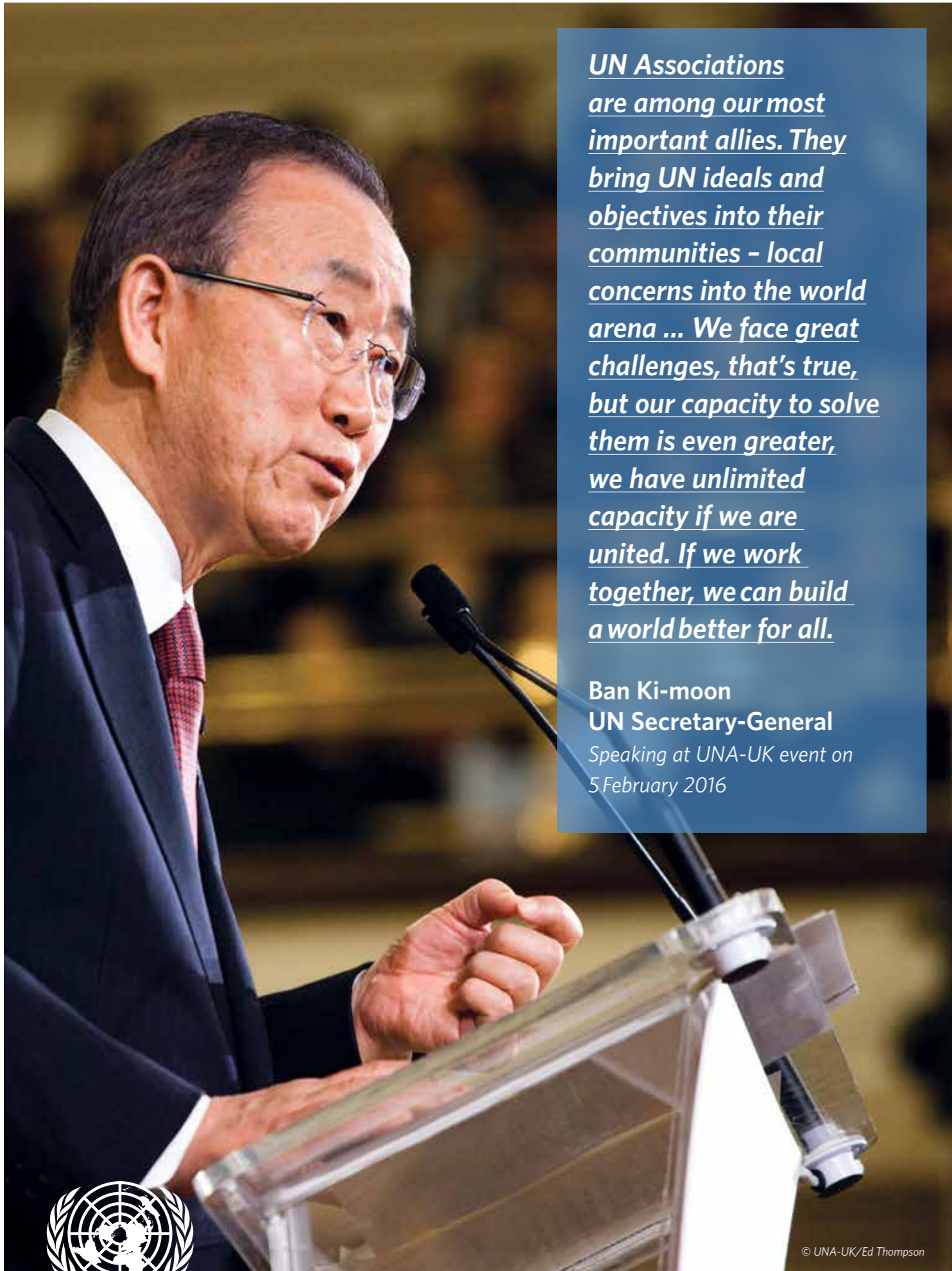


It could be you

*Our response to the refugee crisis
is short-sighted and dangerous*



WITH [Ban Ki-moon's message to the UK](#) / [Julia Neuberger](#) on welcoming strangers / [Chris Gunness](#) on UNRWA / [Anne Althaus](#) on economic migrants / [Walter Kälin](#) on climate refugees / [Jihyun Park](#) on her journey from North Korea



UN Associations are among our most important allies. They bring UN ideals and objectives into their communities – local concerns into the world arena ... We face great challenges, that's true, but our capacity to solve them is even greater, we have unlimited capacity if we are united. If we work together, we can build a world better for all.

Ban Ki-moon
UN Secretary-General
 Speaking at UNA-UK event on 5 February 2016



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 Sally Begbie, Crossroads Foundation

Media reporting on refugees
 Emma Briant, University of Sheffield

Love thy neighbour? Calais
 Clare Moseley, Care4Calais

Europe should invest in refugees
 Sara Pantuliano, Overseas Development Institute

Rights of refugee women in Lebanon
 Kathryn Ramsay, Amnesty International

A gap in legal protections for refugees
 Genevieve Woods, UNA-UK

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Cover photo: A refugee child cries as she sits on an overcrowded bus transporting refugees and migrants © Getty Images/Louisa Gouliamaki

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Contents



“Refugees are not numbers, they are people who have faces, names, stories, and need to be treated as such” Pope Francis, who took 12 Syrians from Lesbos home to the Vatican on 16 April in what he called a “gesture of hope”

- 4 Editorial**
Natalie Samarasinghe and Jeremy Greenstock
- 6 The facts**
New World lets facts and figures speak for themselves
- 8 Opinion**
 Welcoming strangers to our land
Julia Neuberger
- 9 Interview**
 The dispossessed of the earth
Chris Gunness
- 10 Opinion**
 The false dichotomy between ‘economic migrants’ and ‘refugees’
Anne Althaus
- 11 10**
 Myths about the refugee crisis
- 12 Opinion**
 Disaster displacement
Walter Kälin
- 13 Opinion**
 The Sahrawis: forgotten victims
Ian Williams
- 14 Feature**
 Ban Ki-moon’s speech in London
- 18 Essay**
 When did people become “illegal”?
Natalie Samarasinghe
- 20 The UN & the UK**
 National security, arms control, human rights, peacekeeping, climate change, development and UN Secretary-General hustings
- 24 UNA-UK outreach**
 Grassroots campaigning in the 21st century
Richard Nelmes
- 26 The last word**
 From North Korea to the UK
Jihyun Park



Short-sighted and dangerous

Natalie Samarasinghe, UNA-UK's Executive Director, on our response to the refugee crisis

This issue of New World seeks to get under the skin of the biggest displacement crisis since records began, with its staggering numbers (pages 6-7), populist myths (page 11) and politicised terminology (page 10). We highlight situations often ignored by the media (pages 9 and 13) and showcase two very different survivor stories from the Korean peninsula: that of Jihyun Park, a refugee who went through enormous hardship to reach the UK (page 26), and that of Ban Ki-moon, the UN Secretary-General (pages 14-17).

As Baroness Neuberger describes on page 8, the current crisis has engendered much goodwill. But compassion has been fickle. The outrage that accompanied Alan Kurdi's death has subsided; the reaction to reports that some 500 people had died crossing the Mediterranean on 25 April was muted. On the same day, British MPs rejected a proposal to take in 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children stranded in Europe. A Home Office Minister warned against creating a "pull factor".

We have been here before. In the 1930s, politicians here (and elsewhere) were wary of making it too easy for Jews to gain asylum, lest it encourage others. Newspapers railed against "swarms" of refugees and reported that criminals, revolutionaries and Nazi spies were coming in with them.

Yet a sense of solidarity prevailed – perhaps because of the experience of war or because refugees back then looked a little more like "us" – leading eventually to the establishment of the UN Refugee Agency and Refugee Convention. Solidarity became enshrined in international law and became the basis for our rules-based global order.

But today, we in the West have grown accustomed to using humanitarian assistance as a global buffer, contracting out responsibility for refugees and pursuing ever-tighter definitions of who



Emergency supplies and welcome packs prepared for refugees arriving in Belfast © Charles McQuillan/Getty Images

deserves our support. This approach is short-sighted and dangerous.

First and foremost, it dehumanises people, raising serious questions about our commitment to the values we profess to uphold. Second, it wastes human potential by prioritising containment in camps over resettlement and integration.

Third, it ignores the root causes of the crisis as well as the risks posed by a prolonged, unmanaged flow of people. Some 10,000 children are already thought to have gone missing after arriving in Europe, believed to have fallen victim to traffickers.

Fourth, it sends a worrying signal about our ability and willingness to deal with crises that we routinely expect developing countries to tackle. We don't seem to care whether the 1.2 million people taken in by Lebanon are "bogus" asylum seekers. We expect them to be looked after – well

enough to discourage them from leaving, and attempting to reach European shores. Let us hope this generosity would be extended to us should we ever be in need of shelter (page 12).

And finally, it undermines our international system, which has brought us prosperity and security, and which will not endure without our concerted efforts (pages 20-23). The rise of populist sentiment against refugees – and immigrants more generally – should be a warning sign.

Taking in people will not be easy in the short-term, but we must not lose sight of the bigger prize: living up to our values, and helping to build a safer, more prosperous future for us all. The world is too interconnected to do anything else. If we don't, our response to the refugee situation may end up harming us more than the crisis itself. ●



Open and generous

Sir Jeremy Greenstock, UNA-UK's Chairman, on what our response to the refugee crisis could be

The UK's response to the growing pressure of migration into and within Europe is normally regarded as a domestic issue. Concerns about immigration lie at the heart of the British debate about Europe, and make the outcome of the 23 June referendum on UK membership of the European Union highly uncertain. But the core issues are as much external as national.

The world is fragmenting, which means each nation, group or individual is tending to make subjective decisions about their immediate interests with increasing disregard for collective considerations. The UK has long been one of those countries which sees the value of an effective international system, because of its history of involvement at the global level, especially in trade, and because it has developed the skills and the machinery to make such a system work. When the British are on form, any international meeting gains from their involvement.

These geopolitical trends, including conflict arising from state breakdown, have piled on the pressure over migration. The communities of the EU – as much as any region – focus on their local concerns, to the extent that the EU can barely discuss the issue rationally, at a time when a collective answer is most needed. An appeal to values – care for the starving and dispossessed, the need to address inequality – is not enough to trump the natural tendency to resist sharing hard-won resources with strangers when the numbers are so high.

The UK is one of the few countries with a real capacity to understand the need for cooperation on big problems at the wider level. We must not leave ourselves out of the search for a collective solution to the migration problem. For a start, we will not protect ourselves by shutting our doors and our minds to it. But just as important, we can help our allies, partners and neighbours to forge a route to some answers.

