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From Our Chair



Trisha Rogers

It was good to see many of you – in-person and online – at our Policy Conference on 9th March. A huge amount of work and expertise had gone in to drafting and amending the resolutions that were presented: congratulations to all the groups involved and many thanks to our Policy Committee. The agreed resolutions are now [on our website](#). Do share these with [your MPs](#), as well as with local candidates in the forthcoming election; they can be a useful framework for any hustings we organise.

As you will have seen, we covered a wide range of topics, particularly the current horrific Israel-Gaza conflict. It is encouraging that attempts are being made to avoid more suffering and war by using legal means, such as through the International Court of Justice. This legal pathway to resolve conflict is the aim of [LAW not War](#), of which LASER is a member.

On 15th March, LAW not WAR is launching a crowdfunding campaign to which [this film](#) is an introduction. The final version of LAW not WAR's [Zero Draft Pact for the Future](#) will be adopted at this summer's [UN Summit of the Future](#), the preparation for which you can keep up with by signing up through the [Summit of the Future Information Clearing House](#).

LASER Dates

On 22nd June, 10:30-16:45, at St. Peter's Community Centre, Church Street, Bexhill-on-Sea, TN40 2HE UNA Bexhill and Hastings are hosting the LASER **Summer Council** on *Ploughshares into Swords*, considering ways to replace wars by sustainable peace as envisaged in the UN Charter. There will be speakers (including **Professor Richard Sakwa**), workshops and informal networking. The programme will build on UNA Bexhill and Hastings' 6-year project, developing a Peace Policy Statement, as well as the LAW not WAR campaign. Enrolment will be open from next month. Although the event will be hybrid, discussion will be an important component, so we encourage as many people as possible to attend in-person. If you envisage having any travel difficulties, please [contact me](#). For further information about the event, please contact [Sheila Kesby](#).

On 2nd December at Bermondsey Village Hall, we shall hold our **AGM** and annual address by our **President HE Dr Fatou Bensouda**. We shall then be looking for a new President, for which role I would [welcome suggestions](#).

Campaigning

Boycotts, Divestments and Sanctions

Boycotts, divestment and sanctions provide peaceful but powerful means for people to demonstrate their disapproval of the behaviour of some other organisation or country. These techniques were enormously effective in ending apartheid in South Africa. Many organisations now try to trade, invest and engage ethically, avoiding supporting illegal or immoral activities. The *Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters)* Bill would prevent any publicly funded organisation from putting pressure or avoiding trading with organisations of which they disapprove. (The Bill explicitly mentions organisations in Israel, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Occupied Golan Heights as not to receive boycotts, divestment or sanctions.)



We continue [lobbying in LASER](#) against this Bill. Please [write to your MPs](#) against it. Since the Bill is now awaiting its committee stage

in the House of Lords, due on 20th March, please write, too, to any peers you know – including [the present and previous Chairs of UNA-UK](#), Baroness Joyce Anelay and Lord Stewart Wood — urging that this Bill should not be passed. ***You've still – just! – got time to take action to prevent this proposed removal of a key way of our peacefully addressing immoral actions by organisations and governments.***

Climate Change

There is now less than 3 months to go until *The Great Big Green Week*. Do start planning your own local events (see [ideas here](#)). Do, too, encourage your local teachers to [sign up](#) to receive Climate Coalition resources straight to their inboxes.

Groups' Support

I am delighted to welcome a new Member Group to LASER: The UNA Language Group supports the engagement of young people across the UN intergovernmental process, by providing capacity building and technical language support, focussing on human rights, gender equality and the Summit of the Future. Further information [here](#).

We continue to share our recent AGM presentations of inspiring activities from LASER groups. The presentation by David Wardrop from UNA Westminster described [Partnerships for UNA Branches](#), reminding us of the effectiveness of working with other organisations, often eager to be part of something linked to the UN. The project shared by Sheila Kesby from UNA Bexhill and Hastings described their [UN Peace and Human Security Project](#), which we can learn more about at our Summer Council in Bexhill on 22nd June (see above). These presentations from groups, as well as being shared in each edition of *Pulse*, can now be found on the [Branches page of our website](#).

UNA Enfield and the Barnets (EBUNA) is focussing on SDG2 (Zero Hunger) & SDG13 (Climate Action). They would welcome collaboration and experience-sharing with other groups through contact with [Ali Hessami](#).

It is important to keep our groups' publicity up-to-date. Please ensure that your groups:

- respond (by 18th March) to [UNA-UK's](#) request (for their new website) for your group name, description, location (or virtual), website
- let me know of any changes that need to be made to your group description on our website.

Events - UNA Groups

UNA Wandsworth

On **16th March, 10:30**, UNA Wandsworth, with the Putney Society, invites you to join them outside **Southfields Library** for the unveiling of a plaque by **Fleur Anderson, MP**, followed by a talk by **Robin Gerber**, to commemorate Eleanor Roosevelt's formative years in Southfields, where she attended Allenswood School. For further information, please contact the [principal organiser](#).

UNA Westminster

On **19th March, 18:30**, at the **Alumini Lecture Theatre at SOAS**, UNA Westminster, with the Bar Council of England and Wales and the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy at SOAS, is holding its **21st Annual International Law Lecture**, on ***Where are we in combatting impunity?*** to be presented by **Professor Kingsley Abbott** of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies. With authoritarianism, instability and conflict on the rise globally, do we have an impossible task? Or are there hopeful signs in the increased use of universal jurisdiction and the rise of a new generation of accountability mechanisms created by UN bodies (including the UN Human Rights Council)? There will be a wine reception following the lecture. Admission free. For full information and to register, [please click here](#).

UNA Warwick

On **23rd March, 12:30**, at the **Leamington Spa Baptist Church**, CV32 4RN, UNA Warwick are holding a hybrid meeting on **Challenges for Humanitarian Action in Conflicts**, with speaker **Dr Martin Barber**, UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. In an armed conflict, the safety, dignity, and livelihoods of civilian populations is the most pressing action and yet often the most difficult to ensure. The zoom link is [here](#).

UNA Blackheath and Greenwich

On **27th March, 18:30**, in **Room 002 King William Court, University of Greenwich, SE10 9LS**, UNA Blackheath and Greenwich, with Greenwich University, is holding a talk on **Reflections of an International Criminal Court Prosecutor** by Her Excellency Dr Fatou Bensouda, High Commissioner for Gambia and former Chief Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court (ICC). She will not only remind us of some of the important interventions and prosecutions during her time as ICC Prosecutor, but also consider its role in some key present global challenges. Please register [here](#).

UNA Harpenden



On **6th April, 10:45**, at the **Salvation Army Hall, Harpenden AL5 2TG**, UNA Harpenden is hosting a talk by Professor Gwyn Bevan, LSE on **The Problems of Governing a Neoliberal Britain**. This talk will focus on three themes: political settlements that have established how Britain has been governed; the failing of the neoliberal settlements in service provision; corrosive consequences of 40 years of neoliberalism in Britain. Please [use this link to register](#) for the talk.

Events - Other Organisations

Amnesty UK

On **21st March, 19:00 – 20:30**, Amnesty Central England Network are holding an online panel discussion on **Israel/Gaza: impacts, human rights and routes to peace**. Panellists include **Dr Marwan Darweish**, **Dr Samah Jabr**, **Professor Lynne Segal**, with Chair **Dr Alan Kessedjian**. They would welcome people linked to UNA. [Please register here](#).

The Next Edition of Laser Pulse

Please [send us](#) any materials or suggestions for the next edition of *Pulse* by **16th April 2024**. For announcement of events, it is helpful if you can download and use [this template](#).



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