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**2024 Issue No. 9, October**

*We made some mistakes in the links in the earlier version of this Newsletter. Please replace it with the version below. If you have difficulty following any of the links in this newsletter, please tell [contact@unalaser.org](mailto:contact@unalaser.org).*

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From Our Chair



## Conflicts and Climate Change

Considering events in and around Sudan, Israel, Ukraine, Haiti and Myanmar, alongside the increasing floods and typhoons, the UN Secretary General summarised the situation as, "Today we see runaway conflicts and climate change." The UN seems to be playing an increasingly untenable game of whack-a-mole, as rising temperatures, brutal wars, trade tensions, unfiltered social media and the march of the far right take their toll.

But the UN is still the best forum in which to address these issues. Its agencies – such as UNICEF and UNWRA – are doing remarkable humanitarian work in Sudan and Palestinian communities; its court – the International Court of Justice – is listening to all sides and working to identify rules-based solutions; its linked court, governed by [The Rome Statute](#) – the International Criminal Court – is holding to account those breaking international laws; the General Assembly is highlighting unacceptable behaviour and demanding actions that respect human rights, particularly of the most vulnerable; the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change is preparing for its 29th annual conference on sustainability.

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the horrors we see on our screens. But we need to urge our politicians to work for peace, human rights and sustainability. The UK must use our privileged (and therefore responsible) position, with historical links to many of the most pressing current challenges. We must obey the rules (such as in arms sales), sanction others who don't obey the rules (such as in harming unarmed civilians and illegally occupying land), provide help to those suffering most (such as helping to address the famine now rampant in Sudan).

To focus on the escalating war in and around Israel, we note that, in practice over many years, the international community has adopted Israel's approach of conflict management, as opposed to trying to solve the conflict and to ensure full human rights for all. The community's role should, instead, be to strengthen the 2-state solution – such as by recognising a Palestinian state – and to help make the new Palestinian state more viable – such as with economic, community-building and security support. To remind the government of our concern, we should email our MPs to urge our government to work towards this.

## LASER Events

### Summer Council

Very many thanks to UNA Bexhill and Hastings for hosting our thought-provoking 2024 Summer Council on Ploughshares into Swords. [Here](#) is their report of the day. They are currently revising their Peace Policy Statement, which will then be widely shared.

### AGM

Our AGM will be a hybrid event on **Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 12:00 – 17:00** at Bermondsey Village Hall, Kirby Grove, London SE1 3TD. We hope many of you will join us in person. Directions to the hall from London Bridge mainline station are [here](#). The event will start at 12 noon. If you plan to come in person, please register [here](#) to help us judge numbers for refreshments, though last minute attendees are very welcome too! (Please bring a packed lunch.) If you plan to join us by Zoom, please register [here](#). We shall email out the papers to those who have registered for the AGM on 23<sup>rd</sup> October. There will not be paper copies available for everyone at the meeting.

- **Executive Committee**

As specified in [our constitution](#), at our AGM we shall elect 6 members of our Executive Committee, as well as our Executive Officers (Chair, Secretary and Treasurer). The current committee can be seen [on our website](#). The committee meets about every six weeks, by zoom at 19:30. Nominations for the committee and Officers should be [sent to LASER](#), please, **by 13<sup>th</sup> October**. Each nomination should include: up to 100 words about the person; their branch/group; the names of the nominator and the seconder. Please ensure that the person is happy to be nominated and would expect to attend most meetings.

- **Amending Constitution**

We shall have a motion to amend our constitution. Our draft revised constitution is [here](#), with the changes shown tracked. The most substantial change is the new Clause 9. The other papers (agenda, candidates' bios, etc) will be sent out around 24<sup>th</sup> October.

- **Presidential Address**

Our President, HE Dr Fatou Bensouda, High Commissioner of Gambia and former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), will be joining us and will give her Presidential Address.

