

**Speech by Lord Hannay of Chiswick (Chair, UNA-UK) to the 63rd UNA-UK Annual Conference
Exeter University, 28 March 2008**

This is the third occasion on which I have reported to our Annual Conference on UNA's work in the preceding year and on the prospects for the UN as a whole in the turbulent and somewhat disordered world in which we live. For UNA-UK it has, I believe, been a year of considerable achievement, one in which all of our small headquarters staff have been extremely active, one in which we have increased both the scope and effectiveness of our advocacy work, one in which we have strengthened our governance, and one in which all parts of the Association, the general membership, the Young Professionals Network and our network of UNYSAs have managed to expand. That is a record of which we can all be proud.

I would suggest that one of the keys to our success is that we have brought much more strategic clarity to our work based on three guidelines:

- A strict subject focus on the UN as an institution;
- The continued organisation of UNA-UK's policy work into four programmes, approved by Conference: achieving the Millennium Development Goals; working for peace and security, including a renaissance in multilateral disarmament; human rights and humanitarian action; and reform of the UN and the way it carries out its work; and
- The orientation of UNA-UK's work to reflect its size, capacity and financial resources, with greater recourse to the membership for campaigning clout.

This clarity of strategic purpose is enabling us to strengthen our position as the UK's leading policy authority on the UN.

A word first about our staff. Under Sam Daws' excellent leadership they have worked hard—sometimes, I fear, a bit too hard—and well. We should not expect of that small team, which is all we can afford, more than is reasonable. That is why the Board has unanimously approved some clear guidelines for the contacts between the headquarters staff and our wider membership. We are about to appoint a full-time Membership and Fundraising Administrative Officer in place of Katherine Ronderos who only worked part-time; that should strengthen our membership and fundraising capacity by encouraging supporters as well as members. We are saying goodbye upon his retirement to Bruce Robertson who has, with great dedication, served as London and South-East Region's Development Officer since 1999. He will be missed.

Our finances – about which I spoke a word of warning last year – remain, in the medium- and long-term, precarious, but in the short-term sound enough. We have secured more, and more dependable, financing from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, for which thanks should go to our keynote speaker, Mark Malloch Brown. We are hoping to work together on a series of regional conferences on the environment; and they are helping to meet some of the cost of this Annual Conference. UNA is continuing to generate important revenue from our premises from licensees; the UN's Food & Agricultural Organisation has recently been added to our list. Sam and I are continuing to pursue a number of long-term funding prospects. Work is under way to prepare for detailed consideration of the pros and cons of UNA acquiring charitable status, which could include merging with the UNA Trust. But the proportion of UNA-UK's resources generated by the membership continues to shrink; and the legacy drought also continues. We really do need to find ways to increase our revenues from members and supporters.

We have, as I said, strengthened our governance. I am most grateful for the decisions of the EGM in November which enabled us to complete the Board's effectiveness review by slimming ourselves down. The branch health check which we carried out revealed 66 out of the 99 branches considered themselves 'active' – with 5, heroically, describing themselves as 'vibrant'. This should enable us to merge branches where appropriate and to make our headquarters' outreach more effective. The number of UNYSAs continues to grow – 32 in all, with one at least in every nation of the UK; and some have local membership of over 1,000. But we need to go much further – after all, there are nearly 200 higher education establishments in the UK – and I hope all branches and regions will help Mark Rusling in the drive to add to the number of UNYSAs. The Young Professionals Network continues to go from strength to strength – it now has 1,500 London-based members. They are focusing on four main areas: Business & the Millennium Development Goals; UN & the Law; Working for Peace; and careers with the UN. Their value was recently recognised when David Miliband hosted a YPN reception at the FCO.

Our advocacy work has included the seemingly perennial problems of the Middle East and Darfur; but it has also included the campaign to ban cluster munitions, and encouraging the first green shoots of a renaissance of multilateral disarmament, being spearheaded by a number of US statesmen including George Shultz and Sam Nunn. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on the UN remains active, and we hope to re-instate the meeting to be addressed by the UK's UN Ambassador John Sawers, which recently had to be postponed at short notice when the ambassador needed to stay in New York for Security Council negotiations on the latest resolution on Iran. I very much welcome the motion to Conference suggesting that branches lobby their MPs to join the APPG. UNA-UK was recently commissioned by DfID to produce a report outlining the comparative advantage and cost-effectiveness of the UN across a wide range of policy areas. This excellent piece of work will shortly be made available to the membership and will, I hope, help you in your work.

