

## Background of LASER Executive Committee Candidates, 2024

### Jane Beeley

I have chaired Tunbridge Wells (latterly Tunbridge Wells & Wealden) UNA branch for over thirty years. I am a Chartered Librarian. I have always worked full-time, firstly as a children's librarian, then as a student administrator for the SE Region of the Open University, where I gained my degree. I was a primary school governor for fifteen years. I became site librarian at an H & FE college, and in my last job I ran two hospital libraries for MTW NHS Trust. After retiring I joined the UNA-LASER Committee in 2014, and in January 2021 I became Secretary.

### Andrew Boakes

I am an Architect, managing my own practice. Currently a member of Harpenden, I joined UNA while at school (1975). I have been Secretary or Treasurer and/or Chair of the Hertford and Stevenage Branches and Member of Eastern Regional Council for 40 years. I was a Member of UNA-UK National Executive and Chair of Members Conference at various times over 35 years. I was a school governor for over 38 years (Chair for 10) and retired this year. My interests include International Peace and Security, Human Rights, Sustainable Development and the Environment, Climate and Global-warming, Inclusive Environments and Communities.

### David Cheesman

My SOAS PhD is in South Asian history. I am: founder-Secretary of UNA Luton (established 2009); Board Member (former Chair) of Squared Housing Association, Luton; Patron of *Purbachal – The Eastern Sky*, a Bangladeshi cultural organisation; a Policy Advisor at the Financial Conduct Authority; Joint Director of Equality in Diversity, an independent research, management and training consultancy. I was: External Examiner and Visiting Professor (Sheffield Hallam University); the Housing Corporation Head of Policy, Research and Statistics. Publications cover housing, economic/social history of Pakistan, decolonisation in Africa, community cohesion in the UK, Islam and secularism in Britain and France, memoir of Algeria.

### Gillian Dare

Formerly Diplomat working in Sub-Saharan Africa and on Middle East including Iraq and Jordan and South Asia issues and in Brussels, specialised in political and security policies in conflict affected and fragile counties; represented the UK on multi-lateral platforms. Strategy Manager for conflict in the MENA during Arab uprisings. Last role Senior Policy Officer for WPS & FCDO lead on safeguarding policies in international contexts. Trustee for NGOs working with refugees, minorities in the Middle East, women in Afghanistan and addressing trauma with victims of conflict. Member of the UK FORB Forum and Chair of its Iraq Working Group.

### Jessica Giles

Jessica is a dual-qualified barrister and solicitor, working in academia. She is a senior fellow of the Higher Education Academy (AdvanceHE) and senior lecturer at the Open University, researching into the human right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion in global context. She leads a research project on interdisciplinary law and religion studies, focussing mainly on how we might better support plural living together. She also has an interest in space law and human rights. She is passionate about engaging with local communities to bring International law and policy into meaningful contact with individuals lived experience.

### Ali Hessami

As a systems engineer and technologist, I have always considered social impact as a key aspect of societal concern with emerging technologies. This is well illustrated in the evolution of Artificial Intelligence technologies that are heralded to bring many benefits to the humanity alongside many potential harms and

threats. I believe the UNA movement and the LASER group have a key role to promote peace, common human values and equity/equality and collective prosperity values from the UN. I will be willing to support LASER in promoting and disseminating these ideals.

### **Salem Mezhoud**

I have a cross-functional experience as Head of region and programmes with the UN and NGOs in Human rights and humanitarian affairs, for the OHCHR, OCHA and UNICEF, ILO, HRW, MRG. I held academic posts at the Sorbonne, Columbia, Wilson Center (DC) and King's College London, and broadcasting roles for the BBC World Service, VOA, RFI, specialising in Africa and the Mediterranean, covering conflict, post-conflict reconstruction, Counter-terrorism in the Sahel. My involvement with UNA since 1984, included representing UNA at the European Social Forum (Paris). I am a member of the Executive Committee of UNA Westminster.

