



UNA-UK's Resources Pack

General Election 2017

Intro

With polling day fast approaching, beyond Brexit, there has been little by way of meaningful debate on foreign policy.

Despite the momentous task ahead for the UK's next government - to shape Britain's role with Europe and the world - the election is largely being fought on narrow and highly politicised domestic issues, with foreign policy discussed primarily as a vehicle to further Britain's short-term interests.

UNA-UK has released a short, sharp ['manifesto'](#) to serve as a clarion call for putting foreign policy at the centre of this election, and the UN at the heart of foreign policy. Our manifesto is backed up by a policy report entitled ['Keeping Britain Global'](#), which argues that now, more than ever, Britain's national interest and the UN Charter's vision of a peaceful and more just world are one and the same. As the lines between national and global interest blur, Britain's future cannot be served without an equal focus on domestic and foreign policy.

We need your support to get this message to political parties, and to bring international issues to the fore. Now is the time for everybody who believes they are a global citizen to stand up and be counted.

This guide is designed to support you in taking action at a local level, and help make sure candidates standing for election - our future MPs - know that UK voters care passionately about Britain's commitment to international cooperation and the United Nations.

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1. Five things everyone should ask their local canvassers

As polling day draws closer, you may be seeking out the views of your local candidates on the issues that matter to you. Or you might be furiously trying to avoid reams of campaign literature and seemingly endless TV appearances by politicians, only to receive a phone call or visit from party representatives keen to secure your vote.

Whether you find it invigorating or irritating, interacting with party representatives is valuable. The points and questions you raise are likely to be fed back to party headquarters and can have real influence on candidates' approaches and parties' campaign priorities.

By highlighting the links between national and global interests, you can send the message that constituents care about global issues, and that policies should reflect this. You could also trigger candidates to swot up on the UN and put foreign policy further up their agenda.

Do your bit to support internationalism by asking candidates and canvassers the following questions and publicise their answers to your networks. Our answers are included!

1. What will you do to support the United Nations?

For Britain to survive and prosper, it must invest in global solutions. UNA-UK believes in an outward-looking Britain. Whether it's migration, climate change or threats to international peace, policy-makers should lead a national conversation about how the UK can help address the defining issues of our time.

The UK should champion its rich legacy of internationalism with a sense of pride, from the values that British civil servants wrote into the UN's founding documents, to the UK's pivotal role in shaping the international human rights system. Above all, a global Britain should invest in the health of the United Nations – an essential global institution and a lynchpin of a rules-based international system. At this turbulent time in global affairs, when multiple crises are converging, the UN is stretched to breaking point. It needs political leadership and support from the UK.

2. What will you do to invest in soft power and diplomacy?

Politicians must recognise the importance of the UK's soft power tools if Britain is to sustain or expand its influence on the world stage. This should include championing its 0.7 per cent GNI aid commitment, and increasing funding to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, with an emphasis on operations that support work at the UN-level as the UK's role on the Security Council, and relations outside the European Union, become more important.

3. What is your position on arms sales to Saudi Arabia and other human rights abusers?

The UK is a major arms exporter that has sold arms to countries with poor human rights records for decades. Since the UN's Arms Trade Treaty entered into force in December 2014 – a treaty that aims to stop weapons transfers to countries where they might be used to commit abuses – the UK has continued to export arms to countries such as Saudi Arabia, which is engaged in a violent conflict in Yemen. According to the UN figures, the death toll of the conflict stands at more than 10,000, many of

whom are civilians killed by Saudi-led airstrikes. A further 19 million people are in need of humanitarian aid and are at risk of starvation and diseases such as Cholera.

UNA-UK believes that the UK should immediately suspend such transfers and support calls for an independent, UN-led investigation into violations of international humanitarian law. It should adopt a more cautious approach to arms exports and begin implementing the Arms Trade Treaty to a consistently high standard, refraining from conduct which undermines the Treaty, including by ceasing arms exports to all countries where there is concern that they will be used to commit war crimes and human rights violations.

4. Will you increase our contribution to UN peacekeeping?

UN peacekeeping represents one of the most effective and proven methods for developing and maintaining global peace and security.

