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2025 Issue No. 12, December 2025

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The Next Edition of *LASER Pulse*

From Our Chair



Trisha Rogers

UNA groups (aka branches) – with their many inspiring activities – are all run by volunteers. Between us, we offer a huge range of expertise, experience and enthusiasm, all much appreciated. But are there additional ways in which you would enjoy contributing?

For example, if you do not have the time or expertise to become the LASER Treasurer yourself, can you think of a friend, colleague or acquaintance who might like to assist Peter Webster, with a view, in due course, to taking on the role? (Peter, who also has a demanding full-time job, will continue to be our Policy Committee Chair, leading our annual Policy Conference, a very demanding role.) The person does not need to be an accountant, but would need to have some experience in bookkeeping and be able to keep records on Excel. Please let me know if you would like more information on the role.

We greatly appreciate the volunteering by a different group each year to host our Summer Council. For 2026, this responsibility has been taken on by UNA Eastbourne – well known for its inspirational work on carbon-capturing tree-planting in Uganda and Bangladesh. Please note among the details below that the date is now **4th July** (with related activities in Eastbourne on 5th July for those who can stay).

Some other opportunities for volunteering are given in the *Groups' and Members' Information and Support* and the *Working Groups* sections below.

Campaigning

We encourage members to [engage with their MPs](#) when trying to influence UK government policy (which can then influence UN actions). We can, of course, all also write directly to the relevant ministers, but ministers usually read only letters 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 and ask questions in the House. It is important to give your full home address when you write, so your MP knows you are a constituent.

Israel/Palestine



One of the key factors in negotiations is having visionary, popular and diplomatic leaders on both sides. This has long been lacking for the Palestinians, exacerbated by many of their leaders having been killed during the conflicts. Marwan Barghouti – who has repeatedly said that he supports only unarmed resistance – is the most popular Palestinian leader; but has been in Israeli prisons for 23 years. LASER supports the **Free Marwan** campaign and asks our readers to e-mail them to support their statement:

“As current and former elected representatives from around the world, we call on Israel to release Palestine’s most popular leader, Marwan Barghouti, unjustly imprisoned for 23 years.

‘The Inter-Parliamentary Union—representing over 181 national parliaments — found “numerous breaches of international law” in his case, concluding it was ‘impossible to say that Mr. Barghouti received a fair trial’.

“Marwan Barghouti is widely recognised as a Palestinian Mandela figure —a popular, unifying leader committed to Palestinian rights, freedom, democracy and international law. He has consistently topped opinion polls for Palestinian leadership, yet no national elections have been held in nearly two decades. His prolonged imprisonment – marked by solitary confinement, torture, threats, and under a communication ban – constitutes a grave injustice and stands as a major barrier to peace.

“We call for his immediate release.”

Please also write to your MPs, to ask them to:

1. Call for the immediate release of Marwan Barghouti, citing the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s finding that he did not receive a fair trial.
2. Emphasise that he is the most popular Palestinian leader—a unifying figure committed to peace, democracy, and international law - and that his life is under threat.
3. Ask them to sign the global statement in support of his release by emailing info@freemarwan.org.

You could also include in this letter the calls from the British Jewish organisation Yachad for us to urge the UK government to take firm action on the appalling Israeli settler violence in the West Bank by:

1. **Imposing further sanctions** on individuals and organisations responsible for displacement and settler violence – including Israeli government coalition members who enable or incite it.
2. **Preventing UK charitable donations** from being used to fund settlements.

You can stress to them that many British Jews do not support this violence by settlers, nor the actions of the Israeli government which enable it.

Sudan



Following last month's campaign calling for the appointment of a high-level UN Humanitarian envoy for Sudan building on this *United Against Inhumanity* [article](#), congratulations to UNA Enfield and the Barnets for [this letter](#) that they have sent to the Foreign Secretary urging support for action to help prevent the escalating atrocities in Sudan, as well as helping the vulnerable civilians affected by the war there. They have shared it so others can support this campaign for UK action on Sudan.

LASER Events

LASER Policy Conference

Our Policy Conference will be on **28th March, 2026**, at the Sands Film Studio, in Rotherhithe, London SE16 4HZ and online, **starting at 11:30am**. Draft resolutions will need to be submitted by **26th January**. The draft resolutions will be aggregated and circulated in mid-February with the deadline for amendments being **2nd March**. The final agenda will then be circulated before the meeting.

This is your chance to help decide what stance the Region should take on a wide range of international issues. Resolutions need to be on an international topic and must call for action by the UK government or the UN. The Policy Committee may also share resolutions with political party leaders and with other actors of influence on the issue concerned. Resolutions can propose policies and also set out background facts or

statements of concern that you would like the Region to support, and they can be submitted by UNA Groups or individual members. You can see our current resolutions – for inspiration and for the framework we use – [here](#). **New resolutions need to be 175 words or fewer in total. You can also suggest amendments to existing resolutions which should add not more than 75 words to the total length of the resolution. Please do not send in longer resolutions, as this creates considerable additional work for the Policy Committee and may lead to the resolutions being rejected.**



LASER Summer Council

NOTE REVISED DATE AND VENUE!!

