

## **Report of UNA-UK Executive Director Sam Daws for 2009-10 to the UNA-UK AGM 6 March 2010**

As Lord Hannay has mentioned I announced today to the Board some news about my own future. I will turn to that briefly at the end of my remarks but first I want to turn to the more important subject of what progress has been achieved towards UNA-UK's objectives over the last 12 months.

2009 - 2010 has been a remarkably productive year, with progress in all five pillars of our work. I want to start by touching on some of the highlights in each area.

### **Our first pillar is strategic communications: Why the UN matters**

Our two principal ways of communicating this have been New World and the website. From the feedback we have received these grow better each year. New World now rivals in content and presentation periodicals which have a raft of dedicated staff working fulltime on them. Natalie Samarasinghe has done a brilliant job, having taken over the editorship from Veronica Lie who did so much herself to professionalise the publication. Natalie's contribution can also be felt more widely, in the coherence and quality of our communications across the board, not to mention the contribution of her human rights policy expertise to our work. The quality of New World has not gone unnoticed in policymaking circles, which has helped us secure op eds and essays from many of the world's leading experts. This has included, over the last year, Helen Clark, Navi Pillay, Ngaire Woods, Yvo de Boer, Bruce Jones, Jan Egeland, and Sir John Holmes. We have also increasingly used the magazine to equip members and supporters with information to explain why the UN and why multilateral solutions are so vital, and have provided expanded coverage to forthcoming membership initiatives and events to this end.

The UNA-UK website is now updated virtually daily through the tremendous efforts of our Communications Officer Helen Franzen, and this year we launched the new and very popular "Members Forum". We have seen an exponential increase in the number of hits of our website over recent years. We now attract an average of nearly 100,000 unique visitors annually, who access over a quarter of a million separate pages. The daily statistics are just as impressive. Helen has also ensured that our three separate and now monthly e-newsletters UN Matters, YPN news and UNYSA news are both comprehensive and sent out on time. They have proved very popular, as has UNA-UK's presence on new media such as Facebook and Twitter.

Other resources, from 'The Road to Copenhagen' to the '2009 Lobby Pack' have supported our message that the UN matters.

### **Our second pillar is influencing decision-makers and decision-formers**

This year has proven, beyond any reasonable doubt, that our Chair, Lord Hannay, has the supernatural ability to be in five places at the same time! That is the only explanation I have been able to reach on his ability to contribute simultaneously to a myriad of House of Lords debates, committees and inquiries; engage in meetings and constant correspondence with government ministers; criss-cross the country and beyond speaking to public audiences and at conferences about the UN; and continue to appear regularly on countless television and radio channels. I think it is safe to say that Lord Hannay's contribution to the Association in the area of influencing decision-makers has been second to none. To mention just a few of the areas where he has campaigned on behalf of the UN and UNA-UK over the last 12 months: He initiated a major House of Lords debate on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and made a key contribution to a debate

on climate change post-Copenhagen. He used the Queen's speech debate to raise UNA-UK priorities and he has sent letters to the government on matters as diverse as Sri Lanka, corruption, voting rights, the IAEA, peacekeepers, genocide, Burma, the arms trade, disability rights, racism and Gaza.

In December, we organised, with RUSI and BASIC a major international conference in support of President Obama's call to work towards a world without nuclear weapons. Tim Kellow, our outgoing peace and security programme coordinator, made a valuable contribution to the organisation of the conference and I thank him for all his work for UNA-UK over the last three years.

Georgina Banks, my Executive Assistant, has along with her superb organisational skills, been making her mark this year on our parliamentary work by coordinating the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the UN. She has helped us to hold three excellent events for Parliamentarians – with Sir John Sawers, Francis Deng and more recently with Gareth Evans and Baroness Shirley Williams. She also organised the launch of our annual lobby of Parliament, and has created a hustings guide for the coming General Election, available on our website today, and in hard copy to branches in a week's time. The election gives us an important opportunity to develop relationships with the substantial new intake of MPs – among them, of course, possible future prime ministers and foreign secretaries.

We have continued to build on our relationship with the FCO and DFID, contributing to the policy formulation process. We have also maintained close contacts with Shadow ministers and their advisors over the last three or so years. I attended the Conservative Party conference in Manchester last October and Lord Hannay and Natalie recently provided oral and written evidence to the Conservative Human Rights Commission.

### **Our third pillar is mobilising our grassroots membership and supporter base**

It is wonderful to see an increased level of activity in our membership networks over the last year.

You may remember from UNA-UK's inaugural Impact Report that in the four years from 2005 to 2008 our nations, regions and branches averaged 233 events per year. The figure for 2009 is set to significantly exceed this. So far about half of our branches and regions – 35 out of 79 – have reported on their activities in 2009. But these 35 alone have undertaken a total of 251 events and activities. These range from Model UNs in local schools to town hall flag-raising ceremonies, and from talks on climate change to fundraising outside supermarkets for UNICEF. Branch events marking UN Day last October were even highlighted in Parliament in response to a Parliamentary question.