- **Inspirational Groups**

Our groups and members engage in a wide range of innovative and inspirational activities. We shall hear some of their experiences, from simple to ambitious. 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](#).

- **Distinguished Service Award**

Many people do remarkable – but often not widely noticed – work to promote international understanding through UNA branches. We like to recognise this service through our annual UNA LASER Distinguished Service Award. Please send [LASER](#), **by 13<sup>th</sup> October**, nominations for this award, with a brief explanation of the service they have given.

The programme is:

12:00 – 13:15: Formal business

13:15 – 14:00 Lunch (BYO; hot drinks, fruit and biscuits provided)

14:00 – 15:00 Presentation by LASER President **Dr Fatou Bensouda**, High Commissioner of the Gambia and former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

15:00 – 17:00 Presentations from some LASER groups on inspirational activities

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## Policy Conference

Our Policy Conference will be on **15<sup>th</sup> March, 2025** in London. Do start preparing resolutions; you can remind yourself of our current resolutions [here!](#)

## Groups' News and Support

### UNA Working Groups

- **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.

- **UN Security Council Veto Reform**

Several UNA groups and individual members have come together to consider how to make the UN Security Council more effective, with particular emphasis on the veto. They have set up a Working Group to investigate how to constrain the veto if it can't be removed altogether. If you would like to join, please email [LASER](#) and Group Convenor, [David Cheesman](#).

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- **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.

## Support from UNA London Trust, including for Diaspora Women's Groups

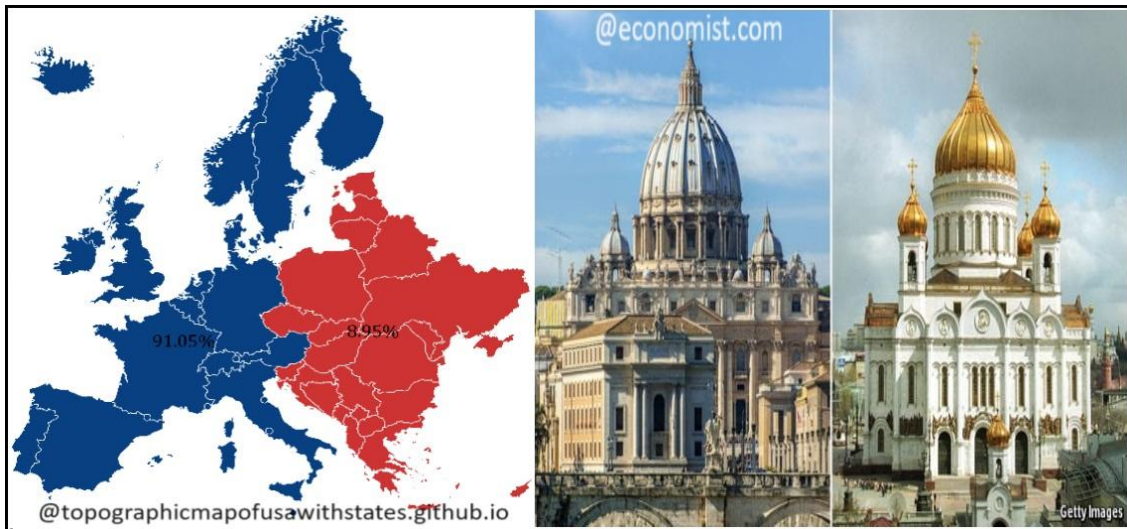
UNA Wandsworth has been creating a network of diaspora women's groups. As part of this effort, they have encouraged applications from these groups to [The London UNA Trust](#). The Trust also continues its usual support for UNA branches. The Trust has recently given grants to: UNA Enfield, UNA Bexhill and UNA Canterbury. In addition it awarded grants to the following diaspora women's organisations: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; Voice of Darfur Women; WOW Women of Wandsworth; Al- Rahama; Global South Youth; Network of Eritrean Women – UK; Almahana Foundation; Dargala Foundation; Kawayan International.