The case for doing this could be made in value terms, and UNA-UK exists to connect UN-sanctioned values with UK policy-making. But values on their own are not winning the argument in a more selfish world. Interests also matter. So I would like New World readers to connect this edition on refugees and migration with UNA-UK's response to the UK's National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review (pages 20-21).

We argue there that the EU's migration challenges, including in Europe's southern and eastern neighbourhood, have a significant impact on British national security. I am convinced, from my experience as a diplomat and UN specialist, that almost without exception an international initiative to remedy conflict or improve international security is stronger when the Brits are fully contributing. If effort and resources have to be expended, the longer-term payback justifies them in terms of a safer, fairer and economically sounder world with which to do business.

This is where I most admire the contribution of the UNA fraternity in the UK, delivering enthusiasm and momentum when values and interests come together. You are constantly pointing out to policy-makers why the universal standards of good behaviour enshrined at the UN need to apply to UK decisions, and why policies that appear to address only our narrow national interests are unlikely to be productive.

Immigration of course cannot be open-ended, and governments – as the Germans, for instance, have come to realise – need to show that arrangements for it are properly controlled. But the UK has long benefitted from fresh blood coming into the country, already runs a comparatively tolerant society and needs to retain its strong global connections. I find the arguments for playing an open and generous role on this issue overwhelming, and I hope that UNA-UK members and supporters will raise their voices in this direction. ●

Get in touch

UNA-UK welcomes your thoughts and comments on this issue of New World, and your suggestions for future issues.

You can email the editor, Natalie Samarasinghe, at samarasinghe@una.org.uk, tweet @Natalie_UNA or @UNAUK or write to UNA-UK, 3 Whitehall Court, London SW1A 2EL.

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New World - required reading for global citizens from all walks of life.

The facts

New World lets facts and figures speak for themselves

Who's who?

Refugee

A person fleeing war or persecution who crosses an international border.

Internally displaced person

Someone forced to flee their home due to violence, persecution or disaster who does not cross an international border.

Asylum seeker

A person who has asked for refugee status and is waiting to hear the outcome of their application.

Migrant

A person who moves within or across borders. 'Migrant' can be used as an umbrella term that includes refugees, but is commonly applied to people who move for reasons other than a direct threat of war or persecution, such as work, education or family reasons, or serious hardship.



A child sits among life jackets after arriving in Lesbos from Turkey. Over a million people, mostly refugees from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, have crossed into Greece since January 2015. In the first four months of this year, nearly 2,000 have died or gone missing trying to reach safety in Europe. Since Italy's Mare Nostrum search-and-rescue missions was suspended in 2014, the number of people crossing the Mediterranean has remained roughly the same, but the death toll has risen some 15 per cent © AFP Photo/Aris Messinis

Number of people displaced worldwide **60m** Population of Italy

If you become a refugee today, your chances of going home are lower than at any time in more than 30 years

10 countries host 57% of all refugees under UNHCR's mandate



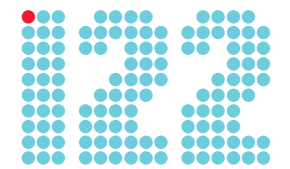
50% of these countries are in sub-Saharan Africa

4 are least-developed countries

0 are in the EU or the Americas

According to the OECD, migrants contribute more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in benefits.

One in every



of us has been forcibly displaced



Just under **1 billion people** (one in seven of us) are migrants

Roughly **740 million** have moved within their own country



Some **244 million** have crossed borders, with the majority, **over 140 million**, migrating from one developing country to another

Where do refugees come from?		Who takes them in?	
Syria 4.2m	DRC 535,300	Turkey 1.8m	Jordan 664,100
Afghanistan 2.6m	CAR 470,600	Pakistan 1.5m	Kenya 552,300
Somalia 1.1m	Myanmar 458,500	Lebanon 1.2m	Uganda 428,400
South Sudan 744,100	Eritrea 383,900	Iran 982,000	Chad 420,800
Sudan 640,900	Iraq 377,700	Ethiopia 702,500	Sudan 356,200



SYRIA is the biggest source of new refugees but even if Syria were excluded, the underlying trend of rising global displacement would remain.



Before 2012, **TURKEY**, which now hosts the largest number of refugees, was not even in the top 20 host countries.



LEBANON has the most refugees per capita. One in five people in the country is now a Syrian refugee.



ETHIOPIA hosts the most refugees in relation to the size of its economy, with 469 refugees for every dollar of GDP.



The UK hosts **117,234** refugees, equivalent to **0.18%** of its population

Most asylum seekers are not allowed to work in the UK, so must rely on state support



They are given

£5.28 PER DAY

for food, sanitation and clothing, less than the

MINIMUM WAGE PER HOUR

The UK ranked 7th in EU for asylum applications in the first half of 2015. Countries such as Austria, Hungary, Serbia and South Africa received more.

Sources: UN Refugee Agency UK (www.unhcr.org.uk); UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) 2015 Mid-Year Trends Report; International Organization for Migration (www.iom.org); Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Migration Policy Debates, May 2014; UN Development Programme, Human Development Report 2009; UK Office for National Statistics, Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, February 2016



Julia Neuberger on
why we should welcome
“strangers” to our land

My mother was a 22-year-old refugee from Nazi Germany. She worked her socks off to get her younger brother out after Kristallnacht, and then both her parents just before the Second World War. Most of the rest of her family perished in extermination camps.

On my father’s side, I am the grandchild of economic migrants – also from Germany. Those facts, coupled with the strong Jewish traditions about welcoming the stranger, because “you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 22:21), make me increasingly depressed about Europe’s attitude, and indeed the world’s, to the huge movement of peoples from Africa and elsewhere, particularly those fleeing the horrors of Syria.

Under Angela Merkel, Germany set a remarkable lead in 2015, taking in over a million people. Her principled views on our duty towards refugees, and her words, “wir schaffen es” (“we can do this”), made a deep impression on me and many others. But she has suffered something of a backlash, and we are now witnessing a hardening of policy, and a diminution in the already limited language of welcome, all over Europe, from France to Greece, from Sweden to Denmark, and of course here in the UK.

Despite this charged political environment, churches, synagogues and mosques are trying to help. Many synagogues host ‘drop ins’ for destitute asylum seekers. They give them a real welcome, help with food and clothing, and offer some advice on medical and social care. Temporary shelters can be found around the country, staffed wholly by volunteers, and people of all faiths and none have been going to Calais to help the distressed, disorientated and confused refugees and migrants living in appalling conditions.

Good-hearted people have also been volunteering in countries such as Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. It is vital that we keep reminding Europe that the vast majority of refugees continue to be hosted by their neighbouring states, in the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

So what else can we do? In parliamentary terms, we must do what we can – which is likely to be very little – to soften the worst proposals to limit entry and to deter people from even trying. In broader political terms, we can try to argue for a speedier, fairer, immigration review system, and for people to be treated with courtesy and kindness at all times. We may or may not get a sympathetic hearing.

[T]here is more we could do and more we should do. We cannot just stand back

But the faith communities within the UK could do more. We are stronger together than apart. The Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, the free churches and the various denominations of Jewish, Muslim and other faith communities could amplify their efforts by working together, and there are already welcome signs of increased cooperation. If it becomes possible to welcome individuals and families, sponsored by institutions and private people, over and above the numbers the UK has said it will take in, then I hope that faith communities will take a lead.

Britain’s foreign policy bears some responsibility for the current situation. Our involvement in Libya ended with Gaddafi defeated. But it also led to a lawless warring country that many people are desperate to leave. Similarly, our lack of military involvement in Syria (and I am not suggesting I would have been in favour of such action) may have made it easier for Assad to continue shelling his own people. Foreign policy is not neutral. The effects on human beings have to be factored in, and we cannot abrogate responsibility for what happens as a result of our decisions, even if they seem to be taken so very far away.

So I would argue, both as a rabbi and as an independent member of the House of Lords, that there is more we could do and more we should do. We cannot just stand back. Few of us have families who have been here since Roman times. Or since William the Conqueror. Most of us are much more recent arrivals, with a folk memory of our families coming to the UK from elsewhere. We should never forget it. That memory should move us to action, and to sympathy. ●

Julia Neuberger DBE is Senior Rabbi at West London Synagogue and a crossbench member of the House of Lords



Cards and posters made by children in Belfast to welcome eleven Syrian refugee families in December 2015
© Charles McQuillan



The dispossessed of the earth

Chris Gunness talks to UNA-UK
about Palestinian refugees



Chris Gunness is Spokesperson and Director of Advocacy and Strategic Communications for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

What are the biggest challenges facing Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank?

Let’s focus on the human dimensions here and concentrate on how the denial of dignity and rights inflicts suffering at the individual level.

If you are a child living under occupation in the West Bank, you see Israeli settlements growing up on the hills around your home; you see separate roads for settlers, separate water supplies, a completely different justice system. Meanwhile, you find yourself hemmed in by physical restrictions, with the prospects for a dignified and prosperous future receding with each passing day.

If you are a child in Gaza, your neighbourhood is likely to be lying in ruins; unexploded ordnance is probably littering your recreational spaces; you may well be deep in grief and horribly traumatised. If you are six years or over, you will have lived through three terrifying conflicts.

What can the international community do to help?

Beyond the blockade and occupation, there must be robust political action to address the conflict in Syria, which hosts nearly half a million Palestinian refugees. It is a simple historical fact that refugee crises can only be solved if the root causes of dispossession are addressed. In the meantime, UNRWA stands ready to help an embattled population with emergency aid and long-term human development assistance. We do this as part of one continuous intervention, under one roof, providing both a band-aid and long-term services such as education and health – which are very much part of the Sustainable Development Goals.

UNRWA is suffering from a deficit of \$85 million – how do you make the case for support?

Last year we nearly had to postpone our school year for half a million children. We just didn’t have enough

money to pay our 20,000-plus teaching staff. So at a time when extremist groups were in full recruitment mode, we were nearly forced to leave half a million children on the streets and not in UN schools.

Donors realise this situation is unsustainable. They also know it costs at least seven times more to provide services to refugees once they arrive in Europe than to deliver services through UNRWA in the Middle East, which is where the refugees prefer to be.

Some critics say UNRWA’s work is perpetuating the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Accusing UNRWA of perpetuating the conflict is as nonsensical as accusing Oxfam of perpetuating world poverty. We are a humanitarian organisation mandated to deliver services. It is the failure of the political players who are charged with bringing peace, including by solving the refugee question, that perpetuates the conflict and the refugee crisis it has engendered.

You made the headlines in 2014 following an emotional interview with Al Jazeera. Do we need a more compassionate response to refugees?

