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## 2025 Issue No. 2, February 2025

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## From Our Chair



There are some important UNA domestic issues that urgently need our attention.

Most importantly, **UNA-UK is recruiting a new Chief Executive.** They are looking for a passionate internationalist – politically-savvy but non-partisan, equally at ease at campaign rallies and in the corridors of power. Political understanding of the nature of the UN and the UK's relationship to it is critical, together with a track record of generating and diversifying funding for their organisation. The candidate needs to be able to work effectively with the board of trustees, as well as the network of groups, members and supporters. To see if this might be right for you – or for someone you know – please go [here](#) or to the [UNA-UK website](#). **The closing date for applications is 20<sup>th</sup> February**, so let's wrack our brains and help find an inspiring new leader for our organisation!

We need UNA-UK – and they need us! If you are not currently a paid-up member, **do join!** Details are on the website [here](#). We hope to see you at their **Members' Conference** in London on 12<sup>th</sup> April (details in the *Events* section below). You might like, too, to consider [joining the Conference Committee](#).

The relationship between groups/branches and the national organisation is very important, but many of us do not update UNA-UK with the latest information on our groups and their activities. Please check your group's description on [the national website](#) and send any revisions of your description – and details of any upcoming activities – to [UNA-UK](#).

And while you're checking, is your group description [on the LASER website](#) up-to-date? Please [send us](#) any revisions.

## Campaigning

We encourage members to [engage with their MPs](#) when trying to influence UK government policy. We can, of course, all also write directly to the relevant [ministers](#), but ministers usually read letters only from MPs (while most other letters are dealt with by officials), so we prioritise getting MPs on board and encouraging them to contact the relevant ministers. It is important to give your address when you write, so your MP knows you are a constituent.

We welcome the ceasefire in Gaza: many prisoners have been released from both sides; people are returning to their homes in northern Gaza. However, the ceasefire is very fragile; violence in the West

Bank has dramatically increased; and President Trump is making outrageous statements, suggesting that all Palestinians should be removed from Gaza. It is important that the UK government is not over-influenced by the stance of the US. We must urge our government to show resolve in using our leverage (and historic responsibility) in the region, as well as our influence with other countries and as a member of the Security Council's P5 to:

- Press for the reinstatement of access and full support for [UNRWA](#) to do its humanitarian work for all Palestinian refugees
- Protect the rights of the Palestinian people (not only for safety, food, shelter, health care, etc, but also for political self-determination)
- Promote security in the wider region (such as in [Syria](#), which currently has the world's largest refugee crisis)
- Not allow the [sale of arms to Israel](#) that are being used against non-combatants
- Ensure that International Law is followed, such as by respecting the decisions concerning Israel and Palestine of the [International Court of Justice](#) and the [International Criminal Court](#).

The UN Secretary General has recently identified a “Pandora’s Box” of some of the most pressing challenges facing the global community:

- Resolving the Israel/Palestine dispute (while welcoming the ceasefire)
- Reducing inequality (such as increasing progress on the [Sustainable Development Goals](#))
- Preventing catastrophic climate change (welcoming [UN assistance](#) to about 100 developing countries with their climate action plans and the dramatic improvements in renewable energy, as well as the widespread commitment to ‘[Net Zero](#)’)
- Appropriate safeguards around [Artificial Intelligence](#) (while building on the “unprecedented opportunities” it offers).

Pandora’s Box released not only horrors, but also hope; we must take action to help fulfil those hopes!

## LASER Policy Conference

Our Policy Conference will be on **15<sup>th</sup> March, 2025, 12:00-18:00**. It will be at **Bermondsey Village Hall**, Kirby Grove, London SE1 3TD and online. Please bring a packed lunch. Drinks will be provided. If you would like to attend in-person, please register [here](#). If you would like to join online, please register [here](#).

Thank you for the draft resolutions. These are being aggregated by the Policy Committee and will be circulated in a special edition of *Pulse* next week, with the deadline for **amendments being 24<sup>th</sup> February**.

Amendments can be submitted by UNA Groups or individual members. You can see our current resolutions – for inspiration and for the framework of notes and calls to action that we use – [here](#). Note that we then promote the resolutions more widely – including forwarding them to the Foreign Secretary

and other key actors – and share the responses on our website.

You can suggest amendments to the new draft resolutions (when you receive them next week) and also

to existing resolutions which should add **not more than 75 words** to the total length of the resolution. ***Please do not send in longer amendments!***

## Group News and Information

### UNA Working Groups

These Working Groups bring together groups and individual members to work together on key areas. There are no set structures or required outcomes. They mostly meet electronically and might want to develop campaigns, awareness-raising materials, presentations, or reports.