On **Saturday 4th July 2026**, UNA Eastbourne will host their Summer Council, at Eastbourne's **Victoria Baptist Church, BN21 1UE** (about half an hour's walk or short bus ride from Eastbourne station). The focus will be ***The Climate Crisis: Risk Assessment and Adaptation***. On **Sunday 5th July**, UNA Eastbourne will organise a walk along the Peace Path to the UN monuments at Beachy Head. So keep the whole week-end free to spend in Eastbourne! There will be further details in future editions of *Pulse*.



UNA Group Events

UNA-UK



On **11th December, 18:00-19:30**, UNA-UK is hosting Sir Matthew Rycroft, former UK Permanent Representative at the UN, to speak on ***Reflections on Selecting a Secretary-General***. The free event will be at UNA-UK headquarters (3 Whitehall Court, London SW1) and online. Please register and get further details [here](#).

On **17th January 2026, 12:00-17:00**, UNA-UK is celebrating **UNGA at 80**, marking the 80th anniversary of the first meeting of the UN General Assembly, in Methodist

Central Hall, Westminster, with panels on *Peace, Security and Justice, Addressing Planetary Challenges, A UN Fit for Future Generations*. This will be attended by leaders in international cooperation from the UK and around the world. Registration is [here](#) and please make a generous donation to help cover the costs.

UNA Climate and Oceans



On **12th December, 18:30-21:00**, UNA Climate and Oceans is hosting at Stade Hall, Hastings TN34 3FJ a presentation of *Ocean*, the Film of the Year, presented by David Attenborough. The event is sold out online, but contact [UNA Climate and Oceans](#) to join a queue for cancellations.

UNA Harpenden

On **24th January 2026, 18:00**, UNA Harpenden is hosting a *Burns Night Supper* at **Park Hall, Leyton Road, Harpenden AL15 2LX**. There will be songs, poetry, dancing and delicious Scottish food. The cost will be £30 per head, to be paid **by 24th November**. Please register [here](#).

Groups' and Members' Information and Support

Group Descriptions and Activities

There is a list of LASER Groups [on our website](#). Please check your entries and [let us know](#) of any changes you would like.

As well as publicising activities of our LASER Groups in *Pulse*, we also sometimes publicise other activities in our region that are relevant to our work, as well as activities outside our region that are accessible online or easily reached by people in our region. Please see the end of this newsletter for how to submit material.

Marking UN80



Congratulations on the many and wide-ranging local UNA events marking UN80! There have been: blue floodlighting of official buildings; raising of UN flags; faith and belief events; refurbishment and relaunching of a League of Nations birdbath; lectures and discussions; coffee mornings; evening receptions.

If your group has not yet marked the anniversary, it is not too late. The key UK date is 10th January (80 years after the first meetings of the General Assembly and Security Council in Westminster, London). January is also a good time to plant a ceremonial oak (the symbol of the 80th anniversary). We need to raise awareness of the astounding world-changing achievements of the UN, as well as the huge challenges it now faces and for which it needs the vision and support of its Member States (and their peoples), including especially the 5 Permanent Members of the Security Council, whose status and privileges come with great responsibility.

Support for Groups' UN80 Activities

The London United Nations Association Trust is offering support to projects marking UN80. To apply for a grant, please use the form on [their website](#).

Supporting UNA-UK UNGA80 Event

UNA-UK is looking for volunteers to help deliver their historic UNGA event at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster on 17th January 2026. Please register your interest [here](#).

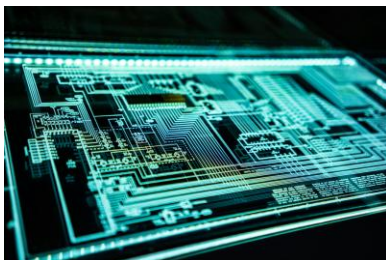
Inspirational Group Activities

[Here](#) is the description of the activities of UNA Harpenden – especially their Book Group and Discussion Group – that was shared at our AGM. You can find descriptions of inspirational activities from other groups on [our Groups' page](#).

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 online and might want to develop campaigns, awareness-raising materials, presentations, resolutions or reports. There is further information [on our website](#). If there is a topic you would like to research and take forward in consultation with other interested members, do [contact us](#) about starting a new UNA Working Group.

Digital & Emerging Technologies



In December, the UN created the Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies, to support the newly adopted *Global Digital Compact* (GDC). The GDC is a framework that supports an open, sustainable, fair, safe and secure digital future for everyone. The GDC will seek to address governance, inclusion, and access across technology and AI. This new Working Group will investigate and decide in which areas of the GDC we can lend support, and develop plans and actions to advance its objectives. All are welcome to join. People with experience in governance, community-led technology groups, open source software and experience in emerging technologies (such as blockchain, AI, BioTech, IoT) are encouraged to contact us. We expect to meet remotely every other month, with planned in-person gatherings occasionally. As we focus on particular topics, meetings may occur more regularly. Please contact [Cameron McAnsh](#) for more information

and to join the group.