Compassion and humanity are an intrinsic part of restoring human dignity, which is ultimately what we are doing for refugees, people who are truly the dispossessed of the earth. If my tears served as a reminder of that, then I make no apologies. Moreover, if my tears served to focus world attention on the tears being shed in Gaza and the huge injustices being perpetrated against civilians there, then I have no regrets.

What is your message to the international community?

2017 will be the 10th anniversary of the Gaza blockade, the 50th anniversary of the Israeli occupation, and the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration. Let us use these milestones as spurs for positive change. ●



Anne Althaus on the false dichotomy between 'economic migrants' and refugees

The international community is faced with a tragic and challenging situation. Raging conflicts, natural disasters, environmental degradation, and blatantly unequal sharing of resources have put tens of millions of people on the move.

This unprecedented level of mobility has led to debates in political spheres, the media and in the public arena on the proper terminology to qualify the various migration patterns and types of migrants. In those discussions, the concept of 'refugee' is almost always opposed to 'economic migrant'. However, this dichotomy is not only unfortunate – given its oversimplification – but inaccurate.

'Economic migrant': an ambiguous (non)-expression

The term 'economic migrant' has no legal definition. It is not mentioned in any international instruments of migration law. 'Migrant worker' is used in the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Family to designate a person engaged in a remunerated activity in a state of which he or she is not a national. 'Migrant', on the other hand, is a neutral term that denotes any person who is moving or has moved across an international border – or within a country, away from their place of residence. A person can therefore be a migrant regardless of their legal status (documented or undocumented) and of the voluntary or involuntary nature of the move.

'Economic migrant' is nevertheless commonly used in the public discourse, often with an unfortunate derogative connotation. It frequently implies that the migrant has freely decided to move with the only aim of improving their financial situation, in other words for 'personal convenience'. At worst, it is suggested, with a xenophobic twist, that 'economic migrants' move to 'steal' the jobs and social benefits of their destination's population.

Mixed migrations: a complex reality

The inaccurate dichotomy between 'economic migrants' and refugees



A child stands by a dried-up riverbed in Niger, which ranked 188th (last) in the 2015 Human Development Index. The country is regularly hit by disasters, including drought, flooding, cholera and locust swarms, and over half the population suffers from food shortages. Surrounded by conflict-affected states, it has taken in over 80,000 refugees from other countries © UN Photo/WFP/Phil Behan

creates two fixed categories and gives the misleading impression that only refugees have and deserve legal protection and rights at the international level.

Yet, the reality is different and far more complex. Migratory movements are composed of various types of migrants who may have specific protection needs, even if they are not fleeing persecution or a conflict. These include accompanied or unaccompanied migrant children; victims of human trafficking; migrants attempting to reunite with their families; and migrants affected by natural disasters or environmental degradation, including as a consequence of climate change.

There are also migrants who leave their home country because they have virtually no access to their social rights, such as the right to health or to education. Indeed, many migrants leave because the health system in their country is so bad that if their child falls sick with a common disease such as malaria, death is highly likely. And there are migrants fleeing inhumane treatment, such as

forced labour, and who arguably should be protected by the principle of non-refoulement – which proscribes their return to their country of origin – even if they do not necessarily meet the definition of a refugee.

Migrants cannot be reduced to 'economic migrants' on the one hand and refugees on the other. In fact, it is highly difficult in most cases to isolate a unique cause for the migration.

So, while 'forced migration' is accurately used by the international community to designate movements of refugees and internally displaced persons, it must be noted that other types of migrants may also have little or no choice but to hit the road – and not for personal convenience. The term 'economic migrant' should therefore be avoided. The neutral word 'migrant', or the existing legal term 'migrant worker' when applicable, should be used instead.

All migrants have rights

Refugees benefit from a specific legal regime that provides them with international protection, notably the 1951 Convention, which allows them to obtain asylum in their country of destination. Other migrants, however, also have human rights in their states of origin, transit and destination, including the rights to life, health, physical integrity and non-discrimination, and labour rights. While states have their own immigration laws and processes, they still have the obligation to respect the international norms to which they have committed, even when faced with migratory challenges and security concerns.

The correct use of migration terminology and the correct application of international migration law are not questions of charity. Doing so ultimately protects human dignity and, consequently, stability and public order for the benefit of us all. ●

Anne Althaus is Migration Law Officer at the International Organization for Migration

10

myths about the refugee and migrant crisis

1 "Most people claiming asylum aren't refugees. They're economic migrants"

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), Syrians remain the main group of asylum seekers worldwide. Along with Afghans and Iraqis, they made up 90 per cent of those arriving in Greece in 2015 and the year to date, and in most countries, around 90 per cent of Syrian applicants are granted refugee status. When people fleeing violence in states such as Eritrea and Ukraine are taken into account, the majority of asylum claims are likely to be legitimate.

2 "'Refugee', 'asylum seeker' and 'migrant'... it's all basically the same thing"

Frequently conflated in the press, these terms are not interchangeable. 'Migrant' can be used as an umbrella term for people on the move. A migrant is an 'asylum seeker' only if they have fled their homeland and submitted an asylum application in another country. They gain 'refugee' status once the host country is satisfied that the individual would be in danger if returned home.

3 "Most refugees come to the West"

Over 86 per cent of refugees live in developing countries. Turkey – the only OECD country to feature in the top 10 refugee hosts – has taken in the most refugees, including 2.7 million Syrians, according to UNHCR figures from March 2016. By the end of 2015, 1,000 Syrians had arrived in the UK under its resettlement scheme, which is intended to take in 20,000 by 2020.

4 "Harsh policies will deter migrants from making the journey"

The refugee and migrant crisis is driven by human desperation – not the readiness of Europe to provide shelter. When Italy's search-and-rescue operation, Mare Nostrum, was replaced by a low-budget alternative in October 2014, migrants continued to cross the Mediterranean and, with 3,771 deaths, 2015 was the deadliest year for people making this dangerous journey. 'Deterrent policies' are based on the flawed assumptions that most migrants understand the policies of their country of destination and that they are acting out of calculation, rather than desperation.



5 "Most forcibly displaced people are seeking refuge abroad"

While it's the perilous boat journeys that make the headlines, the majority of displaced Syrians haven't actually left the country. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that there were at least 6.6 million internally displaced people in Syria at the end of 2015 – two million more than have fled the country to seek refuge abroad.

6 "Syrian and Iraqi refugees are likely to be ISIL sympathisers"

Syrians and Iraqis who flee their country are victims, not supporters, of the so-called Islamic State, whose leaders have repeatedly condemned those leaving areas under their control. According to Shelley Pitterman of UNHCR, leaving the country is a sign that individuals have "rejected the ideology of extremism and share the values of freedom and tolerance".

7 "It's easy to gain asylum in the UK"

The UK plays host to less than one per cent of the world's refugees. It has a highly-controlled asylum system under which around two out of three applications were rejected in 2015. The Refugee Council reports that courts overturned 38 per cent of Home Office decisions on asylum appeals in 2015.

8 "Refugees and migrants are a drain on the economy"

In fact, successive studies conducted by the OECD have found that migration is "neither a significant gain nor drain for the public purse", and that host countries could benefit significantly by capitalising on immigrants' skills, for example, by permitting them to work. Asylum seekers generally receive only a small allowance and, in countries such as the UK, are not allowed to work. A strategy that favours deportation over integration ignores the heavy cost of the former: a study by Migrants' Files last year put the price tag at €11bn in Europe since 2000.

9 "Refugees must claim asylum in the first country they reach"

Contrary to widespread belief, there is nothing in international law to this effect. The EU's Common European Asylum System enables its member states to return an adult asylum seeker to the first EU country they reached. But this has proven ineffective and imbalanced, as countries on the edge of Europe, such as Greece and Italy, have far more arrivals.



10 "Things are getting better"

As conflicts continue to rage across the Middle East and North Africa, the crisis shows no sign of abating. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that over 76,000 migrants and refugees arrived in Europe by sea in the first six weeks of 2016. It is widely assumed that now that winter has passed, the worst is over. But IOM reports that the summer months are the busiest for those seeking to reach Europe, and when most deaths occur.





Walter Kälin on
disaster displacement

This has probably been the warmest winter ever in England and Wales, the UK Met Office recently announced, and global average surface temperature in 2015 broke all previous records by a wide margin, according to the World Meteorological Organization.

Rising global temperatures mean more drought in some parts of the world and stronger rainfalls, causing floods and landslides, in others. Global warming contributes to more intense and frequent tropical cyclones and causes sea level rise. Together with earthquakes and other geophysical hazards, such events trigger disasters that force people to flee their homes to save their lives or find assistance and protection amid large-scale destruction.

The numbers of disaster-displaced persons are staggering. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, on average, more than 26 million people are newly displaced each year – a larger number than are displaced annually by armed conflict. It is the equivalent of one person per second.

While most remain within their countries as internally displaced persons, some cross borders to seek refuge. Drought in Somalia, for instance, prompted the flight of 290,000 victims of famine to neighbouring countries in 2011–12, and some 200,000 Haitians sought refuge abroad in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake.

Cross-border disaster-displaced persons are normally not recognised as refugees. Present international law and domestic legislation envisage refugee status for people fleeing persecution, armed conflict or violence, but not those displaced in the context of natural hazards and the adverse effects of climate change. Thus, for example, Ioane Teitiota from the low-lying Pacific nation of Kiribati was refused asylum in New Zealand because he could not show that the negative effects of sea-level rise amounted to persecution under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention.

To close this protection gap, some have called for amendments to the Refugee Convention. Others have warned

that an expansion of the definition of “refugee” may further undermine the international protection regime for people fleeing persecution and armed conflict. Faced with the challenges of the present refugee crises, governments are clearly not ready to adopt a wider notion of “refugee”, entitled to protection under international law.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that many disaster-displaced persons find themselves in a refugee-like situation. Fleeing abroad rather than finding refuge within their own country might be the only option when the closest route to safety is in a neighbouring country, when life-saving medical assistance can only be accessed on the other side of the border, or when a country is simply too overwhelmed by a disaster to adequately assist and protect its affected citizens.

More than 26 million people are displaced by disasters each year – the equivalent of one person per second

What, then, is the solution? In 2012, the governments of Norway and Switzerland launched the Nansen Initiative, a state-led, bottom-up consultative process intended to build consensus on how best to address cross-border disaster displacement. Regional consultations under this initiative have led to the ‘Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change’. Endorsed by more than 100 states in October 2015, the Protection Agenda opts for a pragmatic approach. It compiles and analyses key principles and existing effective practices from around the world and provides a toolbox of policy options that states, regional organisations and other actors could integrate into their own laws, policies and frameworks. Finally, it identifies priority areas for next steps, including data collection and incorporating planned relocation into in-country disaster displacement risk management.