## UNA Events

### UNA Harpenden



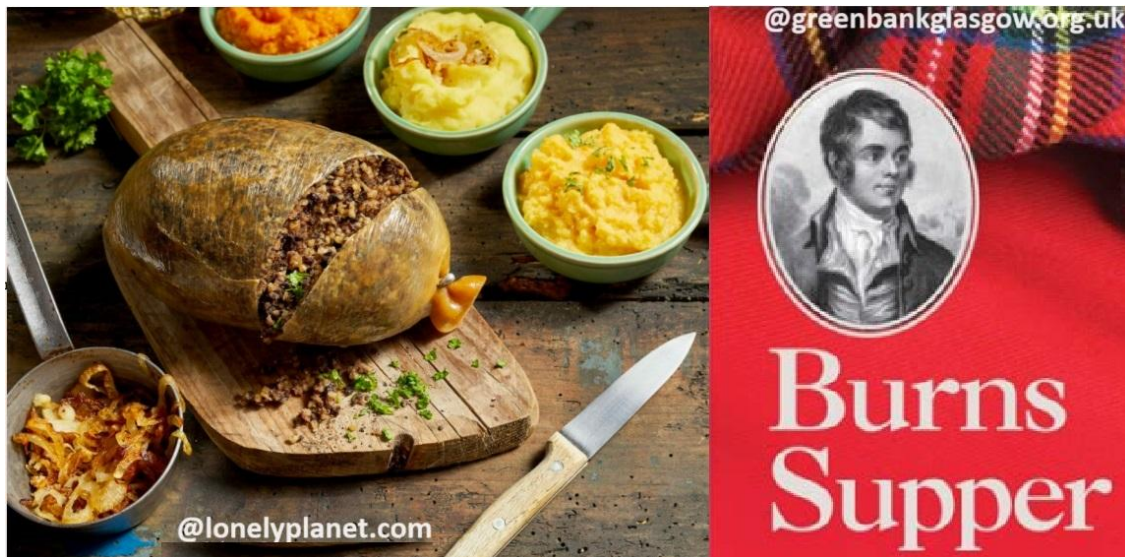
On 13<sup>th</sup> October, 18:30, at the High Street Methodist Church, AL5 2RU, UNA Harpenden is holding its annual **Service for UN Day**, with an address on the **Women's Federation of World Peace (WFWP)** by Patricia Earle (WFWP Vice President). [Please register here to attend.](#)



On 19<sup>th</sup> October, 10:15, UNA Harpenden is holding a free hybrid meeting on **The East-West European Conflict: historical drivers, prejudices and their relevance in a multi-polar world**. The speaker will be Emeritus Professor Richard Sakwa (University of Kent). [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](#).

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### UNA Wandsworth and Clapham

On **26<sup>th</sup> October approx. 10:30** (precise time to be confirmed), the Balham Mandir (Hindu temple) – through UNA Wandsworth and Clapham – invites us to join their **UN Day Celebration** at **Balham Mandir, SW12 9AL**. It will include Aarti (ceremony of light) and blessing of food. Numbers are limited so, for further information and to register, please contact [UNA Wandsworth Chair](#).

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### UNA Canterbury

On **27<sup>th</sup> 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.

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### UNA Climate and Oceans

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On **16<sup>th</sup> November, 10:00**, at **St Peter's Community Centre, Bexhill, TN40 2HE** UNA Climate and Oceans, with Sussex Marine and Coastal Forum, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Sussex Underwater and Sussex Dolphin Project are holding **The Ocean Symposium and Marine Exhibition**, with presentations and panel discussions on marine conservation, as well as marine art. There will be a chance to meet academics, policy makers, community leaders and business leaders. For further information and to register, please follow [this link](#).

## The Next Edition of LASER Pulse

Please [send us](#) any materials for the next edition of *Pulse* by **5<sup>th</sup> November**. 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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