

## **Report of the Chairman of the UNA-UK Board of Directors**

### **Annual Conference, 13-15 April 2007, Warwick University**

This is my second report to Annual Conference on behalf of UNA-UK's Board of Directors, and this time, I am not speaking after just a few weeks of stewardship, but after a whole year. So you really can hold me and the rest of the Board to account for any shortcomings! As I did last year, I intend to focus the first part of my report on UNA-UK's activities and will then take a look at the wider UN-picture, in New York and around the world.

Since we last met in Durham in April 2006, UNA-UK has had an extremely active – even hectic – year and one with a fair number of achievements. We have emerged, temporarily at least, from the dark shadow of financial weakness but are having to restructure, moving forward with a smaller but high quality staff. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to every single member of that staff, so ably led by Sam Daws, who work extremely long hours and without whom we would have had no hope of making the progress we have. You will see a number of new faces mainly young I am glad to say – and some in new functions. Veronica Lie has moved up to be Head of Advocacy, and is already building on her earlier success while continuing her great work on *New World*. Tim Kellow has taken over from Alexander Ramsbotham to work on peace and security issues, and has cut his teeth on UNA-UK's conference on the NPT in Cardiff, and UNA-Edinburgh's Trident workshop at the Scottish Parliament. Mark Rusling has come in as our new Campaigns & Education Officer and has begun to expand our outreach to universities. Natalie Samarasinghe is Sam's new Executive Assistant and does a bit of everything with imperturbability and efficiency. There are other changes, but I will stop there.

One of the most satisfactory developments is that we have now, for a second successive year, reversed the previous steady decline in the number of our supporters. It is still nowhere near what it ought to be, but at least it is moving in the right direction. And much of the expansion is taking place, as it should be if our long-term viability is to be assured, at the younger end of the age spectrum. We have added four new UNYSAs (at Kingston, Leicester, Cambridge and London Metropolitan universities); we are converting a number of Model UN societies into UNYSAs; and our new material for freshers' fairs was well received. But we need to do more. We should aim to have UNYSAs at every British higher education institution, not just at 30 or so out of 170. I hope every one of you will help by getting in contact with higher education institutions in your region or branch area, and trying—with Mark Rusling's help—to get something moving. Another major success story has been the further development of the Young Professionals Network. The network has grown rapidly to 900 members; a Welsh network was launched on November 2006 at the Welsh Assembly; and it is now regarded by WFUNA as a template for worldwide development – a huge tribute to Tim Jarman and his colleagues.

Then, secondly, our advocacy work has expanded greatly over the last year. I have myself written to ministers about Darfur (thrice), about the Middle East Peace Process and the Lebanon (twice), about the proposed Arms Trade Treaty, about banning cluster munitions, about keeping the UN firmly at the centre of the country's citizenship curriculum, and protesting at the government's decision to discontinue the corruption enquiry related to BAE Systems. Sam and I had a useful

meeting with the Foreign Secretary and we went over a number of those issues with her. On each occasion, we have shared the texts of these letters with you by putting them on the website, along with the texts of ministers' replies when we receive them. I would not claim 100% success, but in some cases – cluster munitions, for example – things have moved in the direction we wanted. And we are getting careful, considered replies to our representations, which mean we are being taken seriously. I hope you too will increasingly make use of our correspondence with ministers in your own contacts with members of parliaments. In addition, I have myself spoken on all those issues in the House of Lords, where UN questions are followed closely by a good number of members.

Thirdly, we have had a very full programme of activities throughout the year – and never forget just how labour intensive these are to organise. In addition to the two valuable conferences on Trident and non-proliferation – I sometimes feel UNA-UK was one of the few organisations to take seriously the Prime Minister's call for a full debate – we have helped to launch the 2006 Annual Review of Global Peace Operations, and also David Malone's book on Iraq at the UN; we held a successful parliamentary lobby in October; we held a conference with Transparency International UK on corruption, and one with Clifford Chance on business and human rights; we were involved in events with the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the President of the Human Rights Council; and we organised a meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the UN to host the UK's Permanent Representative to the UN, Sir Emyr Jones Parry. As to our future 2007 programme, I will leave Sam to speak about that. But, since I am sure he will be too modest to mention it, I will just refer to the launch, in June, of *The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations*, which he has been co-editing. The Handbook, which runs to 800 pages, has contributions from many distinguished experts, including my predecessor as Chair of UNA-UK, Richard Jolly. It will be launched in New York by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; and here in London the Foreign Office will be holding an event to coincide with its publication. My own book on the UN, which is of a somewhat less scholarly nature, will probably be a 2008 and not a 2007 event.