Outcomes of the Nansen Initiative process have already found their way into important international documents. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 addresses prevention of and responses to disaster displacement, including across borders. Negotiators at the UN climate conference in Paris agreed to create a Task Force to develop recommendations for integrated approaches to climate change-related displacement. In the context of the forthcoming World Humanitarian Summit, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has suggested, in his proposed Agenda for Humanity, the adoption of “an appropriate international framework, national legislation and regional cooperation frameworks by 2025 to ensure countries in disaster-prone regions are prepared to receive and protect those displaced across borders without refugee status”.

Disaster displacement is now a solid part of the international policy agenda, and several processes at international, regional and domestic levels have started to develop stronger and more effective responses to one of the biggest humanitarian challenges of the 21st century. They must succeed; the time to act is now. ●

Walter Kälin is former Envoy of the Chairmanship of the Nansen Initiative. From 2004 to 2010, he was UN Special Representative on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons



Ian Williams on the Sahrawis
– forgotten victims of a highly politicised crisis

When millions of refugees are trudging and wading their way to safety all over the globe, the plight of some 120,000 Sahrawis might not seem so pressing. But if ever there was “a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing,” it is probably, for many of us, Western Sahara’s struggle for self-determination and the Sahrawis’ quest to return to their land.

For 40 years, these refugees have eked out a precarious existence in the desert on the western edge of Algeria after being driven out by Moroccan occupiers. And just as Chamberlain’s dismissive words came to haunt his reputation, the Western Sahara imbroglio continues to have consequences beyond the bitter fight between Morocco and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro (Polisario).

At one time, the Sahrawis had the dubious benefit of Cold War patronage, but since the fall of the Berlin Wall there has been an almost consciously contrived international amnesia about them. That changed in March when UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited the Sahrawi camps in Tindouf and, clearly upset by what he saw, reiterated the long-standing UN call for a referendum on self-determination, and referred to the Moroccan presence across much of Western Sahara as an “occupation”.

Ban’s comments were grounded in UN resolutions and decisions going back four decades. In 1975, the International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion stating that the Sahrawis are entitled to exercise their right to self-determination and dismissing Moroccan claims to the land. The General Assembly has called for the “occupation of Western Sahara” to end, and the Security Council has called for Morocco to withdraw. In 1991, the Council set up the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to implement settlement proposals that Morocco had accepted in 1988.

Initially, Morocco paid lip service to the referendum while trying to pack

the electoral roll with settlers. When it became clear that eligible voters wanted Morocco out, the kingdom insisted that the referendum exclude any question of independence. With support from France, Morocco has also managed to ensure that MINURSO remains the only UN peacekeeping operation without a human rights monitoring component.

When Ban made his statements, Morocco went into paroxysms of denunciation, claiming that the UN and the international community accepted its annexation. In a breathtaking abuse of language, it accused the UN Secretary-General of “semantic slippage” for using the term “occupation” and noted with “utter dismay the verbal slippages, faits accomplis and unjustified complacency,” of the Secretary-General. It ordered UN staff out of the territory it controlled.

With the future of MINURSO at stake, Ban sought support from the Security Council to protect the mission it had mandated 25 years ago and which it has renewed annually ever since. Surely the Council would not want to risk a precedent whereby states can, without censure, toy with peacekeeping missions simply because they don’t like what a Secretary-General says?



But support was not forthcoming. France, Egypt and Japan opposed action and, after days of backroom wrangling, the most the Council could deliver was an anodyne appeal for MINURSO to continue.

Persuaded by his staff that the UN generally uses the term “non-self-governing territory” rather than “occupied” for Western Sahara, Ban sought to explain to Morocco that his words had resulted from his emotional reaction to the refugees’ plight. But to his credit, despite searing personal attacks, he has not backed down from the UN’s clear and long-standing decisions.

Ban’s brave stance is particularly important as Morocco and its friends have thoroughly compromised the UN system. Successive UN officials have been bribed, suborned and browbeaten not to challenge the Moroccan version of affairs with anything as upsetting as the truth. Even the MINURSO website begins its list of relevant UN resolutions in 1991, when it was set up, not in 1975, when the Security Council asked Morocco to withdraw from Western Sahara.

The most convincing evidence for the Sahrawi case is the Moroccan refusal to allow a referendum. Rabat knows it would lose, and its refusal to allow a human rights component in MINURSO is obliquely eloquent testimony to how it intends to maintain control.

The UK has been reluctantly supportive of what Robin Cook would have called the “ethical dimension” of foreign policy over Western Sahara. But a public statement of support for the Secretary-General is overdue, as are reprimands to those countries whose deeds threaten to undermine the UN Charter and decisions of the Security Council, General Assembly and International Court of Justice. After 40 years of suffering, support for the Sahrawis is even more overdue. ●

Ian Williams is a freelance journalist based at the United Nations who blogs at www.deadlinepundit.blogspot.com

Ban Ki-moon delivers major speech in London

On 5 February, UNA-UK was delighted to host UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The event, held in association with Chatham House, took place at London's Central Hall Westminster, where the UN held its first meetings in 1946 and where the first Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, was elected.

Over 2,000 people braved the cold weather and queues snaking around the building for what was probably Mr Ban's last major public appearance in the UK, as he prepares to step down this December after 10 years in post. The audience consisted of representatives from Government and Parliament, NGOs, universities, business and media, as well as UNA-UK members and supporters, some of whom were part of the first wave of enthusiasm for the UN seven decades ago, and some just three months old.

Mr Ban was introduced by Baroness Anelay, UK Minister of State with responsibility for the UN. She reminded participants that in 1945 the success of the UN was by no means guaranteed, but that "today, with its 193 members working together ... it sets norms, builds consensus, mediates conflicts, enforces agreements, holds states to account [and] coordinates disaster relief". Describing the UN as the "world's leading multilateral organisation", she said that the UK was "proud" of its contribution, noting its pledges to meet the 0.7 per cent development and two per cent NATO spending targets, as well as its support for humanitarian action and peacekeeping. She thanked Mr Ban for his "drive, dignity and commitment", saying that she was "personally committed" to ensuring that the UK continues to play a leading role at the UN.

Natalie Samarasinghe, UNA-UK's Executive Director, used her opening remarks to say that while "the headlines may not always reflect it, there is a strong

core of people in this country who care about global issues and who want to engage with the UN". Noting that the selection process for Mr Ban's successor was underway, she expressed hope that his speech would remind people just how important the role of UN Secretary-General is, and that people would "follow this process just as closely as the other selection drama unfolding across the pond".

In his wide-ranging speech, Mr Ban praised the UK as a leading humanitarian donor, highlighting its recent decision to increase financial assistance to Syrian refugees. Referring to his own displacement as a child, he spoke of the need to "counter dangerous myths about refugees" and of the UN's role in helping people to rebuild their lives after conflict.

Afterwards, he engaged in a lively discussion with UNA-UK's Chairman, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, covering issues from LGBT rights to Israel-Palestine to the moral authority of the Secretary-General. Thousands of people submitted questions ahead of the event, which was trending on Twitter for most of the day, as participants posted hundreds of photos with captions such as "poignant, humble, inspirational", "bucket list tick" and "dream come true. You were the bomb, Mr Ban".

A condensed version of Mr Ban's speech is featured opposite. To read the full transcript and watch the recording, visit www.una.org.uk



Ban Ki-moon addresses 2,000 people at Central Hall Westminster © UNA-UK/Ed Thompson

"I myself was once a displaced person. When I was six years old the Korean War broke out and I had to flee my home with my parents without knowing where to go. Life was miserable, terrible. We survived on food and medicine provided by the United Nations ... Without the United Nations, I would not be able to stand before you today."

The Secretary-General's address

It is a great honour and a very moving experience that I am standing at the same podium where, 70 years ago, our founding fathers of the United Nations were gathered to talk about the future of our world right after the terrible and tragic consequences of the Second World War.

Heartbreak was fresh as delegates gathered here in early 1946. Across a continent, cities were still filled with rubble, and families were reeling from their losses. In Britain, food was still rationed and young men faced military conscription.

But hopes were very high. Seven months earlier in San Francisco, states had adopted the United Nations Charter. Seventy years ago this week, here in this Hall, the United Nations

took its first tangible steps, including the appointment of a Secretary-General.

I want to pay special tribute to one person who was in this chamber at that time. He is one of the great teachers: Sir Brian Urquhart. Next to my great predecessor Dag Hammarskjöld, no one in UN history has better embodied the ideal of global service and the principles of the Charter.

The United Nations has succeeded at the job for which it was founded: to protect succeeding generations from a third world war. In that regard, I think we can be a little bit proud, and the United Kingdom has been a key partner every step of the way. You have championed human rights, international law and agreements such as the Arms Trade Treaty. You are a leading humanitarian donor – as we saw again

yesterday with your generous pledges for Syrian refugees and Syrian people under siege. And at a time when others are cutting back on development aid, Britain has ring-fenced its own vital support for the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. I really appreciate the contribution and leadership of the United Kingdom.

Today we need UK contributions more than ever. The world is being tested. People worry about the next extreme storm, terrorist attack, financial shock or outbreak of deadly disease.

Yet through all this I am confident about our future. I take heart in part from the two landmark achievements of last year: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change. These are two important visions and commitments adopted and

laid out by world leaders. They have shown a sense of purpose, and a sense of unity, despite political, ideological and religious differences.

The Millennium Development Goals which were adopted in 2000 generated remarkable gains. The new Sustainable Development Goals will take us even further. Human rights and women's empowerment are major threads, as are good governance and other critical factors for stability. Crucially, the new goals are universal, applying to all countries, since even the wealthiest societies have yet to fully conquer inequality or exclusion.

The Paris Agreement is a very important turning point in putting our people and our earth onto a sustainable path, where we will be able to contain the rise of global temperature below two



UNA-UK Chairman Sir Jeremy Greenstock interviews Mr Ban on stage
© UNA-UK/Ed Thompson

degrees or even 1.5. Without that, we will have serious consequences affecting not only us but our whole world. It seems that people believe we have two planet earths, but we only have one. We cannot negotiate with nature. The Agreement marks a change in our way of thinking.

So I have great hope. At the same time, the world faces undeniable dangers.

The savagery in Syria will soon enter its sixth year. We must continue to press for an end to the fighting, sieges and abuses of human rights. Yemen is also in flames. Coalition air strikes in particular continue to strike hospitals, schools, mosques and civilian infrastructures.

In this world, at this time, more than 125 million people need immediate humanitarian assistance. If all those people lived in one country, it would be the 11th largest country in the world. These numbers are unsustainable. The human costs are intolerable.

