

Lord Hannay of Chiswick, Chair of UNA-UK

ADDRESS TO UNA-UK ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2006

Durham University
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It is a great privilege to be addressing this annual conference for the first time. I have always admired the role of UNA, the effort its membership put into their support and their critical suggestions for strengthening the organisation, the work they do voluntarily in good times and bad. Without that support the UN would be a weaker and less effective organisation. Hitherto I have admired UNA mainly from afar – from my post in New York, from my work to try to get a settlement in Cyprus, from my spell advising the Secretary-General as a member of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. Now all that will change, and I am honoured to have been chosen to chair the Board of UNA. I hope I will serve you to your satisfaction and that, together, we shall make a difference and an effective contribution to our national life and to the collective work of the UN of which we are an essential part.

I feel rather a fraud to be standing before you to give you an account of UNA's activities over the last year having myself been such a small part of it – a mere couple of months or so, starting with that splendid evening in Central Hall Westminster and the Secretary-General's inspiring address to us. The real work over the period I will review has been done of course by Richard Jolly, as it has been for quite a number of years. We all owe him a huge debt of gratitude. He brought UNA through a difficult period when our finances were under great stress. He installed our new executive director, Sam Daws, who is proving a worthy successor to a long line of distinguished predecessors, most recently Malcolm Harper whom I know well from my earlier work for WFUNA. Let us not forget either Richard's great work at UNICEF which I watched with admiration when I was in New York.

Now for the more mundane but vital matters of UNA-UK's activities over the past year. There seems to me to have been real progress during these last 12 months in seven different areas.

First, funding. Last year UNA was recovering from acute financial difficulties. Sam Daws has sought five new grants from charitable trusts, successfully bringing in over half a million pounds. The two most significant grants have been from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (amounting to £120,000 over three years) and from the Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust in memory of one of my predecessors as Chair of UNA-UK, the late John Ferguson, (amounting to £400,000, again over three years). Elnora Ferguson is not with us today, but I know from my work with her at the University of Birmingham that she is a person of great generosity, and we should express our gratitude for this grant. Despite these generous grants we are, I am afraid, far from being out of the woods yet. UNA's ongoing costs are very high compared with its regular income. Many of you may be surprised to hear that less than 20% of our annual budget is paid for by members' subscriptions and donations. So we have constantly to seek new and innovative sources of funding – and here we are always competing with many other, very worthy not-for-profit organisations.

Second, governance. We have continued over the last year, with expert guidance from the interim Deputy Director Simon Le Fevre (who will, I fear, be leaving us fairly soon and whom we owe a great debt of gratitude) to carry out a root and branch review of our governance and financial procedures. As a result we have improved our compliance with statutory requirements, and even exceeded these in our quest for "best practice". One area in which I would like to see

even more change is to shift some reserves, away from finance and administration and into membership, advocacy and education work. For a small organisation it is really essential to make that shift. We have also agreed that the Board will establish an Audit Committee to ensure tight control of the spending of the monies we do have; and we shall be conducting an overall review of the effectiveness of the Board and its procedures.

Third, UNA's profile. The event in Central Hall with Kofi Annan was a wonderful boost to UNA-UK's image, nationally and internationally. It seems from our research to have been one of the few times that a current Secretary-General has made a major policy speech under UNA-UK's auspices; we must make sure it is not long before it happens again!

Fourth, developing our membership outreach and its role in influencing government policy. Through the 10 "In Larger Freedom" consultations up and down the country – from Bath to Belfast, from Aberystwyth to Edinburgh (and I was delighted myself to take part in three of them: in Cambridge, Aberystwyth and Southampton) we ensured that UNA members had an opportunity to communicate their views to ministers and civil servants in the run-up to last September's UN Summit in New York. And we lobbied with great success a few weeks ago to get whole-hearted government backing for the new Human Rights Council which is being set up as a result of that summit.

Fifth, attracting younger people to UNA. Through the work of our admirable UN Youth and Students Association and our partnership with UK Model UN we have continued to build our links with schools and increase the number of our branches at university. Recently, through the establishment of a network of Young Professionals, we have made UNA relevant to a new generation. I spoke to them myself recently and was inspired by their dynamism and enthusiasm.

Sixth, marrying our strength as a grass-roots organisation with our aim to be the UK's leading policy authority on the UN. Here the role of policy experts in last year's consultation process was an excellent beginning. Historically, in the 60s and 70s, UNA had close links with leading academics and policy experts around the country. We want to re-establish those links. Today I can tell you that, as previously foreshadowed in *New World*, we are launching an initiative to put together an advisory panel of experts on all aspects of the UN's work who will be available to the Board and to its policy committee to further the policy objectives established by our annual conference.

Seventh, professionalising UNA-UK's image. Many have already expressed their appreciation for the improved look and content of *New World*, of the new membership leaflet and of the report on our "In Larger Freedom" consultation. There have been improvements too to the UNA website; and many individual branches, such as Westminster, have really excellent sites of their own. Our own headquarters office has been transformed through simple and effective renovations and clearing out mountains of old furniture and duplicate files. We will pay back the cost of that refurbishment within 12 months through additional licensed income from like-minded organisations such as the One World Trust and we hope to bring in an additional £350,000 over the next 10 years in this way, thus helping to put the UNA Trust back on a sound financial footing.

So much for the past. Sam Daws will speak in more detail about our plans for this year. We are hoping for some high-level speakers from New York and elsewhere at occasions under the aegis of the All-Party Parliamentary Group of which I am a Vice-Chair. We hope to see the Young Professionals Network supplemented by a Business Council for UNA-UK. We have a major conference on non-proliferation in Cardiff in December. We are planning others to cover the responsibility to protect, the work of the new Human Rights Council and the crucial issue of Secretariat reform. We will be following closely issues relating to climate change, to international migration and to progress on the Millennium Development Goals. And of course there will be the

process of selecting a new Secretary-General on which I expressed some thoughts recently in the *Financial Times*, on 23 March to be exact. I do not think that time will hang heavy on our hands.

