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From Our Chair

It is with great sadness that we report the death of internationalist and geophysicist **Derek Morris**, a longstanding friend of UNA Harpenden, who chaired the branch from 1999 to 2005. He died from Covid-19 on *14th July*, after two weeks in hospital. His eulogy is [here](#). We shall miss him and send our condolences to his wife, Madeline, and son, Robert.



LASER Dates for your Diaries

Our AGM will be on **2nd November, 11:00** (with more information in *UNA Events*, below). Our Policy Conference will be on **15th March, 2025** (so you can start preparing resolutions and remind yourself of our current resolutions [here](#)). Both will be at [Bermondsey Village Hall](#), near London Bridge.

Campaigning

A new government – especially one that has won the election on the promise of “Change!” – gives us an important opportunity to press for progress on key issues.

UNGA

As the government approaches its first UN General Assembly (UNGA), which starts on 10th September, our Campaigns Officer [gives us the background](#) so we can ask [our MPs](#), ahead of the UNGA, to urge the UK government, to:

- conduct an updated Voluntary National Review of our work towards the Sustainable Development Goals (not done since 2019)
- invest more in youth and civil society
- ensure that the Women, Peace and Security agenda is central to all peacekeeping plans
- uphold the norms of International Humanitarian Law, such as respecting the international courts and helping to protect civilians and humanitarian workers by not providing military equipment to countries violating international law.

Israel/Palestine

We welcome the new UK government’s strengthening of attempts to prevent the loss of civilian life and human rights abuses in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, most recently in the West Bank and also by suspending 30 (out of 350) arms export licences (for arms assessed possibly to be used for harming Palestinian detainees or impeding the supply of aid to Gaza). While the government has announced that it will – in due course – recognise the state of Palestine, it is hesitating as to when to do that. The [Balfour Project stresses](#) that now is the time and encourages us to ask [our MPs](#) to press for this.

Climate Change

Meet Your MP Day

If you would like to lobby your MP about climate change action in person, on **12th October** join the [Meet Your MP Day](#) of the Climate Coalition (of which LASER is a member). Information about resources and online training is [here](#).

Preparing for COP29

For excellent (and entertaining) summaries of global developments approaching COP29, you can sign up [here](#) for the climate diplomacy briefings from Ed King of the [Global Strategic Communications Council](#).

Groups' News and Support

Local Committees and Officers

Looking back at the work of Derek Morris reminds us that our local Chairs and committees are the lifeblood of UNA groups. We depend on these volunteers and greatly value the range of ideas, energy and experience that they bring to our work – as a critical friend of the UN system – for a more peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. If you are not already involved in our work in this way, do consider helping with your local groups and encouraging those you know who share our vision to do so too. Do [contact us](#) if you'd like to explore this further.

Annual Group Carbon Footprint Report

If not done already – and as mandated at our Policy Conference in 2019 – please ensure that your group responds by **14th September** to the survey from our Environment Officer, [Annesha Kar Gupta](#); you can download the form [here](#).

Threat to Democracy in India



The Chair of UNA Harpenden, [Suheil Shahryar](#), invites you to join a small working group to help devise a campaign on the current threats to democracy in India, including the demonization of India's 200+ Muslims and other ethnic minorities (14% of India's total population), with its potential for huge human rights abuses. The group is working to analyse the situation, draft a resolution for LASER to consider, raise awareness (such as through creating a presentation for local groups) and suggest other ways of taking the campaign forward.

Working Group on UN Security Council Reform

At a recent UNA Groups' meeting, following presentations from UNA Luton and UNA Bexhill & Hastings on projects they had each been doing on how to enable the UN to be more effective in building peace, in spite of a divided Security Council, it was agreed to establish a **Working Group on UN Security Council Reform**. If you would like to join this Working Group, please email [LASER](#) and our [elected trustees](#).

Reforming The
United Nations



@prezi.com

Working Group on Local Implementation of the SDGs

Several LASER UNA groups, working with their local Councils on [local implementation](#) of the [SDGs](#), have created a Local SDG Working Group to support and learn from each other. Some UNA Groups have been doing this for several years; others are just starting. Do [contact LASER](#) if you would like to join this Working Group.

Model United Nations

Model United Nations (MUN) events can be an effective and enjoyable way for young people to learn about international issues and structures while analysing different countries' priorities and policies. They develop skills of research, communication and teamwork. Last term in our Region there were successful ones in primary and secondary schools and in universities (both in individual institutions and also involving several across a community or even across different countries). Several UNA LASER groups are supporting [MUN activities](#). If you might be interested in working with your local schools or colleges in this way – or would like to share your experience with others starting on this life-transforming journey – [please get in touch](#).