I myself was once a displaced person. Some of you might have read my life story. I was born in Korea just before the end of the Second World War. When I was six years old the Korean War broke out and I had to flee my home with my parents without knowing where to go. Life was miserable, terrible.

We survived on food and medicine provided by the United Nations. The UN Children's Fund, UNICEF, provided

humanitarian assistance – including powdered milk and small toys. The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, provided us with textbooks and note paper. More importantly, the United Nations provided us with security, exercising for the first time the authority to maintain international peace and security through a Security Council resolution. Sixteen nations provided their soldiers, including many young men from the United Kingdom, many hundreds of whom died in the battlefield.

Without the United Nations, I would not be able to stand before you today. If I think about all that happened to me and to my country, to my people, I was able to survive only because of the United Nations. And now I'm standing here as the Secretary-General and feeling humbled. At that time, the United Nations blue flag was a beacon of hope to me. And I'm much more humbled now when I travel around the world and see that still, to many people, the United Nations flag, the United Nations logo itself, are beacons of hope. I have no other choice but to be motivated and give all that I have.

This is what I'll tell you, particularly the young people here. You may not appreciate all this wealth and happiness and stability as much as I or my generation did, or as much as many people around

the world who are living in very difficult conditions would. Don't take it for granted. I'm asking you to look beyond the United Kingdom, which is one of the most powerful and richest countries in the world.

“The United Nations looks to states such as the United Kingdom for leadership... Preventing extremism and promoting human rights go hand-in-hand, and we look to you to set a positive example by upholding these hard-won gains abroad and at home”

Today, many people are struggling to survive. People who cross the Aegean Sea, Mediterranean Sea or the English Channel in search of better lives are symptoms of problems, not themselves cause for suspicion. We must counter those who promote dangerous myths about refugees and migrants. We must look at the roots of the conflicts and governance failures that compel people to undertake perilous journeys.

Across the United Nations, we are placing greater emphasis on prevention. The Human Rights up Front initiative calls on us to act early in response to violations of human rights, before countries reach the point of no return.

The United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism focuses on underlying drivers of radicalisation and the need to avoid approaches that end up alienating the people we are trying to reach.

In Istanbul in May, we are going to convene a humanitarian summit meeting to help the 125 million people who need our immediate support.



Mr Ban surrounded by audience members after his speech
© Ander McIntyre

We continue to advocate the Responsibility to Protect, especially to build up national capacities to prevent genocide and other grave violations of human rights. We have learnt tragic lessons from the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, in Srebrenica in 1995 and in Cambodia in the 1970s. Each time world leaders committed: never again, never again. When the Holocaust happened during the Second World War, people established the UN saying “never again”.

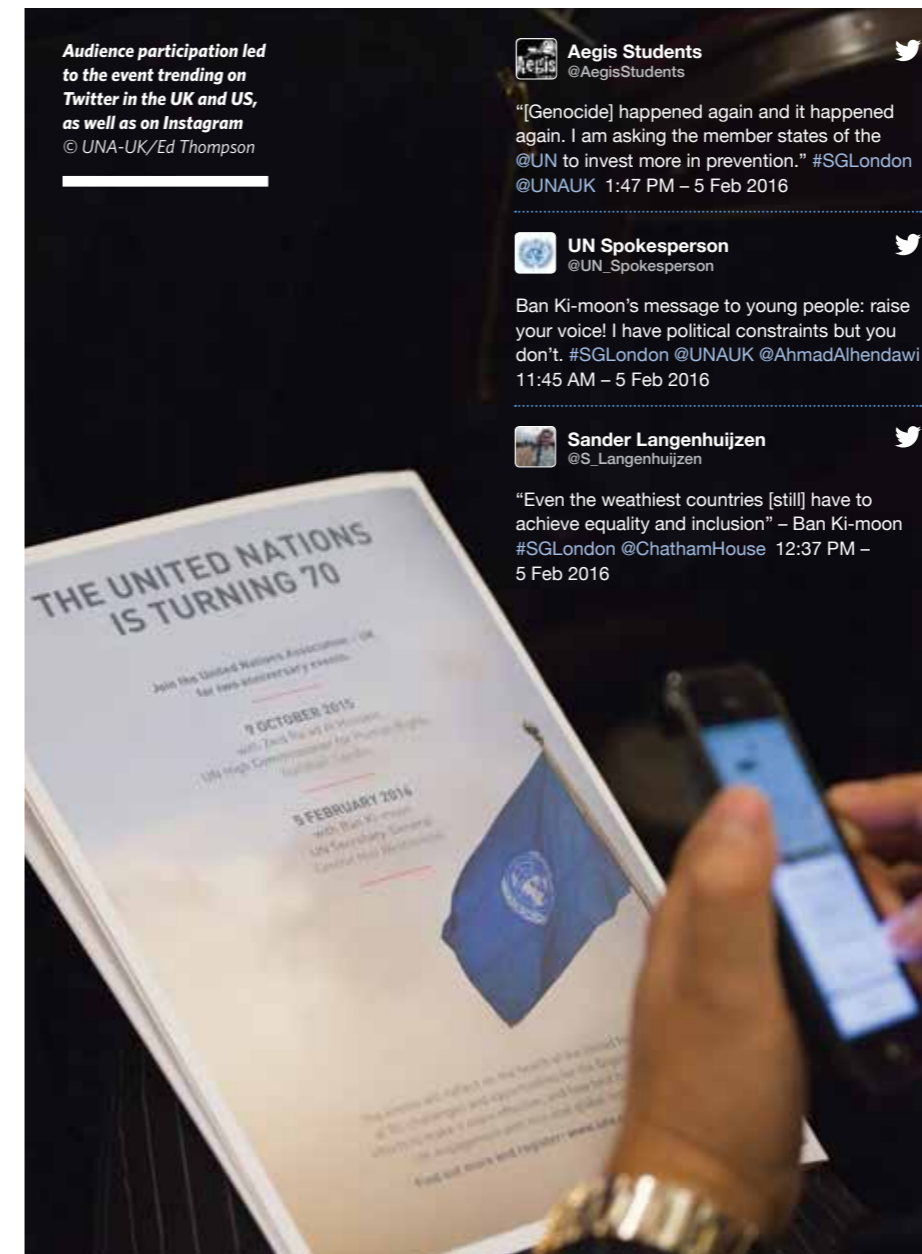
But it has happened, again and again. That's why I'm asking the member states of the United Nations to invest more in prevention. When you see there is a symptom for fire then you better address those symptoms rather than bringing in all the fire engines after the fire has broken out. That's preventive diplomacy.

The United Nations looks to states such as the United Kingdom for leadership across the whole agenda that

I have presented. Preventing extremism and promoting human rights go hand-in-hand, and we look to you to set a positive example by upholding these hard-won gains abroad and at home.

I commend the United Kingdom for its role in the landmark deal on Iran's nuclear programme. We must show the same determination in resolving conflicts in the region. In both Syria and Yemen, the United Nations is doing all it can to get a dialogue started between warring parties. Sectarian tensions and regional power struggles are proving hard to surmount. There is no military solution. Only through inclusive political dialogue can we solve all these seemingly intractable and complicated situations.

We need states that are party to the Arms Trade Treaty to set an example in fulfilling one of the Treaty's main purposes: controlling arms flows to actors

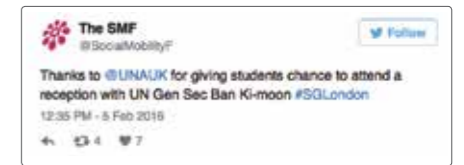


Audience participation led to the event trending on Twitter in the UK and US, as well as on Instagram
© UNA-UK/Ed Thompson

Aegis Students @AegisStudents
“[Genocide] happened again and it happened again. I am asking the member states of the @UN to invest more in prevention.” #SGLondon @UNAUK 1:47 PM - 5 Feb 2016

UN Spokesperson @UN_Spokesperson
Ban Ki-moon's message to young people: raise your voice! I have political constraints but you don't. #SGLondon @UNAUK @AhmadAlhendawi 11:45 AM - 5 Feb 2016

Sander Langenhuijzen @S_Langenhuijzen
“Even the wealthiest countries [still] have to achieve equality and inclusion” – Ban Ki-moon #SGLondon @ChathamHouse 12:37 PM - 5 Feb 2016



that may use them in ways that breach international humanitarian law.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, the United Kingdom has a key role and key voice in establishing and guiding UN peace operations. The UK has recently pledged support for peacekeeping in South Sudan and Somalia. We hope you will go beyond those engagements and provide even more troops for this flagship UN activity.

In all of this, UN Associations are among our most important allies. They bring UN ideals and objectives into their communities – and local concerns into the world arena. I welcome your special commitment to mobilise new generations of UN supporters.

Empowering women is one of my top priorities. I think of Dame Margaret Anstee, who became the first female Under-Secretary-General. She wrote a very famous memoir, *Never Learn to Type*, which was inspiring and moving. I have appointed some 50, maybe 60 women to senior posts. I'd also like to do more for youth. I appointed the first Special Envoy on Youth, who is working very hard to promote the future of young people.

I know that there are voices that question the greater role of the United Nations. I'm conscious of the criticism and expectations. Can you do better? Can you do it more efficiently, more effectively, more accountably, more transparently? We are now doing great work to change the United Nations to meet these expectations and to serve, in the opening words of the UN Charter, “we the peoples”.

The distinctions between national and international interests are falling away. I see a new understanding emerging which grasps the global logic of our times, and which agrees that British traditions are best sustained, and British interests best pursued, through full engagement with the world and with the United Nations.

We face great challenges, it's true, but our capacity to solve them is even greater. We have unlimited capacity if we are united. If we work together, we can build a world better for all, where nobody is left behind. ●

When did people become “illegal”?

Gaps, discrepancies and challenges in refugee protection

Issuing false documents, bribing officials and smuggling babies in packages – today, such actions might rightly be criticised as people trafficking but during the Second World War this is how Oskar Schindler, Irena Sendler, Raoul Wallenberg and others saved thousands of Jewish lives.

Drafted in the years following the war, the 1951 UN Refugee Convention recognised that it may sometimes be necessary for those fleeing persecution to enter a country without authorisation, stating that countries “shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence”. This obligation has been progressively eroded, at least in the West, through the concepts of “illegal immigrants” and “bogus asylum seekers”. These labels shift the focus from what someone has had to endure to how they entered a country, and imply criminalisation of the person themselves, often with serious consequences for their ability to access protection.