### **Valeria Minisini**

Valeria works in not for profit communications and has a background in gender, campaigning and social media management. She has been the UNA LASER Campaigns Officer for a couple of years and also serves as the branch Chair for UNA Canterbury. Valeria has been actively involved in UNA activities since her second year of university and has been involved in several national campaigns including #1for7billion.

### **Titilayo Odukale**

I am a legal Advisor, International Relations Officer, a Visionary and a Strategic influencer with workable solutions. I love cooking, world politics, singing and dancing. Discoveries in my legal advisory work led me to complete a stint of politics from Oxford University and I recently completed PhD in law and legal studies. I have been actively involved in UNA-UK activities since 2017 and I did social media for the LASER UN75 Festival on Economy Security.

### **Catherine Pluygers**

I am a musician and have always had an interest in development issues. I studied for a degree in development at Birkbeck University. I am vice-chair of UNA Wandsworth and a long-standing committee member of UNA Westminster. Currently I am chair of UNA LASER Trust and was chair of LASER from 2015-19. I have been on the executive committee of WILPF and have a particular interest in the welfare of women. Over the years I have helped deliver some very large projects for UNA, WILPF and Voices of African Women.

### **Trisha Rogers**

I am an educator and internationalist. I have worked in the UK, Nigeria, Pakistan and South Korea. I was Chief Executive of the Council for Education in World Citizenship, the Pestalozzi International Village and Jubilee Debt Campaign. I was a trustee of Chatham House, UNA-UK and Humanists UK. I worked in mathematics education, teaching at schools and universities. I believe local UNA groups are important for awareness raising and campaigning about the many ways the UN family of structures can help build a safer, fairer and sustainable world, as well as about the important international role of the UK.

### **Suheil Shahryar**

As an IT and cybersecurity consultant, I have been working in the financial services sector in the UK and world-wide for the last 30 years. With a degree in Astronomy from UCL and a Masters in Geophysics from Newcastle, my previous career for 15 years was that of a geophysicist working for oil companies in the UK and the Middle East. Born in Bangladesh, I have made England my home. A humanitarian and cosmopolitan at heart, I am interested in understanding and solving how human society can live and thrive sustainably and overcome the negative effects of our age, including climate change, inequality, unregulated technology and social, political and economic barriers. I am Chairman of UNA Harpenden.

**Hana Shono**

Hana Shono is a part-time paralegal and an aspiring solicitor hoping to specialise in the field of Intellectual Property. She also serves as Chair of UNA Scotland and is a volunteer intern at UN House Scotland of which she is part of various projects including Beyond COP, the Human Rights team and the Nuclear Disarmament team. Hana is also Deputy Chair of the UNA-UK Conference Committee, which organises the UNA-UK Conference every two years. She studied History at the University of St Andrews and holds a Masters in History from UCL and a Law degree from the University of Law.

**Antony Vallyon**

Member of Westminster branch, LASER Policy Committee, a Trustee; and also a working group for an International Environment Court, and of the Academic Council for UN System (ACUNS). I became inspired by working for UN University in Tokyo and at the UN Secretariat in New York in 1997 on peace, development, human rights and UN reform. I became active in UNA-USA, Australia, then New Zealand. After being a branch chair, I was President of UNA New Zealand from 2007-2010. I led the NZ delegation to the 2009 WFUNA Plenary in Seoul, and was Rapporteur for the UN Renewal session.

**David Wardrop**

I am a long-time member of the L&SER committee and have chaired Westminster UNA since 2001. Over the years, we have initiated and sustained a film festival, an international law lecture, and a conference and wreath-laying ceremony to mark International UN Peacekeepers Day. In 2021, the government agreed to our proposal for the naming of United Nations Green, here in the heart of London.

**Peter Webster**

I am chair of the Region's Policy Committee, and of Streatham & Clapham Branch. Outside UNA, I work in the field of Responsible/Ethical Investment. I have a University degree in Mathematics and an MBA. I believe UNA is an important means: for people to show their support for the UN's principles; for educating people about the UN's work; for campaigning to strengthen it; and for ensuring that our own government acts in line with international law, advances shared global goals and plays a constructive role as a UN member state and permanent member of the Security Council.