A further area to mention has been our website, which has been greatly improved. Matt Ripley has devoted a good deal of effort and attention to the website and the new incarnation of [una.org.uk](http://una.org.uk) will be unveiled at this conference. I hope you will find it an increasingly useful tool for your branch and regional activities. If you have suggestions on how it could be further improved, please feed them in. We have also begun to make use of our Expert Advisory Panel, inviting them to write articles for *New World*; and I hope you will agree that *New World* itself has continued to go from strength to strength. I hear nothing but praise for it, including from the new Secretary-General, when he saw our October-December issue, which was devoted to his election (*and had his face on the cover!*).

And then, fifthly, I should say a word about the work of the UNA-UK Board of Directors, which I have the honour to chair. Our new Audit Committee is now up and running. We have carried out the effectiveness review of the Board's work, which I mentioned last year; and I am very grateful to Thelma de Leeuw and the other members of the panel who gave their time to it. Of the recommendations that came out of the process, those that the Board had the authority to take itself were endorsed at the February Board meeting, and are now being implemented. An account of those recommendations has been conveyed to you for your information. The remaining recommendations, particularly the suggestion to have

a somewhat smaller Board, are not up to us to decide. Personally, I am convinced of the case for reducing the Board's size to roughly 19-20. However, I know that will involve sensitive issues of regional and other representation, so, before we move towards decisions in the appropriate forum, it would be good to have a thorough consultation. I gather provision has been made in the margins of this conference to do a bit of brainstorming on this possible reform, and I look forward to participating in that and hearing the views of all concerned.

You might think from this report that I have nothing but good news to convey, and that all in the garden is lovely. But that is not so. While our financial situation is certainly better than it was, it remains precarious. Subscriptions to membership cover less than 20% of our expenditure. This year we have received no legacy income at all. We are eating our way through the major funding commitments we received. So we must start to think hard now about how to remedy the situation and how to avoid sliding towards another financial crisis. We really must have a renewed drive for legacy income. In the past, this has been a crucial resource. So we will be asking you all to consider whether you can help, either yourselves or by getting others to do so. Sam and I will also be seeing what we can do to secure new commitments from foundations or philanthropic individuals. I just hope that by this time next year I will not be wearing a longer face when we get to this point; but I cannot guarantee that.

And lastly in this survey of UNA-UK's domestic scene, one item that does not fit exactly in a positive or negative categorisation: WFUNA, the World Federation of United Nations Association. There are some distinctly positive elements. WFUNA held a successful Plenary Assembly in Buenos Aires last November; it made an excellent choice as its new President in Hans Blix, former Director-General of the IAEA and well known for his work on disarmament, in Iraq and elsewhere; and it brought to an end the scrapping over the post of Secretary-General with Pera Wells confirmed in that post. Sam Daws went to the plenary and played a highly positive role there; and Rod Fielding has been re-elected to WFUNA's Executive Committee. But WFUNA has yet to establish a clear *raison d'être* and it remains financially precarious. I am sure we are right to be playing an active role in trying to make it more effective and in resuming our financial contribution on the condition of further reforms and improved performance.

Let us now look a bit beyond our own affairs and take stock of the UN's standing and prospects as the new Secretary-General takes over. Most of the year I am reviewing passed under Kofi Annan's stewardship. His ten-year tenure of office ended on a muted note, with the shadow of the oil-for-food scandal still falling on it and with the rejection of his Secretariat reform package by the developing countries, whose numerical majority in the General Assembly outweighed the positive voices of the overwhelming majority of the main financial contributors. This was a miserable denouement to a reform campaign to which Annan had devoted much time and energy, due as much to a general loss of mutual confidence and respect between developed and developing countries, as to the specifics of the Secretariat reform package. It was sad to see developing countries, which have so much to gain from a reformed and strengthened Secretariat, rejecting measures which would have increased transparency and accountability, and which would have reduced the excessive micro-management by the member states, which is such a bane of the UN. This problem will not go away and it is a major challenge for the new Secretary-General in his early months in office. Nevertheless, I would argue myself that Kofi Annan's term of office was one of great achievement, when the voice of the UN,

expressed with eloquence and compassion, was heard in every corner of the world. We owe him a great debt of gratitude, and I hope you would agree that I should write to him in his retirement and express that view on behalf of this Conference.

Annan's successor, Ban Ki-moon, is now three months into his period of office. It is much too soon to be passing judgement or to be making any kind of serious comment; and I have no intention of doing so. As you probably know, I had an opportunity to meet the new Secretary-General when he came to London in December. I found him well-informed and open-minded. He faces a mountain of problems and we should wish him well. I hope we will have an opportunity later this year or in early 2008 to welcome him on a public platform and then you will all have a chance to form your own opinions.