Destination matters

Although 145 states are party to the Refugee Convention, there are huge differences in how refugees are treated and whether they are even classified as such. In developing countries, which host the vast majority of refugees, admission tends to be granted on a group basis, leading, for example, to the mass influx of refugees from Syria into Lebanon or Afghanistan into Pakistan (neither of which, incidentally, has ratified the Convention). In low-income and fragile countries, scarce resources often mean refugees are held in camps rather than



Somali mother and baby inside UNHCR tent in Ethiopia – the world’s fifth largest refugee-hosting country and the largest in sub-Saharan Africa in absolute and relative terms © UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

UN Refugee Agency

Founded in 1950
originally with three-year mandate

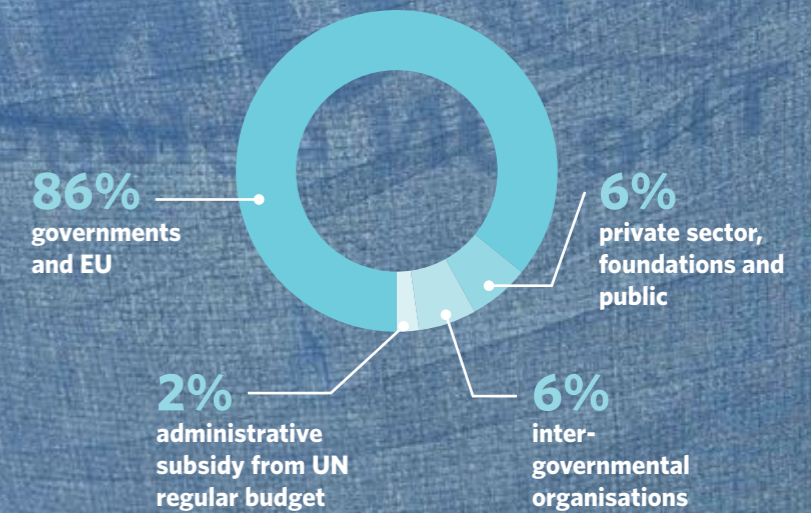
2 Nobel Peace Prizes
in 1954 and 1981

Assists 60 million people

Funding **almost entirely voluntary**

9,728 staff in **456** locations in **126** countries

Budget for 2016-17: \$7.2bn
(currently 84% shortfall)



integrated into communities, and their rights to housing, education, health care and other necessities can be limited.

There are, of course, exceptions. In 2014, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) praised Tanzania’s decision to grant citizenship to 162,156 former Burundian refugees – the largest group in the Agency’s history to receive naturalisation after decades in exile.

Fortress Europe

By contrast in wealthier states, those accorded refugee status often enjoy citizens’ rights, at least after some time, but few are granted entry and even fewer make it through the gruelling process. Those seeking to claim asylum generally face lengthy and complex application procedures. In the UK this can include months (in some cases years) in detention centres while claims are being processed – a practice opposed by UNHCR. Those fleeing conflict zones but unable to prove individual persecution can find themselves turned away, as European states tend

towards individualised, rather than prima facie, admission policies.

Again, there are notable exceptions: Germany’s acceptance of a million refugees last year, for instance. But the broad trend has been towards a curtailment of refugee rights through a process designed to make it increasingly difficult to gain refugee status.

The EU–Turkey agreement is the latest manifestation of this trend. While UNA-UK welcomes attempts to manage the situation – long overdue given the dire warnings that UNHCR issued in the lead-up to the crisis – we share widespread concerns about its potential to lead to blanket expulsions and unsafe deportations, especially in light of the lack of capacity to implement the policy in a manner that protects those affected.

More “illegals”?

The current displacement crisis – the biggest since records began – is not likely to abate any time soon. If Syria, the largest source of refugees, is excluded,

the underlying trend remains and will only be exacerbated by challenges such as climate change. Unless new tools and approaches are adopted, this future landscape is likely to make more people “illegal”.

With numbers on the rise, it is time for states – particularly wealthier countries – to ensure that refugees are able to exercise their right to claim asylum without having to put their lives in the hands of smugglers. There must also be greater support for the developing countries that host the vast majority of refugees.

Closing the gaps

The 1951 Convention does not explicitly address the issue of civilians caught up in generalised situations of violence, unless they belong to a particular group being persecuted. While UNHCR’s position is that people fleeing indiscriminate effects of conflict should be considered refugees if their government is unable or unwilling to protect them, states vary considerably in their interpretation.

Africa and Latin America have adopted instruments recognising such people as refugees. In Europe, there is much less consistency, with some states insisting on proof of individual persecution, others setting up limited schemes for particular nationalities and others taking a broader view, particularly for Syrians. Greater harmonisation is sorely needed.

We must also address disaster displacement which, as Walter Kälin points out on page 12, must be integrated into humanitarian, climate and disaster risk reduction frameworks. In the interim, “asylum” may offer another route to protection. It is already applied as a response to situations that do not fit the traditional refugee paradigm, particularly by countries in Europe where “leave to remain” is sometimes granted rather than refugee status.

Finally, we must address mixed movements of people. Politicians have repeatedly questioned whether those arriving in Europe are ‘refugees’ or ‘migrants’, fuelling notions of those

‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ of support. Refugees still dominate the numbers – UNHCR has stated that over 90 per cent of those arriving in Greece in 2015 and the year to date are from the top 10 refugee-producing countries. But it is undeniable that this is a mixed movement of people that must be managed accordingly, with fair processes for refugees and migrants alike.

This means accepting that migration is a reality, an integral part of global development and an opportunity as well as a challenge. It means looking at the facts not the headlines. Far from being out of control, it is surprising that migration is not higher than it is: in 2015, just 3.3 per cent of the world’s population lived outside their country of origin.

Above all, it means treating refugees and migrants as people, not statistics, not “illegals”, not problems, but humans who have, through choice or necessity, crossed a border – surely a right that none of us would be willing to give up. ●

UN a national security priority

In November 2015, the UK published its National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review (NSS/SDSR), which sets out Britain's approach to peace and security over the next five years. The publication of this document marks the end of an 18-month UNA-UK campaign to encourage the Government and public to recognise the extent to which the UK's security and prosperity depend on a well-functioning international system with the UN at its heart.

The new NSS/SDSR embraces UNA-UK's proposition. It lists "strengthen[ing] the rules-based international order and its institutions" as a priority, and erosion of this system as one of four "particular challenges" likely to drive UK security priorities over the next decade. Describing the UN as the "world's leading multilateral institution", it goes on to frame the UK's role within the organisation – and within the EU and NATO – as a means to "shape a secure, prosperous future for the UK ... and amplify our nation's power".

The document also takes forward our call for greater engagement in UN peacekeeping (see page 22) and mentions – for the first time – the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). However, we believe the NSS/SDSR largely misses the opportunity to adopt joined-up policies on arms control and disarmament (see opposite).

Arms control in the UK ...

After eight months of reduced oversight, parliamentary scrutiny of UK arms exports resumed in early 2016 with the reconvening of the Committees on Arms Export Controls (CAEC). The decision to revive CAEC came amid growing concerns over UK exports to Saudi Arabia, in light of that country's actions in Yemen.

In January, a UN Panel of Experts on Yemen released a report documenting air strikes targeting civilians, condemning in particular the decision to treat "the entire cities of Sa'dah and Maran as military targets". According to reports by the UK



Stephen O'Brien, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, briefs the Security Council on Yemen, 3 March 2016
© UN Photo/Loey Felipe

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Britain approved licences for Saudi-bound exports worth over £2.75bn from April to September 2015, including bombs, rockets and missiles.

UNA-UK and other members of the UK Working Group on Arms pushed hard for the CAEC to be reconstituted. We have since sent recommendations to Chris White MP, who was elected as CAEC Chair in February, calling for sufficient parliamentary staff capacity to support this important work.

... and in wider Europe

UNA-UK and partners also wrote to the European Parliament in February, expressing support for its stance on Yemen and noting that arms transfers to Saudi Arabia were contrary to the EU's Common Position on arms exports controls and potentially to the international Arms Trade Treaty.

Later that month, the European Parliament passed a resolution calling for an EU-wide ban on arms exports to Saudi Arabia until alleged breaches of international humanitarian law in Yemen have been fully investigated. Over 6,000 people have died since the conflict began in March 2015. Some 21 million – 82 per cent of Yemen's population – are in need of humanitarian assistance.

Human rights in foreign policy

In March, UNA-UK submitted evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee's inquiry on human rights, which focused on the administration and funding of Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) human rights programmes. During an earlier inquiry, a senior FCO official had stated that human rights were no longer a top priority.

UNA-UK's submission considered the potential consequences of this apparent de-prioritisation, arguing that the UK's reputation was a key element of its soft power and that perceived "downgrading" of human rights could undermine these standards internationally. We urged the UK to champion rights at home and abroad.

The Committee's report echoed UNA-UK's position, stating: "Perceptions and symbols matter, particularly in the context of the UK's soft power and international influence. We recommend that the FCO is more mindful of the perceptions it creates at a Ministerial level, especially when other interests are engaged, such as prosperity and security, as is the case with China, Egypt and Saudi Arabia."

Stronger action to prevent atrocities

In March, UNA-UK called on Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond to support a General Assembly resolution on R2P, which was adopted unanimously by UN member states in 2005 to protect people from war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and ethnic cleansing.

The draft resolution calls for R2P to be put on the formal agenda for debate at the General Assembly, which currently holds just one day of informal discussion on this vital topic. Despite its failure to prevent slaughter of civilians in countries like Sri Lanka and Syria, the Security Council has hitherto been seen as the primary vehicle for implementing R2P. As atrocity prevention is a global responsibility, we believe the 193-member Assembly should become a serious forum for R2P discussions.

Hammond replied that the UK "supports unanimous agreement to a resolution that reaffirms the commitment to [R2P] ... and protects key principles of the UN Charter".

The UK's security strategy

The 2015 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review (NSS/SDSR) sets out the UK's approach to peace and security, following a major government review of the risks and threats facing the UK. The last such review was conducted in 2010.

Anticipating the NSS/SDSR in 2015 – the UN's 70th anniversary – UNA-UK launched a major campaign in 2014 to highlight the importance of the UN to security and prosperity in the UK and beyond. We encouraged our supporters to back UK action to strengthen the UN, creating a "foreign policy manifesto" ahead of the general election, and stimulating over 10 per cent of the nationwide responses to the Government's public consultation on national security.

We also worked with partners including the British Association of Former UN Civil Servants to hold "witness seminars" on the UN and UK relationship, which captured lessons learned from former UK diplomats and UN staffers. We launched six major reports – on the UK and peacekeeping, atrocity prevention, nuclear disarmament, development cooperation, humanitarian assistance and conflict resolution – and we lobbied ministers and shadow ministers on our priorities.