- **UN Security Council Veto Reform**

Several UNA groups and individual members have come together, with some international experts as advisers, to consider how to make the UN Security Council more effective, with particular emphasis on the veto. This working group is investigating how to constrain the veto if it can't be removed altogether. If you would like a summary of the recent meeting and would like to join the group, please email Group Convenor, [David Cheesman](#).

- **Local Implementation of the SDGs**

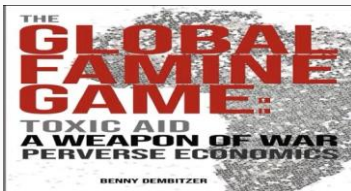
Several LASER UNA groups, working with their local Councils on [local implementation](#) of the [Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs](#), have created a Local SDG Working Group to support and learn from each other. Some UNA Groups have several years' experience and have established effective local SDG committees; others are just starting. Do contact Co-Chair of UNA Tunbridge Wells and the Weald, [Marguerita Morton](#), if you would like to join this Working Group. UNA Enfield and the Barnets (EBUNA), part of this Working Group, is focusing on SDG2 (hunger) and SDG 13 (climate impact) and has issued their [EBUNA SDG Interim Research Report](#). For further information on their work, please contact [Ali Hessami](#).

- **Protection of Minorities in India**

The Chair of UNA Harpenden, [Suheil Shahryar](#), invites you to join a 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. They would welcome your comments on [their draft resolution](#). This considers the situation in the light of: international articles and declarations; the Indian constitution; and

recent reports on the persecution of minorities. It then urges actions by the UK government, South Asian countries and the UN.

## New Book and Discussion on Global Famine



Over 30,000 people die of starvation every day. Longstanding UNA LASER member, Benny Dembitzer's new book discusses how poorly managed aid is toxic and is part of the problem. It is available [here](#). You can also join the conversation on [Benny's blog](#).

## Recording of Climate and Sustainability UNA Youth Summit 2024

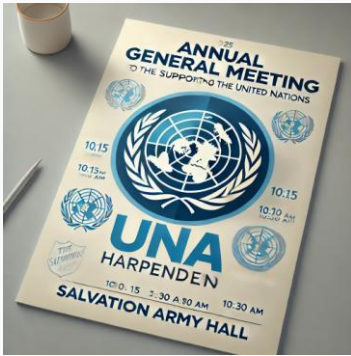


Our UNA LASER group Climate and Oceans hosted **The Climate and Sustainability Youth Summit 2024**, attended by more than 300 young people from across the world, at the end of COP29 in 2024 at Imperial College London and on zoom. There were

presentations from COP29 observers and other experts, including **Sir Jim Skea** (Chair Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)), **Professor Apostolos Voulgarakis** (Associate Director Leverhulme Centre for Wildfires, Environment and Society), **Dr Carl Wright** (Commonwealth Local Government Forum), as well as a film of **David Attenborough**. Panellists included experts and members of the UNA Youth Council. As well as important information and ideas, there were useful contacts and suggestions, especially for young people. You can enjoy the sound recording – enhanced by videos and slides – from 4:40 minutes into the recording [here](#). Learn more about UNA Climate and Oceans [here](#).

## UNA Events

## UNA Harpenden



On **8<sup>th</sup> February, 10:30 – 12:30**, UNA Harpenden will be hosting its AGM and Group Discussion at **The Salvation Army**, Harpenden, AL5 2TG. Register [here](#).

On **22<sup>nd</sup> March, 10:30-12:30**, UNA Harpenden will host a hybrid event at **The Salvation Army**, Harpenden, AL5 2TG on ***The Space of the World: can human solidarity survive social media and what if it can't?***. The speaker will be **Professor Nick Couldry** (London School of Economics and Political Science). Further information about the talk is [here](#). Please register [here](#).



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## UNA Warwick District

On **22<sup>nd</sup> February, 12:35-13:45**, UNA Warwick are holding a meeting online and at the **Leamington Spa Baptist Church**, Chandos Street, Leamington Spa, CV32 4RN, on ***Challenging the UN Security Council Veto in the Face of Atrocity Crimes***. The speaker is **Professor Jennifer Trahan** (of New York University's Center for Global Affairs, author of *Legal Limits to Security Council Veto Power in the Face of Atrocity Crimes*). The UN Security Council's veto power has repeatedly blocked action, even in response to genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, leading to devastating loss of life and a failure of global accountability. Professor Trahan will explore the history and evolution of the veto (including showing the short film *The Veto*). The zoom link is [here](#), with ID 846 9914 4523 and passcode: 688649862. For further information, please contact [the Chair](#).