There could be no greater tribute to the UN's indispensability than the current massive spike in demand for UN peacekeepers – 100,000 personnel or so authorised for deployment in some 17 missions, and more in the pipeline. This places a formidable burden on the organisation but is surely the best answer to those who fear – or hope – that the UN may become irrelevant or marginal. UN peacekeeping is unrecognisably more professional than it was when the first great wave of conflict hit it immediately after the end of the Cold War. But there is still much to do before UN peacekeeping can be said to measure up fully to the challenges it faces. The problem of the speed of response and deployment remains unresolved, often leaving the field open to "spoilers"; if the ideal solution of a standing rapid reaction force at the Secretary-General's disposal remains out of reach, as I believe it does, we must find a way of improving on the present stand-by arrangements, which are not working well. I hope that Europe will give a lead here. Then the integrated approach to peacekeeping and peace building still falls short of full effectiveness. The civilian aspects of peacekeeping and peace building are every bit as important as the military, but getting the two aspects to work together is even more so. Regional peace operations, particularly in Africa, need stronger support, with the UN standing behind them financially and with logistical and technical backing. And zero tolerance for human rights abuses by peacekeepers needs to be more than just words on paper but a living reality. The newly established Peacebuilding Commission needs to show that it can make a real difference and not just be a talking shop.

Now, what is to become of the campaign for reform, which has so far produced some positive results, but has seen so many good proposals blocked or left beside the road? The UN, like every international organisation, needs to adapt its policies and methods on a continuing basis as the challenges facing it change. But my own view is that a further single, overall approach to reform – such as was tried between 2003 and 2006 – should not be repeated in the immediate future. There is a risk of diminishing returns and of reform fatigue setting in, with the very concept of reform getting a bad name. Better, I would suggest, to pursue a sectoral approach, pushing forward reforms where they are most needed and most wanted. Clearly reform of the Secretariat has to begin roughly where Kofi Annan left it. The new Secretary-General is planning to re-structure the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, splitting it into two sets of functions. This would probably be strengthened if he were to take up one of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change: to have a second Deputy Secretary-General with overall responsibility for peace and security. Conflict prevention remains more talked about than practiced. Another of the High-level Panel's discarded recommendations, that the

Peacebuilding Commission should be able to act preventatively to stop states sliding towards failure rather than simply dealing with them once they have failed, needs to be revisited. And the whole complex of issues relating to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction needs urgently to be rescued from the deadlock in which it was left following the September 2005 Summit. Pragmatic, negotiated solutions to the problems posed by the North Korean and Iranian nuclear programmes are clearly a necessary part of that but are not sufficient alone. In particular, the world needs a multilaterally guaranteed source of uranium enrichment and reprocessing services to pave the way to a moratorium on the construction of new plants, which offer a short cut to the possession of fissile material for weapons. What I would not myself include in a priority list of sectoral reforms, which should be pressed to early decision, is Security Council enlargement. That vexed issue is for the moment firmly stuck, impaled primarily on China's refusal to let Japan have a permanent seat, and Africa's unwillingness to choose how to address the problem of a permanent seat or seats for itself. To try now and fail again on this issue is to weaken the UN gratuitously. It will have to wait for a shift in international opinion.

Of course reforms, while necessary, will never, and should never, dominate the UN's agenda to the exclusion of everything else. The crisis in Darfur remains acute, a test case for the responsibility to protect, and one which the UN has so far failed. What is needed is clear; a robust hybrid UN/AU peacekeeping force; some preventive deployments in Chad and the Central African Republic; and a renewed peace process bringing all the dissident groups to the negotiating table. How to achieve these objectives is less clear. But the UN must not give up and accept defeat at the expense of the suffering people of Darfur.

Now, too, is the time for the UN to join with the other members of the quartet – the EU, the US and Russia – in a renewed push for a meaningful Middle East Peace Process, one which faces up to the final status issues and does not just get bogged down again in interim measures. I would hope that the European Union would play a more active role than it has done in the recent past.

Climate change is, of course, another one of the major issues facing the UN. Time is beginning to run out for negotiating post-Kyoto arrangements for limiting carbon emissions. It is essential for negotiations to be engaged this year. Solutions to such a complex matter cannot be improvised at the last moment; and global warming is not waiting patiently as our governments dither and prevaricate. Carbon emission caps and trading need to be extended worldwide and to cover all sectors of the economy; China, India, Brazil on the one hand, and the US and Australia on the other, need to be brought within the scope of the next stage arrangements. Technology transfer, in particular to developing countries, needs to be galvanised. And the UN needs to be given more robust institutional machinery to implement whatever agreements can be reached – a fully-fledged agency or something along those lines.

As usual, the limitations of time and of your patience prevent me from mentioning the many other priorities of the UN's work: pursuing the Millennium Development Goals, for example, and making a working reality of the new Human Rights Council. We shall have a chance to debate all these matters in the days ahead; and our UNA will be working on them in the year ahead. I hope I have said enough to convince you that time will not hang heavy on your or our hands and, moreover, that we will not let it do so.