UNA Events

UNA Luton

On **20th September, 17:00-19:00**, UNA Luton is hosting a free webinar on ***Increasing Supply and Equitable Access to Social Housing***. The speakers will be **Dr Suzanne Muna**, Co-Founder of the Social Housing Action Campaign, **Professor Stewart Smyth**, Cork Business School, **Dr David Cheesman**, former Head of Policy Research and Statistics at the Housing Corporation. The focus will be on increasing the supply of – and equitable access to – social housing in the UK, with the possibility of finding social justice solutions also applicable to governments and NGOs in other democratic countries. The [zoom link](#) is here (with passcode 796127, if needed).

UNA Harpenden



On **21st September, 10:30**, at the **Salvation Army Hall**, Harpenden AL5 2TG, UNA Harpenden is hosting a hybrid on ***The Failure of the British Planning System: how it creates unaffordable housing, divides the generations, forces longer commutes, and costs prosperity*** by **Professor Paul Cheshire**, London School of Economics.

Please register [here](#) to attend, either in-person or via Zoom (a Zoom link will be sent to you after registration.)

The British land use planning system is internationally an outlier which we exported to our colonies. The result is that almost the only cities with housing costs as unaffordable as London are Vancouver, Toronto, Auckland and Sydney, as well as some in India. In most European countries there are reciprocal obligations, legally enforceable, so that national priorities have to inform local plans, and local priorities have to inform national plans (for infrastructure or housing provision). And if the democratically agreed local plan says a development is legal, then it automatically gets permission. Please register [here](#) to attend.

On **25th January, 17:45**, at the **Park Hall, AL5 2LZ**, UNA Harpenden is holding a **Burns Supper** to celebrate the life and poetry of Robert Burns. It will cost £25 per head. Please make your reservation [here](#).



UNA Warwick District



On **28th September, 12:30-13:45**, Warwick District UNA is hosting a free hybrid talk and debate at **Leamington Spa Baptist Church, CV32 4RN** on ***A Case for the UN Transitional Authority in Gaza***. The speaker will be **Richard Caplan**, Professor of International Relations at Oxford University, former editor *World Policy Journal* and former advisor to the House of Commons Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. The UN has experience – such as in Cambodia, East Timor and Namibia – of providing 'transitional authority' temporary governance arrangements to facilitate transition from violent conflict. To register, please contact [Gian Clare](#). The zoom link is [here](#).

UNA Canterbury

On **27th October, 17:30**, UNA Canterbury's annual **UNA Service for Peace**, will be held in **Canterbury Cathedral**. The service – which brings together many community organisations working to create a fairer, more sustainable world – will this year focus on **Implementing the [Sustainable Development Goals in the Community](#)**. The keynote address will be by Councillor Alan Baldock, Leader of Canterbury City Council and SDG Champion. For those who cannot attend in person, the event will be live-streamed on the Canterbury cathedral's YouTube channel.

LASER AGM

On **2nd November, 12 noon**, **LASER AGM** will be at **Bermondsey Village Hall**, Kirby Grove, London SE1 3TD, with directions to the hall from London Bridge station [here](#). It will include a **Presidential Address** from LASER President **HE Dr Fatou Bensouda**, Gambian High Commissioner and former Chief Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court, as well as some presentations from local groups. Please [contact LASER](#) if you would like to describe an activity of your group that you think would interest other groups. Your presentation at the AGM would then be shared, with other groups' inspirational descriptions, [on our website](#).



Other Events

Movement for the Abolition of War

On **14th September, 10:30 – 16:00**, the Movement for the Abolition of War is holding a hybrid conference on ***Alternatives to War in a Time of Global Crisis*** at **Sands Film Studio, Rotherhithe, SE16 4HZ** and [online](#). "The positive news is that we can still prevent climate breakdown, not least through rapid decarbonisation, through modifying the economic system so that it works for everyone, and through demilitarising our approach to security. The numerous failed wars of the last 25 years should convince us that 'If war is the answer it must be a very stupid question'." Speakers include **John Gittings**, Towards a World Voice Diplomacy, **Diana Francis** former President of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, **Paul Rogers**, Peace Studies Professor Emeritus at Bradford University, **Jonathan Cohen**, Executive Director of Conciliation Resources **Andrei Gomez-Suarez**, Director, Rodeemos el Diálogo, Colombia, **Gwen Burnyeat**, University of Edinburgh, **Tanya Hubbard**, conflict transformation facilitator. Suggested donation £10.50. Find more information and book [here](#).

Overseas Development Institute (ODI)

On **17th September, 10:00-12:00**, ODI with Migration for Development and Equality ([MIDEQ](#)) is hosting a roundtable on ***Migration decision-making: beyond political rhetoric and guesswork***, looking at the latest evidence on migration decision-making and the

role of inequalities in migrants' use of intermediaries, at ODI, 203 Blackfriars Road, SE1 8NJ. Please register (for in-person or online attendance) [here](#).

The Next Edition of LASER Pulse

Please [send us](#) any materials for the next edition of *Pulse* by **1st October**. Please keep announcements short and in the normal *Pulse* format; it is helpful if you can download and use [this template](#).



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