Local Implementation of the SDGs

Several LASER UNA groups, working with their local Councils on local implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, have created this Working Group to support and learn from each other. Some UNA Groups have several years' experience of this work and have established effective local SDG committees; others are just starting. Groups usually work with other local civil society groups: to consider how best Councils can develop their infrastructure to meet local needs; to persuade their Councils to adopt the SDGs into their strategic planning; and to encourage their Councils to submit their Voluntary National Reviews to the United Nations. Please contact Co-Chair of UNA Tunbridge Wells and Wealden, Marguerita Morton, if you would like to join this Working Group.

SDG Guidance and Use Cases



Since September 2024 this Working Group has been meeting every 8 weeks to exchange experience and collaborate to promote the adoption and implementation of the SDGs by UNA groups. One of the group's members is a UK representative at the ISO/UNDP PAS 53002:2024, *Guidelines for contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*. The ISO/UNDP guidelines address: setting SDG impact objectives and targets; engaging with stakeholders; collecting data on impacts; generating options; making risk-based decisions; and understanding trade-offs to increase positive impact. We intend to generate an overview resource from this standard for the benefit of other UNA groups. We shall also discuss specific SDG adoption, research and use cases by various groups, including SDG initiatives on SDG2 (hunger) and SDG 13 (climate impact) in UNA Enfield and the Barnets. Please contact Ali Hessami for further information.

Achieving Peace in Europe

The group aims to develop a resolution on *Defending Europe Responsibly* for submission to the 2026 UNA LASER Policy Conference, to be accepted by LASER and then presented to the UK Foreign Secretary and other European leaders. The background information on the formation of the working group can be found [here](#), with further information [here](#) in the paper *How does Europe defend itself responsibly?* by **Suheil Shahryar**. To join the group, please register [here](#).

Tyranny, Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction - Interrogating the Draft Second United Nations Charter

The Group aims to assess how well this Second UN Charter (written by an international consensus on UN reform) will strengthen International Law through a series of discussions, each starting with an attempt to 'diagnose' the root causes of our unpeaceful world, which in its present course, is predicted to make itself extinct. It will then try to find, in each case, a 'cure' for this 'disease', working from our own experiences and our findings in the 'Second Charter'. Finally, in each case, and later in summary, it will attempt to expedite these 'cures' through the 'force of law' - as expressed in all the various forms of International Law. The group will be chaired by LASER Head of Policy, Peter Webster, and will convene by Zoom. For more information and to join the group, please contact [Greta Vipond](#). Even if you do not want to join the group, [Greta Vipond](#) would be very interested to receive your responses to the following 3 questions, as this would add greatly to the work of the group:

- What are the basic requirements for effective, and dynamic World Governance at this moment in time?
 - What are the core principles you would like to see as the basis of a Second UN Charter?
 - Which core principles should we retain that are embedded in the present UN Charter?
-

Imagining a UN Fit for the 21st Century

The classical and inflexible governance of the UN, built around classical institutional models of the post-war era, renders it unfit for a dynamic and multipolar world order. The UN governance can and should be re-engineered for the brave new world. This Working Group is adopting a novel research method creatively to explore the drivers and opportunities for a reformed structure and governance, leading to a UN that will be agile, inclusive, representative, transparent, accountable and fair to the needs, rights and values

of the international community in this century of exponential change and shifting power dynamics. It is intended to produce a consensus-based, ideal structure/governance/regulatory model and associated brief narrative for the UN in the 21st century. The group has agreed that the aim of the creative study is *UN Reforms through Diverse, Representative and Agile Coalitions*. For more information and to join, please contact [Ali Hessami](#).

Systemic Transformation Network

This Working Group is being led by **Barrie Oxtoby** of UNA Shropshire and **Suheil Shahryar** of UNA Harpenden. Following the release of [*UNA-UK Strategy 2026-30*](#), Barrie and Suheil are offering their systemic transformation approach to UNA groups and partners to align their objectives and operational plans with the UNA-UK strategy. They would be keen to hear from interested UNA group leaders. For information, see [here](#).

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.

How about a monthly ‘cup-of-coffee £3.00’ in the form of a standing order? Please [let us know](#) of any donation.

The Next Edition of *LASER Pulse*

Please send us any materials for the next edition of *Pulse* by **4th January, 2026**. Please keep announcements short and include all the information requested in [the Pulse template](#). We welcome pictures, but **please ensure that any pictures you send are not copyright-protected**, as we add each edition of *Pulse* to our website for public access and would be liable for copyright fees. Please note, too, that, since previous editions of *Pulse* are available on our website, **any announcements should include only information (such as contact details) that you are happy to have publicly accessible on the internet**.



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