What we wanted

- Recognition that an effective UN contributes to the UK's security and prosperity, with clear proposals to strengthen the organisation.
- Emphasis on tackling root causes of threats, such as poverty, human rights abuses and instability in countries that may not be considered priority interests.
- Leadership on the world stage and nationally, with the UK upholding international laws, norms and commitments on human rights and arms control.
- Renewed engagement in UN peacekeeping, acknowledgement that preventing mass atrocities is

a national interest and concerted efforts to further arms control and disarmament.

What we got

- A broader approach to national security (compared to 2010) that recognises how much the UK depends on collective solutions to a range of challenges that directly and indirectly affect the well-being of its citizens.
- Acknowledgement that these challenges have complex causes, many of which arise far from the UK's shores, underpinning a persuasive case for development assistance.
- A well-crafted argument for strengthening international institutions so that they remain effective and legitimate.
- Clear commitments to UN peace operations, including the announcement of troop contributions and the formation of a new cross-Whitehall peacekeeping unit.
- The inclusion, for the first time, of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle, and emphasis on early warning.
- The inclusion of a wider range of regions and partners than in 2010, including those that may not have featured in a traditional security context, but which are important from – for example – an environmental security perspective.
- Human rights – although mentioned throughout the NSS/SDSR, it is difficult to get an overall sense of priorities, particularly as different terms, such as "British values", are used without reference to domestic or international treaties.
- Migration is presented in terms of risk but not opportunity. Given that immigration consistently features in public opinion polls on threats to the UK, the NSS/SDSR could have been used to make a more well-rounded argument.
- Arms control and disarmament – the document makes only passing reference to the Arms Trade Treaty. It affirms the UK's intention to double its drone fleet, but does not set out its policy on drone use, nor engage with international efforts to regulate autonomous weapons. It also makes no reference to the UK's international obligation to disarm under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Visit www.una.org.uk/nss to read our pre- and post-NSS/SDSR submissions to Government and Parliament, and to access our policy reports.

What we need to work on

- Leading by example – the NSS/SDSR should state explicitly that the UK's own conduct is an important factor in protecting its people, projecting its influence and promoting its prosperity. This must include the protection of universal values at home and abroad.
- Public engagement – the document does not give sufficient weight to the need to create buy-in for policies. Over time, public disengagement

The UK Prime Minister and UN Secretary-General at the London Syria Donors Conference on 4 February 2016, which saw a record \$10bn pledged in aid © UN Photo / Eskinder Debebe



Parliamentarians discuss British peacekeeping

The UN All-Party Parliamentary Group, chaired by Lord Hannay of Chiswick, discussed the UK's contribution to UN peacekeeping. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, former head of UN peacekeeping, argued that peace operations – which many people consider to be the UN's flagship activity – provide an unreliable measure of the organisation's effectiveness, since success relies heavily on actors working independently from the UN.

“We will double of the number of military personnel that we contribute to UN peacekeeping”

UK National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015

He also warned about the impact of “we lead, you bleed” – the current division of labour, whereby the five permanent members of the Security Council mandate and pay for missions, whilst developing countries supply most of the troops who face real danger on the ground. He warned that aspiring permanent members like India, who contribute large numbers of troops, may be tempted to reduce these numbers.

Michael Clarke, former Director-General of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), concentrated on the UK's recent shift in policy on peacekeeping and considered how the UK could contribute more. He said that rather than focusing too much on numbers, the UK should concentrate on “enablers”, such as equipment that improves the mobility of personnel in an operation; command and control structures; and defence medicine.

On 25 May, UNA-UK will hold a major conference on peacekeeping in partnership with its Westminster branch and RUSI. The event will feature a keynote speech by Guéhenno, as well as a wreath-laying ceremony at the Cenotaph to acknowledge the service of peacekeepers past and present. See back page for details.

The UK and UN Peace Operations

The UK plays an active role in peacekeeping on the Security Council, in developing mission mandates, drafting resolutions, chairing negotiations and coordinating the Council's working group on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.

Over the years, the UK has consistently remained among the top 10 financial contributors to UN peacekeeping, currently providing 6.68 per cent of the budget, ranking 5th behind the US, Japan, France and Germany. However, since a peak in troop contributions in the 1990s, it has not deployed significant numbers of troops to a UN mission, ranking 53rd.

	2016	
	Military	Civilian
UNFICYP (Cyprus)	274	0
MINUSMA (Mali)	2	0
UNMISS (South Sudan)	3	0
MONUSCO (DRC)	5	0
UNSOM (Somalia)	2	0
UNSMIL (Libya/Tunisia)	1	1
MINUSTAH (Haiti)	0	3
UNMIL (Liberia)	0	1
TOTAL	287	5

Recent developments signal a shift in the UK's policy on UN peace operations that sees an increase in troop contributions and – we hope – a new strategy for the UK's engagement.

At a US-led contribution drive at the UN in September 2015, Prime Minister David Cameron announced that the UK would deploy around 300 personnel to UN missions in Somalia and South Sudan. In January 2016, the UK sent a small team to South Sudan to assess how the UK should provide support as part of its wider contribution to the mission. In February 2016, Defence Secretary Michael Fallon announced that the UK will provide around 100 troops to a non-UN peacekeeping mission in Egypt, and the UK will host a follow-up meeting to the US-led summit on 8 September.

While the UK's new National Security Strategy recognises that peacekeeping is one of the UN's most important roles, it does not make clearly the compelling case for increased UK engagement. UN peace operations are a tool for achieving UK interests in preventing conflict, sexual violence, mass displacement and extremism. They provide a framework for the UK to make strategic deployments to missions that have the legitimacy of UN authorisation and address situations of potential risk to UK interests, where unilateral or NATO action is not feasible.

The UK already invests considerable sums of money and political energy in UN peace operations. It should capitalise on its investment by strengthening its practical engagement with these operations. The UK is well-placed to provide diplomatic and military expertise that would help to improve the overall quality of a mission. A physical presence would: enhance the effectiveness of UN peace operations on the ground; contribute to UK national security priorities; contribute to training and co-deployment experience; and ensure that the UK is ready to engage with future UN missions in countries of UK interest. It would also raise the UK's international standing as a country that shares the burden of addressing global conflicts.

Visit www.una.org.uk to read our recommendations to the UK Government

Table source: Hansard, 1 March 2016, Ministry of Defence answer to written question 28162 on “United Nations: Peacekeeping Operations”



Participants waiting to take the stage at UNA-UK's debate. Left to right: Natalie Samarasinghe (UNA-UK), Danilo Türk (Slovenia), Vesna Pusić (Croatia), Igor Lukšić (Montenegro), Julian Borger (second row, one of the Guardian moderators) and Natalia Gherman (Moldova) © Tom Pietrasik

Amber Rudd responds on climate

Ahead of the UN climate conference in Paris in December 2015, UNA-UK supporters urged the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change to display leadership at home and abroad. Through a petition, they expressed concern that the emerging deal would not put the world on course to limiting global temperature rise to two degrees Celsius, noting that even this target would have devastating consequences for millions of people. They called on the UK to push for robust measures to close the “emissions gap” and to ensure that its own policies were ambitious.

In her response, Rudd pointed to the “unprecedented agreement” reached in Paris, as well as the “collective aspiration” of a global 1.5 degree temperature rise limit. She noted the UK's climate finance pledge – £5.8bn over the next five years – and its commitment to “taking coal off the grid”, saying: “Paris marks a historic turning point, but it is not the end.”

UNA-UK compiles ideas on SDGs

Following states' adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the UN last September, UNA-UK has released a major report, “The People's Agenda”, featuring proposals on taking forward the new development framework which commenced in January 2016. Contributors include: Ela Bhatt (Self-Employed Women's Association of India), Helen Clark (UN Development Programme), José Graziano da Silva (UN Food & Agriculture Organization), Mark Lattimer (Minority Rights Group), Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka (UN Women), Mahmoud Mohieldin (World Bank) and Ngaire Woods (University of Oxford).

Unlike the previous set of UN

development goals, the SDGs were conceived to be universal – to be implemented by and in all countries. UNA-UK is working with partners in the UK to call for a national strategy that combines domestic with international policies.

W Visit www.sustainablegoals.org.uk to read the report and see page 27 for information on how to order a free hard copy.

UN Secretary-General hustings

For the first time in the UN's 70-year history, candidates for the UN's top job have taken part in hearings with member states. From 12–14 April, nine candidates faced questions from states (and a few from civil society) in individual two-hour sessions, followed by media Q&As. These meetings are a major departure from the secretive process that has characterised previous appointments, with backroom deals dominating the selection and a lack of clarity on who was standing for the role.

In 2013, UNA-UK co-founded the global 1 for 7 Billion campaign to make the process more open, inclusive and – above all – merit-based. Last year, the General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for the circulation of candidates' names and CVs and informal dialogues with candidates. These provisions were endorsed in a joint letter by the Presidents of the Security Council and General Assembly, which marked the formal start of the process in December 2015. Since then, the following people have officially thrown their hat into the ring: Irina Bokova, Helen Clark, Natalia Gherman, António Guterres, Vuk Jeremić, Srgjan Kerim, Igor Lukšić, Vesna Pusić and Danilo Türk.

The UK, which supported UNA-UK's drive to improve the selection

process, asked questions during all sessions, including some solicited through Twitter. Students from Sandbach High School in Cheshire took part in a global call for questions organised by the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service and their question – “Even if you're not selected, how would you try to help our world become a safer, happier, healthy place?” – was put to Bokova via video. In a press conference, Mogens Lykketoft, the General Assembly President who chaired the sessions, noted that candidates had answered some 800 questions and acknowledged 1 for 7 Billion's role in transforming the process.

To complement the UN meetings, UNA-UK teamed up with the *Guardian*, Future UN Development System Project and New America think tank to organise the first-ever “hustings” with Secretary-General candidates on 13 April in New York. Gherman, Lukšić, Pusić and Türk took part, and further candidates are set to participate in a repeat event in London on 3 June.

The debate was structured around questions submitted by 25,000 people in 161 countries through a survey conducted by UNA-UK's partners Avaaz and Global Citizen, followed by a live Q&A. The audience consisted of NGOs, journalists, the public and diplomats, who commented that the interactive discussion enabled candidates' personalities to shine through and allowed for comparisons to be made on their approaches to key issues.

W Visit www.guardian.co.uk to read the debate live blog and coverage, and www.1for7billion.org for detailed summaries and analysis of the UN meetings.

UNA-UK outreach



Richard Nelmes explores how UNA-UK is responding to the challenge of 21st-century grassroots campaigning

Every day, ordinary folk do extraordinary things to highlight injustices, campaign for equality and right the many wrongs in this world. For many of us, working for a better world is so deeply ingrained in our daily lives that we probably wouldn't describe the things we do - whether its making donations, signing a petition, volunteering our time or simply engaging those around us in discussion - in those terms.