The UK has a commendable track record on UN peacekeeping. However, British troop numbers have fallen sharply over the past two decades: in 1995 the UK was the UN's largest contributor with over 10,000 UN peacekeepers. This fell to around 300 in recent years. The small increases made recently - troop contributions will soon reach 700 with the opening of a field hospital in South Sudan - have shown that re-engagement is valuable, and that the UK is able to play a greater role. Our military is the fifth largest in the world by spending, and we have a relative lack of other active deployments, meaning there is capacity for the UK to contribute more troops. Yet the UK provides less than one per cent of the UN's total uniformed personnel. This represents a missed opportunity.

The UK has at its disposal armed forces well suited to provide peacekeepers with the experience, discipline and rapid deployment capabilities that future missions will require: adaptable forces trained to deliver overseas engagement and capacity building, specialist logistical units, and units such as the Royal Marines and the Parachute Regiment with an unmatched ability to cross rough terrain. We should be using our highly skilled troops to build stability overseas and keep us safe in the process. This means increasing our contribution to UN peacekeeping.

5. How will you ensure that the UK shoulders the responsibilities that come with its place on the UN Security Council?

The UK occupies a privileged position in the United Nations as a permanent member of the Security Council with the power of veto. This position must never be taken for granted and must constantly be earned. The UK can do this by:

- ensuring that our actions - at home and abroad - live up to our proud record in creating human rights laws and norms
- showing solidarity by extending a warm welcome to those fleeing conflict and persecution in line with the letter – and spirit – of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention
- embracing the extra responsibilities that come with being a nuclear power by taking steps to further global disarmament
- making the protection of the innocent by preventing atrocity crimes the focus of the UK's membership of the Security Council

2. Practical tips for holding a hustings event

Holding a hustings event in your local area will enable you and members of your community to quiz parliamentary candidates on their approach to foreign policy. Such events are an effective way of raising awareness not only of the role the UK could and should play on the world stage, but also of the work undertaken by the UN and by UNA-UK.

Planning

Here are a few tips for getting organised:

- Decide on a title and theme – for example, ‘UK foreign policy and the UN’ or ‘Britain’s role on the world stage’.
- Avoid a scheduling clash – check if any other hustings are being held in the constituency. Contact the campaign offices of political parties for this information.
- Consider partners – working with youth groups, faith groups or branches of NGOs such as Amnesty, Oxfam and Friends of the Earth could bring your event to many more people.
- Book a venue – factors to consider include: cost, location, capacity and disability access. A public address system and roving microphones may also be helpful.
- Select a chairperson – the chairperson must not be identified with any particular political party. It is also vital that they are able to chair the meeting effectively, ensuring speakers respect time limits and focus on the questions asked.
- Don’t go empty-handed – make sure you have plenty of UNA-UK supporter cards to ensure you can stay in touch with attendees (contact Natalie Saad on saad@una.org.uk for more copies).
- An attendance list on which people can give their name and email address could also help you find out who in your community is interested in events like this.
- Please share these with UNA-UK following the event so that we can keep them up to date with our work.
- Get some help – it can be useful to have a couple of stewards on standby during the meeting to offer any assistance required, such as passing around microphones.

Invite the candidates

Firstly, find out who the candidates in your constituency are. You will find full listings on each of the party websites. The Returning Officer of your local council should have details of all candidates once nominations have closed.

Who to invite

UNA-UK is a strictly non-party political organisation and local UNAs must respect this policy. Local UNAs must therefore ensure that hustings events are non-selective.

The Electoral Commission considers a hustings to be non-selective if:

- All candidates known to be standing in your constituency are invited to attend. This is by far the simplest and most straightforward way to ensure your hustings is non-selective.
- In certain circumstances, it may not be appropriate for all candidates to be invited. If this is the case, organisers should be able to give **impartial** reasons, including to the candidates or parties, why particular candidates or parties have not been invited. Impartial reasons include:
 - Local prominence of some parties or candidates over others.
 - The number of elected representatives at local or national level.
 - Resources and other practicalities constraining numbers of invitees.
 - Security concerns.
- Candidates or parties invited represent a reasonable variety of views, from different parts of the political spectrum.
- Every speaker is given a fair chance to answer questions and, where appropriate, a reasonable opportunity to respond to points made against them.
- The audience is informed at the meeting of candidates or parties standing who were invited but weren't able to attend, and who were not invited for the impartial reasons listed above.