Now for a few thoughts about the UN more widely. 2005 was above all a year for reform at the UN – and high time too. The failure to think through systematically the tasks of the post-Cold War UN and the new challenges it faced, taken together with the membership's failure to give the organisation the resources and political backing it needed when the going got rough and the disagreements over the use of force which arose over Kosovo and over Iraq in 2003, had together brought it to a low ebb. I have no doubt at all that Kofi Annan was right to say it was at a fundamental fork in the road and to call for root and branch reform. And I believe that the report of the High-Level Panel on which I served, and Jeffrey Sachs's report on progress, or, more shamefully, the lack of it, towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, capped by Kofi Annan's own "In Larger Freedom" report, set out clearly most of what needed to be done to make the UN effective and capable of handling the many challenges it faces. Above all these reports make it clear that the world faces not two separate and potentially conflicting agendas, one on development issues and one on security, but a single broad agenda covering the eradication of poverty, pandemic diseases, hunger, environmental degradation, terrorism, the proliferation of weapons, including those of mass destruction, and the modern phenomenon of state failure, all of which urgently need to be addressed.

Now, more than six months on from last September's New York Summit, how should we assess the outcome? Certainly the conceptual need to address that whole broad agenda has been recognised. Considerable additional resources have been pledged to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals; a Peacebuilding Commission has been established; a new Human Rights Council to replace the old, discredited Commission has been agreed; a new international norm of the responsibility of the international community to protect those whose governments are either unwilling or unable to do so has been endorsed; a substantial package of much-needed Secretariat reform is on the table. Altogether this is a more substantial and far-reaching reform effort than any hitherto undertaken since the organisation was established 60 years ago. It represents a real achievement. But we should not ignore what got set aside or blocked on the way: no conflict prevention role for the Peacebuilding Commission; no agreement yet for a comprehensive convention against terrorism, outlawing with no ifs and buts the targeting of innocent civilians; no progress at all in strengthening the international regimes against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, currently under great strain as a result of the actions of North Korea and Iran; no agreement on the guidelines the Security Council would apply before reaching any decision on the use of force; no agreement on the enlargement of that council or on the vexed issue of new permanent members. That is quite a big list. And not one of these problems is simply going to go away or magically get easier to resolve with the passage of time.

So my own assessment would be two, not three, cheers for the Summit. And much will depend on the implementation of the reforms that have been agreed. Will the new resources pledged for the Millennium Goals prove sufficient; and will they be put to good use by the recipients? Will the world find agreement in the vital negotiations for trade in the Doha Round and in the negotiations to come on the post-Kyoto arrangements for the environment? Will the Peacebuilding Commission prove to be an effective mechanism for putting failed states back on their feet in a sustainable way or will it turn out to be something of a fifth wheel? Will the Human Rights Council remedy and reduce the many abuses of human rights around the world or will its efforts be run into the sands of diplomatic manoeuvre like those of its predecessor? Will the Security Council prove willing to act on the responsibility to protect or will it merely wring its hands ineffectively as has so far been the case in Darfur. None of these are easy questions to answer with confidence.

All of them are ones which UNA-UK will, I hope, follow with determination, making our views known to and felt by our own government and more widely.

And then there is 2006's big decision on the choice of a new Secretary-General. Here too the past record has been patchy, and the case for making some changes is a compelling one. I would like to suggest the following new elements. First a serious effort should be made to break away from the system of regional pre-emption now that all the main regions have filled the post. This is not to suggest that an Asian should not get the job under any circumstances, but that it should not be so decided from the outset, thus narrowing the field of choice undesirably. Then I would suggest that all candidates be invited to submit in writing a brief and general summary of their objectives if they were to be chosen. This would avoid the practice of contradictory assurances given in private to different audiences; and, more importantly, it would ensure that the new Secretary-General would have a real mandate when he takes over. Third I would advocate the appointment being made for a single, non-renewable seven-year term of office, thus avoiding the need to curry favour in order to secure a second five-year term. Fourth I believe the appointments of a new Secretary-General and of a new Deputy Secretary-General should be handled in a complementary way, as a single team, able together to match each other in performing the tasks of a high-wire super-diplomat and those of an efficient and rigorous administrator of what is now a large and complex organisation. Fifth I would hope that the member states would take the proposed decisions on Secretariat reform before the end of this year, thus ensuring that the new incumbent could start with a clean sheet and a better basis for action. And finally it is surely desirable that the five Permanent Members should make it clear in advance that they will not exercise, or threaten, their veto over the choice of a new Secretary General but would accept the views of the majority. I hope these ideas, which I have already aired in the *Economist* and in the *Financial Times*, will start a wider debate and fuel some serious discussion of how best to choose one of the most influential appointees in the world.

I hope I have not trespassed too much on your patience on this first occasion of addressing our annual conference. There are many of the UN's fields of activity which I have not mentioned at all. They are no less important for that. And in any case I regard my main role at this annual conference as one of listening to the views of the membership. We are after all a membership organisation. That is our great strength. Increasing that membership must be one of our prime objectives. But we will only succeed in that if our work and our objectives are realistic and practical, and if they make sense to ordinary people, who often find the UN confusing and unsatisfactory. I am convinced myself that there remains a great yearning for a UN which can achieve the noble aims set out 60 years ago in the Charter. Currently we have an organisation which, for all its undoubted successes, remains caught somewhere between indispensability and ineffectiveness. It must surely be our task to move it decisively towards responding effectively to that indispensable need.