminster

On **12<sup>th</sup> July, 18:00 in Room 1, House of Lords** (hosted by Lord Teverson) UNA Westminster is hosting an event on ***Who cares about human rights beyond the horizon?*** The speaker will be **David Hammond**, Chief Executive of Human Rights at Sea, reviewing progress towards international policy change and introducing the new *Geneva Declaration on Human Rights at Sea*, which extends human rights engagement under existing international law. The event is open to all, but space is limited so [please register here](#).

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## UNA Luton

On **15<sup>th</sup> July, 17:00 – 19:00** Luton UNA is holding a virtual meeting to mark **Srebrenica Remembrance Day**, looking at ***Hate crime: consequences and prevention***. The event is rooted in the genocide in Srebrenica on 11th July 1995: the worst atrocity on European soil since World War II. The aim is to find ways forward locally, nationally and globally for promoting sustainable peace and community cohesion wherever we are, especially in a plural society such as Britain. Speakers are **Paul Salver** and **Dr Helen Connolly**. [Here is the zoom link](#).

Luton UNA is also planning the following events. For further information, nearer each date, please contact [the Chair](#).

- On **23<sup>rd</sup> September, 17:00 – 19:00**, a virtual event will consider ***Restoration of a healthy environment: plastic pollution and solutions***
  - On **21<sup>st</sup> October, 17:00 – 19:00**, a virtual event will mark United Nations Day, considering ***Is the United Nations relevant to our times?***
  - On **16<sup>th</sup> December, 17:00 – 19:00**, a virtual event will mark **International Migrants Day**, considering ***Displaced people and migration***
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## UNA Enfield and Barnet

On **19<sup>th</sup> July**, and **25<sup>th</sup> July**, both at **19:00 – 20:30**, the Enfield Climate Action Forum is running two online workshops with Enfield and Barnet UNA (EBUNA) on **From Global to Local - Deploying En-ROADS to support local climate actions**. They will examine a climate model – **En-ROADS** (Energy-Rapid Overview with Decision – Support) and its potential deployment in supporting local climate action. The model was developed by Climate Interactive in collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and is used worldwide. These workshops will be presented by **Ali Hessami**, an expert on risk assessment and a champion of the En-ROADS Model.

The first workshop, on 19<sup>th</sup> July, will introduce the climate model and its six principal parameter classes and explain its potential in building actions to help tackle climate change locally. For this first workshop, please register [here](#).

The second workshop, on 25<sup>th</sup> July, will follow up the introductory session, exploring the six principal parameter classes of the En-ROADS model for pragmatic local action and help identify policies, initiatives and citizen actions that can make a positive contribution

to stemming the global temperature rise and enhancing local preparedness and resilience. For the 20 July workshop, please register [here](#).

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## UNA Southern Region

On **23<sup>rd</sup> September**, Southern Region will hold its AGM in the Newbury area and will welcome LASER members. For further details please contact [their Chair](#).

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## UNA Harpenden



On **30<sup>th</sup> September, 10:30**, UNA Harpenden will host ***The Agonies of Empire: the Second American Civil War?*** led by **Professor Mick Cox**, LSE. The meeting will be held at **The Salvation Army Hall**, Harpenden AL5 2TG. [RSVP](#).

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## Next Deadline for Submissions

Please [send us](#) any materials or suggestions for the next edition of *Pulse* by **29<sup>th</sup> August**. For announcement of events, it is helpful if you can download and use [this template](#).



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