We must translate this increased activity into increased membership numbers. On this front we are doing better than many other membership organisations affected by the economic downturn, but we must do more.

Rich Nelmes, our Membership and Fundraising Officer is doing a remarkable job in developing new tools to support a clear membership recruitment strategy. We can now track the progress of an individual from initial inquiry to attending our events to eventually becoming a member, and we can tailor our contact with them accordingly.

This year we introduced, for the first time, a fund to support branches, regions and nations holding events in support of UNA-UK objectives. We hope to re-establish this fund from July of this year, funding permitting.

We have produced a suite of new membership and trust leaflets with blank space on the back of the membership leaflets to allow for branches to advertise local contacts and events. A new affiliate leaflet will be finalised in April. We hope to then have a big push through the regions and branches to secure local affiliations, including from trade unions, women's organisations, religious bodies and other NGOs.

A set of seven new posters covering some of our key areas of work was launched today, and will be sent out to nations, regions and branches over the next week. Based on feedback from members, a further set with new designs will be produced in the autumn.

We have more than doubled our number of "Do Something" initiatives over the last year. These have ranged from campaigns to close vulture funds and stop violence against women, to support for the soil association's campaign to protect honey bees and for the World Food Programme 'billion for a billion' hunger campaign.

Our ability to link the local to global is improving with a revitalisation of the World Federation of UN Associations (WFUNA) under new leadership. Dr Gari Donn of UNA Edinburgh, Tim Jarman, Nick Boucher and I attended the WFUNA Triennial Assembly in Seoul last August and I went on to Beijing for meetings with UNA China and Chinese officials on nuclear and UN reform issues. In Seoul, Gari did a splendid job of securing the passage of our joint resolution with UNA-USA on the subject of a world without nuclear weapons, and UNYSA was awarded a certificate by Dr Hans Blix for their campaign against the spread of nuclear weapons. I know that many branches continue to partner with and support UNAs in other countries. This work is of enormous value.

An important opportunity to expand our membership and supporter base will come with the UN Forum on 12 June. We have already secured some fantastic speakers and workshop leaders. Over 500 people have already registered for the event, about half of whom are UNA-UK members. You can help us fill the 1200-capacity Friends House venue.

#### **Our fourth pillar is supporting the next generation,**

Our youth wing UNYSA, led by Nick Boucher and an exceptionally strong Youth Council this year, have been fantastically active. They have organised a campaign conference on non-proliferation and climate change in Leicester, a regional development meeting in Birmingham and their AGM to be held in Oxford on 27 March on the MDGs. UNYSAs have been active in mentoring in schools, and a number of UNYSA members took part in the Stop Climate Chaos march in London last December. And Kingston UNYSA organised a 'Week for Haiti' and raised £3,500.

The FCO again hosted a reception for our thriving Young Professionals Network (YPN), with Baroness Kinnock presiding. We have deepened links with the UK Global Compact Network with Susannah Anastasi representing us. Tim Jarman made a presentation on Global YPN at the WFUNA Plenary in Seoul last August. This coming year we are going to do more to seek to convert YPN members into UNA members and supporters.

This year we have also completed a major new teaching pack on the UN with the UK National Commission for UNESCO, called 'The United Nations Matters'. Copies of the pack are available to take away today.

We have supported, with FCO help, more Model UN events than ever before, these include events in Birmingham, London, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Belfast, Bath, Leicester, Stockport, Sussex and Durham.

## **Our final pillar is strengthening UNA-UK's own governance, operations and resources**

In this area we have seen continuing progress over the last year, not least in securing substantial five-year grants to provide UNA-UK with a more stable future.

I am enormously grateful to Ajay Vasa for his long-standing service to UNA-UK in the stewardship of our finances. Carol Hodson, who has, since last June, taken on the challenge of the new position of Head of Governance and Finance, has brought to the position a wealth of experience of NGO governance and management coupled with a keen understanding of the political and economic environment in which UNA-UK operates. She has already considerably strengthened our financial and risk documents and our operations and governance.

I also want to give special mention to Dorothy Havergal-Shaw, who because of ill-health, has most reluctantly last month given up volunteering for us at head office after many decades of valuable selfless service. She is 90 this year and continues to be a real inspiration to all of us who know her. I would like to take back to her from this meeting the warm thanks of the Association as a whole.

\*\*\*\*\*

I think we should feel very proud of our collective achievement not just over the last intensive year, but over the lifetime of the Association.

In particular, over the last five years we have raised the profile of the Association hosting major speeches by both Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon and a host of UN Under-Secretaries-General and other luminaries.