In our inter-connected world, the reach and potential of these actions have increased dramatically. Empowered by technology everyone can now be a broadcaster, convener and agitator for the cause of their choice. Today, we only need ask ourselves one question: what problem do I most care about? Information, tools and resources are usually just a click away and in seconds, we can join with, or inspire, thousands of others around the world to call for the same thing.

While new media has radically shifted the campaigning environment, its impact can be exaggerated (did Twitter really fuel the Arab Spring?) and traditional methods of campaigning and engagement remain as important as ever. So how can civil society organisations square this circle? This is a particularly important question for UNA-UK, as our loyal subscription-paying members seek to engage the next generation of activists - a generation that cares just as much about the problems we



UN Secretary-General candidates on stage at UNA-UK event in New York © New America; **UNA-UK Executive Director moderates panel discussion at the UN on the selection process** © The Elders; **General Assembly holds "informal dialogues" with candidates** © UN Photo/Rick Bajornas; **1 for 7 Billion team members** © UNA-UK; **UNA-UK Activist Summit** © UNA-UK; **1 for 7 Billion supporters in Mali** © Musonet Mali; **World Federation of UNAs meeting in Canada** © UNA-UK

face but that goes about addressing them in very different ways.

UNA-UK was founded to connect people in the UK with the work and values of the United Nations. Today, with multiple crises converging and the UN stretched to breaking point, this mission is more important than ever, and we are working hard to adapt and expand to ensure we can reach as many people as possible.

Our movement has democratised - it's now free to get involved with us and our campaigns are more populist.

They resonate with people who aren't necessarily UN experts or enthusiasts and ask them to take action in a way that suits them.

One example is '1 for 7 Billion', our campaign to improve how the next UN Secretary-General is chosen. If you tell a friend that you know of someone who got a job because of a secret deal or because they were from a particular place, they'll probably be outraged. Go on to confide that you're talking about the UN's top post and you'll find the makings of one of the

most successful campaigns for UN reform in decades.

UNA-UK co-founded this worldwide campaign in 2013 and together with our partners, we have managed to achieve an historic and fundamental shift in the way the UN works through a groundbreaking General Assembly resolution that encouraged the presentation of both women and men as candidates, and called for merit-based nominations based on clear selection criteria. Followed up by a letter from the Presidents of the Assembly and the Security Council, the resolution has significantly brought the process forward from one confined to backroom deals and manoeuvring to one that is more open and inclusive, with a time frame and public list of candidates. For the first time ever, candidates were invited to take part in informal meetings with all UN member states, which UNA-UK complemented by hosting an unprecedented public candidate debate in New York - an exercise we will repeat with further candidates in London on 3 June this year.

This is a clear policy and practical achievement, but no think tank could have got this far. 1 for 7 Billion is powered by a movement of ordinary people - nearly 200 million around the world. By engaging grassroots campaigners far away from the New York bubble, we sought to pair the ultra-local with the ultra-global, giving much-needed clout to our lobbying at the national and international levels.

In the UK, our 'Activist Summit' was one such opportunity. Held in March this year, this day of debate and action gave people the chance to exchange views with experts - former UN staffers, academics and campaigners - on the importance of getting the best possible person appointed as Secretary-General and how to make this happen. Participants then worked together to come up with actions to take this message back to their communities and to lobby their decision-makers. The day ended with public commitments to these actions, which will be followed up, supported and assessed by UNA-UK to demonstrate to politicians and diplomats that people really care about this issue.

Members and supporters of UNA-UK should be proud of what they have achieved so far. But the job is not yet done. There are still crucial parts of the recruitment process that need fixing. Our next goal is to push

for the UN chief to serve a single term of office, which would free her or him from the political pressures exerted by powerful states during the re-appointment process.

The approach exemplified by this initiative - careful selection of an issue and directing our policy, campaigning and outreach resources toward it - is helping our movement to flourish.

Some 20,000 people are now UNA-UK supporters, contributing finance, coming to events and taking campaign actions alongside our members. It's terrifyingly democratic because people get to vote with their feet - if an issue isn't appealing or the call to action too clunky, they simply won't get involved. The onus is therefore on us, to work with our grassroots movement to find issues that resonate with people and with our wider mission, and - crucially - where we have the potential to bring about real change.

While going down this route holds much promise, we know that we need to keep sight of the bigger picture. What makes the UN unique is precisely that it recognises and seeks to address the complex and interrelated nature of global challenges. We asked ourselves: does a campaign-driven approach risk losing this message?

For us, the 1 for 7 Billion campaign has always been about using one particular issue to get people interested in, and talking about, the UN. We have managed to open the door to thousands of people who used to think the UN was simply too big and too distant to change, and we now want to harness their ideas as we work with our partners to create a global people's agenda for the next Secretary-General.

Campaigning on one issue sparks interest in others, and we would love to see many of our supporters become committed UNA-UK activists. Those who don't, well, we hope that they will continue to think and act globally, whether that's by giving money to the UN Refugee Agency, lobbying the EU on arms sales through Avaaz or volunteering in Burkina Faso with International Service. Our mission is to turn UK citizens into global citizens, and with all the crises in the world today, every step in this direction - with or alongside UNA-UK - is a contribution to this mission.

Crucially, though, anyone who supported our last big project will know who we are when we come to them with the next one. And we will - watch this space! ●

1 for 7 Billion: the road to reform

The most successful UNA-UK campaign to date, 1 for 7 Billion, has made UN history by opening up the secretive process by which the Secretary-General is selected. We've come a long way, but there are still some outstanding reforms that are vital to ensuring we get the best possible leader at the end of 2016.

What do we have?

- ✓ A General Assembly resolution - adopted by consensus in September 2015 - on a fairer, more inclusive process to appoint the next UN leader.
- ✓ The support of the UK Government, which is one of the five powerful states to hold a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.
- ✓ The start of the first ever 'official' selection process, initiated by a joint letter sent to all UN member states by the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council.
- ✓ Open meetings to be held between all member states and candidates, with input from civil society - a far cry from the opaque process that once operated behind closed doors.

What do we need?

- ✓ The appointment of the Secretary-General for a single, longer term of office. This will give the next UN leader the political space to take decisive action in moments of crisis.
- ✓ The Security Council to nominate more than one candidate for approval by the General Assembly.
- ✓ Public commitments from all candidates to refrain from making promises to states, including on senior UN appointments, in exchange for their support.

What can you do?

Visit www.1for7billion.org for a list of actions you can take to support our campaign, and the UNA-UK website for information on our candidate debate on 3 June. Tickets are going fast - to book yours, visit www.una.org.uk

The last word



Jihyun Park, a North Korean refugee now settled in the UK, shares her story

Tell us about yourself

I am Jihyun Park, Outreach and Project Officer at the European Alliance for Human Rights in North Korea (EAHRNK). I manage our Korean-language output, oversee projects and build relations with refugees. My home town is in North Hamgyung Province. I hold a mathematics and science degree and I used to be a teacher.

What was your day-to-day life like?

In North Korea a person has two kinds of life and two kinds of food: physical and political. The dictators say that although a person's life vanishes when the person dies, their political life is eternal. They also say that one can bear physical hunger but without food for the mind one cannot live among comrades, so while food for the body has run out, people are fed with "political food", which causes indigestion! Many young people are willing to sacrifice their bodies for their political life. In exchange for our loyalty, we receive famine and death.

Why did you leave North Korea?

I decided to leave when my brother was thrown out of the military. My father was ill and when military officials came looking for my brother, the stress worsened my father's condition. He urged us to leave.

How did you manage to leave?

I was trafficked to China and tricked by the broker, who told me that I would need to raise the money to help bring my brother across. He promised me a well-paid job. Instead I was sold to a man for 5,000 yuan (about £530). I spent six years as his slave, had a son and was sent to a prison camp. Eventually I was repatriated and separated from my boy.

The North Korean labour camp was worse than the Chinese prison. We had to clear the land with our bare hands. Four women had to pull an ox-cart, two in front and two at the back, carrying a ton of soil in the cart. We ate raw potatoes straight out of the ground and picked seeds from animal dung to survive. I was released from the camp after my uncle sent a letter promising to look after me and prevent me



from escaping. Later I was again trafficked to China - this time by choice - to find my son. From there I made it to the UK.

How are you settling in? What challenges have you encountered in the UK?

I came to the UK in 2008. It was the first time I had heard English. I could not communicate with anyone. I wanted to learn English, so I went to Refugee Action and they referred me to a mosque where I had English lessons once a week. After receiving my refugee visa, I looked for jobs and submitted résumés but many required specific qualifications. North Korean qualifications are generally not recognised, so I studied for as many qualifications as I could. I also worked hard to improve my English, so that I could talk to my children and help them with their homework.

Nowadays I help other North Korean refugees. Last year I started an English class at EAHRNK and we often speak about human rights. It was not until I reached the UK that I learnt about rights and that mine had been abused. I remember sitting at the dinner table with my family in our home in Manchester. We were talking about our day - just talking and laughing and smiling. I felt happiness for the first time. In North Korea, one's happiness is not one's own - happiness belongs to the regime. Back then, I did not know what it means to be human.

North Korean defectors hide their faces as they arrive at an immigration detention centre in Bangkok in October 2006, after a Thai court convicted them of illegal entry and ruled they should be repatriated. They hope to be granted refugee status and relocated to South Korea
© AFP PHOTO/ Saeed Khan

What hopes do you have for your country? Do you hope to return?

I tried to bury my painful past life and not think about it. Now I tell my story because I want people to care about North Koreans. The global community must come together to help improve the lives of North Koreans. This means not repatriating defectors, as China still does, as well as engaging the North Korean government on human rights and holding them to account for the heinous crimes they commit against their people on a daily basis.

The most important strategy for engagement is to spread knowledge and information from outside to North Koreans. My dream is to become a human rights lawyer. I want to teach North Koreans about their human rights, and about freedom and happiness. ●

UNA-UK would like to thank Migrant Voice for their support in securing this interview. The full version is available online at www.una.org.uk/magazine

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



OUT NOW

The people's agenda

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SUSTAINING MOMENTUM

What next for UN peace operations?

Join UNA-UK, UNA Westminster and RUSI for the largest annual event to mark the International Day of UN Peacekeepers

0900 to 1730, Wednesday 25 May 2016

Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), Whitehall, London SW1A 2ET



WITH:

A keynote speech by Jean-Marie Guéhenno, President and CEO of International Crisis Group and former head of UN peacekeeping

A wreath-laying ceremony at the Cenotaph at 12.45pm - free and open to the public - to celebrate UN peacekeepers past and present and remember those who have paid the ultimate price for peace



UNA-UK

To find out more and book your place, visit: www.rusi.org/events