So much for our domestic affairs; now let us take a look at the wider picture for the UN as a whole. Ban Ki-moon's first year in office turned out, as could have been predicted, more of a baptism of fire than a honeymoon. I believe he deserves a lot of credit for continuing to plug away on the crucial issue of Darfur with some, albeit so far quite inadequate, progress; and above all for throwing himself wholeheartedly into the preparations for, and the work of, the Bali conference on global warming, where eventual success has now set the scene for two years of intensive negotiations. But elsewhere the record is less encouraging. The Middle East Peace Process, after a brief revival at the time of the Annapolis Conference, is back again on life support. The Balkans, after some years of successful stabilisation and post-conflict peace-building in which NATO and the EU have worked hand in hand with the UN, is once more a focus of international dispute following Kosovo's declaration of independence. The work of the new Human Rights Council remains a cause of preoccupation and that, together with the unwelcome departure of Louise Arbour as High Commissioner for Human Rights, is casting a big shadow over this year's 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The slow-down in the world economy which is now under way could have negative consequences for the prospects of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals; and for completion of the long-delayed Doha Development Round of multilateral trade negotiations. So the overall picture is far from being a rosy one.

Here are a few personal suggestions about what I would like to see the UN focusing on in 2008 and beyond:

First, climate change. Bali was the end of the beginning, not the beginning of the end. Two years of hard slog lie ahead; and a successful outcome, with a binding and effective set of international arrangements to succeed the Kyoto Protocol, is far from assured. Britain, as part

of the EU, needs to give a lead. The US election in November should bring about a decisive and positive shift in US policy, just as Australia's election did there. The aim should be tough controls on carbon emissions; real encouragement for technology transfer from developed to developing countries; an equitable balance between the obligations entered into by developed and developing countries; and a new UN agency capable of implementing whatever agreements are reached at the negotiating table.

Second, the Middle East. The Middle East Peace Process, re-started at Annapolis, is in serious trouble, but neither we nor the UN can afford to turn our backs on it. Some of the flaws of the Annapolis framework will need to be remedied. Direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians, including on the final status issues, continue to be essential but there needs to be some mediator or intermediary to help the two parties to move forward. The total exclusion, indeed boycott, of Hamas is proving counter-productive. Difficult though this inclusion undoubtedly is, a major effort needs to be made to achieve a full ceasefire in Gaza, with a complete cessation of rocket attacks on Israel and of Israel's military incursions into the Gaza Strip, some exchange of prisoners, and a reconstitution of a Palestinian national unity government such as was foreshadowed in the Mecca agreement. Hamas should be expected to renounce the use of violence and to accept previously agreed Arab positions for negotiating a two state solution but should not be required at this stage to give formal recognition to the state of Israel.

Third, a renaissance in the process of multilateral arms control and disarmament, which has stagnated and decayed since 2000. There is a real opportunity, with the election of new presidents in the US and Russia, to call a halt to the process of increasing unilateral actions and reactions on missile defence; and to strengthen the faltering drive against nuclear proliferation. This will require ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty by the US; negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty; establishment of internationally guaranteed supplies of enriched uranium and reprocessing services under the aegis of the IAEA for civil nuclear programmes; and, above all, resumption by the nuclear weapons states of the steps towards nuclear disarmament which they agreed to at the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences. The US and Russia, which together account for 95% of the nuclear warheads in the world, will need to give a lead. But our government should be an active and imaginative participant in getting a negotiating process under way. The world cannot afford another fiasco at the 2010 NPT Review Conference like the one that occurred in 2005.

Fourth, a renewed drive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We are now at mid-point between the setting of the targets in 2000 and the target date for achieving them of 2015. But we are not anything like half way to achieving these goals. In some parts of the world, sub-Saharan Africa in particular, we are nowhere near that. What Paul Collier called the 'bottom billion' are being left behind; and that must be remedied. So Gordon Brown's call for a mid-term review of the MDGs and for remedial action is the right one. And the UN needs to help make it an effective reality.

There are many other issues I could raise, but time and your patience do not permit that. The length, complexity and weight of the list shows just how indispensable the UN remains but also just how much remains to be done if it is to live up to its own and our aspirations. I hope that this summer we may have an opportunity hear in London the Secretary-General's own thinking on the way ahead. Meanwhile this Conference will, as ever, be an invaluable source of guidance and encouragement.