We have revamped our publications, website and electronic newsletters, established a distinguished academic advisory panel, published the Oxford Handbook on the UN with a foreword by the UN Secretary-General and contributions by over 50 of the world's leading UN authorities.

We have created from scratch a now 3000-strong young professionals network, doubled the number of UNYSA branches, produced UN and human rights teaching packs, which have been distributed to every secondary school in the country

We have updated our membership database systems, our financial procedures, introduced an independent audit committee, and reduced the size, number and costs of our governance bodies.

Through regular tendering and tough negotiation we have slashed office costs from insurance to photocopiers and from printing to phone calls, whilst simultaneously reducing our carbon footprint, switching to 100% renewable energy for all our office electricity and improving the environmental impact of our publications

We have decluttered and completely overhauled and refurbished the UNA-UK offices with new lighting, electrics, carpets, toilets, and IT and telephone systems. As well as making UNA-UK a more efficient and professional place to work and showcase the Association's work, this investment paid for itself in just nine months by enabling us to lease out additional space to other charities bringing in additional income of approximately a quarter of a million pounds over the last five years and a significant new income stream to the UNA Trust for decades to come.

In each of the last five years we have ended the year with a financial surplus, modestly building up our reserves whilst paying down our mortgage. We have also replenished the Trust's unrestricted reserves.

Our first quadrennial Impact Report has helped us demonstrate our relevance in an increasingly competitive market place enabling us to continue to bring in significant funds from the government, and to secure two significant five-year grants totalling three quarters of a million pounds of new project funding from foundations.

\*\*\*\*\*

This September I will have been Executive Director for six years. Add in my time in the early 1990s as the inaugural John Bright Peace and Security fellow at UNA-UK, I will have worked for the organisation for nine years of my working life. It has been a great privilege to have served the organisation in these roles but I have decided that now is the right time for me to move on to new challenges.

I would like to thank Lord Hannay and his predecessor Sir Richard Jolly for their support to me over the years, and to the members of the Board and its sub-committees for their dedicated voluntary service and for their friendship. It has been vital that UNA-UK has had strong leadership at the Board level, as we have sought to improve the fortunes of the Association and develop real influence with government. David Hannay has provided that in unparalleled ways.

I will greatly miss my wonderful colleagues at head office. UNA-UK's ultra-hard working staff, who have performed miracles – not only of the loaves and fishes kind – raising UNA-UK's profile, on a tiny budget, to match that of organisations five times our size; but also raising the quality of what we do, improving the servicing of our members and raising, by leaps and bounds, the prestige in which the organisation is held.

What I am pleased I don't need to give up is my membership of the Association. I've been a member myself now for nearly 25 years, and as someone passionate about the importance and value of the UN and its work, I am passionate about our future success.

I will be moving on – my last day in the office will likely be in the first two weeks of September – to become a Senior Research Associate at the Centre for International Studies at the University of Oxford, directing a project on UN Governance and Reform. As a next step I hope to be in a position to establish a broader policy research institute on the United Nations at Oxford, with a particular focus on giving a voice to UN practitioners and scholars from the developing world, and building links to other leading centres in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe.

Thus I will not be very far away – either geographically or in the focus of my work – and whilst I will take care to give my successor plenty of space I will also be available to help in any way that might be useful.

I hope that I will be leaving an organisation with not just a sounder financial foundation, but also a renewed sense of purpose and strategy. That does not mean that there will be no challenges facing my successor, whoever he or she might be. Quite the contrary.

- The need to secure longterm core funding remains both critical and difficult in the current economic climate.
- The question of whether UNA-UK should seek and would succeed in securing

charitable status.

- Choices about how we seek to strengthen our networks of members and supporters, who are still so strong in heart if not in number.
- Can we continue to achieve so much with such a small staff team – and can we do more through volunteer efforts in a way that enhances our focus and mission?
- How can we ensure that our work remains relevant, remains effective and that we continue to use our resources carefully and wisely?

I will watch with great interest to see what choices are made, and how the organisation evolves.

My personal departure in September is still some way away, and UNA-UK has an ambitious agenda for what we want to achieve both before then, and beyond. I have told my staff team to prepare themselves for a busy and exciting time ahead. First and foremost, of course, is the upcoming UN Forum, which has the potential to make a major impact, not just in bringing UN issues to the national consciousness soon after a key General Election, but also in bringing a large number of new people into UNA-UK's orbit, with the opportunity for us to translate that into new members and supporters. But an event of this magnitude and ambition requires the involvement of all of us if it is going to be a success. I look forward to working with you to make our 12 June 2010 Forum a spectacular event.

As this will be my last AGM I finish with a warm thank you to everyone here today for all your support and encouragement over the last five and a half years.