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## UNA Bexhill and Hastings

On **22<sup>nd</sup> February, 13:15-17:00**, UNA Bexhill and Hastings is holding a free meeting at **St. Peter's Community Centre**, Church Street, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN40 2HE with a discussion on ***Rural Town Planning and Development***, led by **Stephen Hardy**, preceded by a short AGM, and a tea break. The discussion will consider how the government's National Housing Plans will affect plans to revive local communities with sustainable businesses and services, as well as to provide more affordable housing.

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For further information and to register, please contact [the Chair](#).

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## UNA Luton

On **24<sup>th</sup> February, 19:30**, UNA Luton will be celebrating ***International Mother Language Day***, to promote awareness about the day's historical origins and the importance of promoting and preserving mother languages. They are important identities for all communities in plural societies, and the awareness of them can help to build Peace across Diversity. The zoom link is [here](#), with meeting ID 874

4014 7657, passcode 340144.

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## UNA Westminster

On **11<sup>th</sup> March, 18:30**, UNA Westminster – with the Bar Council, and the Centre for International Studies at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) – will be holding at **SOAS' Brunei Gallery**, London WC1H 0XG, the twenty-second annual ***Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law Lecture***, on ***Fragmented Refuge: It's time to rebuild the case for humanity***, marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the UN High Commission for refugees (UNHCR). The speaker, **Professor Catherine Briddick** (University of Oxford's Refugee Studies Centre), will review today's changed attitudes to the call of humanity, explore access to protection and the enforcement of international refugee law, and draw on the experiences of those involved in drafting the UN Refugee Convention. The event will be followed by a free wine reception. Please register [here](#).

On **22<sup>nd</sup> May** UNA Westminster will be holding its twenty-second annual ***International Day of UN Peacekeepers Conference and Wreath-laying***, based at the Royal United Services Institute in Whitehall, London. Further details, as they become available, will be on the [UNA Westminster website](#).

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## UNA-UK 2025 Conference

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On **12<sup>th</sup> April, 10:30-17:00**, the UNA Conference Committee is organising the 2025 UNA Conference, to be held in London and online. It will include some keynote addresses, presentations, discussion sessions and opportunities to engage with UNA-UK staff. In-person attendance will cost £10; virtual attendance is free. More information will be available soon. Please register [here](#).

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## UNA Tunbridge Wells and the Weald

On **10<sup>th</sup> May, 14:00-16:00**, in **The Old Auction House**, Linden Park Road, TN2 5QL, UNA Tunbridge Wells and the Weald will hold a discussion on ***The International System in the Age of Trump***, led by **Mike Martin, MP**, followed by the group's **AGM**. For further information, please contact [here](#).

## Other Organisations' Events

### Amnesty Activist-Led UN Network

On **12<sup>th</sup> February, 19:30-21:00**, the Amnesty activist-led UN Network will be hosting a free, open webinar on the ***UN Human Rights System: Essentials for Activists***, with speakers **Renzo Pomi** (Amnesty International UN Representative in New York) and **Anna-Karin Holmlund** (Amnesty International UN Representative in Geneva) on how the UN can make a difference to global human rights and crisis situations and how activists can best engage with its mechanisms and help make them more effective. For more information, contact [here](#). The zoom links is [here](#).

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### Pathway for Peace

The third event in their series looking at ways forward to end the Israel-Palestine conflict will be on **25<sup>th</sup> February, 19:00** at **St Peter's Hall**, Leamington Spa CV32 5AA. Two Jewish activists with differing perspectives will share their views on the way ahead. They are **Professor Haim Bresheeth** (child of Holocaust survivors and author of *An Army Like No Other* about the Israeli Defence Force) and **Dr Magen Inon** (child of people killed on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and part of British Jewish organisation, Yachad). Book [here](#) to attend in-person or watch online.

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## Financial Support for LASER

LASER does not ask for subscriptions from its members or groups, nor does it charge for attendance at its events. We therefore welcome donations to UNA London and South East Region account. Please [let us know](#) if you would like to make a donation.

## The Next Edition of LASER Pulse

Please [send us](#) any materials for the next edition of *Pulse* by **7<sup>th</sup> March, 2025**. Please keep announcements short and include all the information requested in the [Pulse template](#). **Please ensure that any pictures you send are not copyright protected, as we add each edition of *Pulse* to our website for public access.**

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