We strongly recommend reading the Electoral Commission's advice on this issue, or contacting them for information using the following details:

- England: 020 7271 0500 or pef@electoralcommission.org.uk
- Scotland: 0333 103 1928 or infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk
- Wales: 0333 103 1929 or infowales@electoralcommission.org.uk
- Northern Ireland: 0333 103 1928 or infonorthernireland@electoralcommission.org.uk

Format

It is important to decide the format of the meeting in advance to ensure the event is run fairly and smoothly. Think about how you will handle questions posed to candidates by members of the public. Here are some points to consider:

- Do you want to invite each speaker to give a short opening statement? Will you allow all speakers a quick-fire 'right of reply' afterwards?
- How will questions be organised? You may wish attendees to submit questions in writing before the meeting, or you may prefer a more relaxed format and take questions from the floor on the day.
- If questions are submitted in advance, will you group the questions according to topic?
- If questions are taken from the floor, will you decide the first question in advance to get the ball rolling?
- Will you apply a time limit to each question, and to each speaker? How will you time each contribution?
- Will you ask candidates to respond in the same order for every question? If not, ensure you rotate the order fairly.
- How will you integrate the points in UNA-UK's manifesto into the Q&A session? Will you send all speakers a copy in advance?

Whatever you decide, candidates should be briefed beforehand and the format should be explained clearly to the audience. You should also ensure that your hustings event complies with the Electoral Commission's good practice recommendations

(http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/105946/sp-hustings-rp-npc-ca.pdf).

Content

A list of suggestions can be found in part 1 of this guide. More detailed UNA-UK policy information is available in our latest report 'Keeping Britain Global'. However, we encourage you to focus on issues that will resonate in your community.

Remember that while candidates can be expected to have a broad understanding of international issues, elections are usually fought on domestic policy. It is unrealistic to expect them to have detailed knowledge of complex UN procedures. If a candidate does not directly answer the question, do not be afraid to ask for clarification. If you are still unsatisfied, ask the candidate if he or she would be willing to send you a written response after the meeting.

Publicity

Aim to publicise the meeting as widely and as early as possible to ensure the highest possible attendance. Make posters and flyers in advance, and draw up a list of all the public places where details of the hustings can be advertised. In your correspondence with confirmed candidates you might like to ask them to publicise it themselves through their campaign office.

Here are some ideas for how to pull in the crowds:

- Create flyers – hand these out in your town or city during busy periods.
- Contact your local media – get in touch with local newspapers and radio stations, giving them a short and snappy explanation of the event. Be sure to mention names of confirmed candidates and include contact details, should they require further information.
- Use social media – set up a Facebook event and invite all your contacts, providing regular updates on the event page to ensure maximum visibility of the hustings. You could also tweet candidates you have invited, encouraging them to retweet the message to their followers.
- List your event on UNA-UK's website – submit your event for inclusion on UNA-UK's events calendar (www.una.org.uk/add-event).

There is a lot more guidance on publicising local UNA events on our dedicated webpage, www.una.org.uk/local.

Follow-up

Make sure you take some good pictures of your event, featuring the various candidates who attended, and share them on social media and with your local newspaper.

Share the outcomes and experience of the event with the rest of the world by submitting a members' news article (www.una.org.uk/add-branch-news).

If a candidate made a verbal commitment to a particular issue then let us know. This will enable us to remind them of their promises, should they be elected.

3. UNA-UK's manifesto

Everybody in the UK benefits from the international system - from laws that govern trade and protect our rights, to institutions that address climate change and conflict. Over the past 70 years, this system has brought stability and prosperity to many of us.

But the proceeds of globalisation have not been shared evenly. And so, across the world, outlooks are narrowing. In some countries, embracing this trend has led to electoral advantage, at least in the short-term. But this is not a strategy for the future.

Britain's long-term interests require a different approach. Our security and success depend on factors that we cannot control alone. From employment to energy, Port Talbot to Hinkley Point, the things we care about have a global dimension.

We believe our reaction should be to look outwards, not inwards. In the 21st century Britain's national interest and the UN's vision of a peaceful and just world are one and the same.

But commitment to international cooperation has seldom been more in doubt. This uncertainty needs a decisive response.

It is time to put foreign policy at the heart of the General Election. This is not just about our relationship with the European Union. This is about building cross-party consensus on issues like international peace, migration, human rights, the environment, the UN, Britain's role in the world - these things are bigger and more important than party politics.

UNA-UK is calling on all political parties to commit to:

- Placing the UN at the centre of British foreign policy and taking steps to make it work better
- Taking a multilateral approach to peace and security challenges that is firmly rooted in international law
- Maintaining our 0.7% overseas aid commitment, which saves lives every day and tackles the root causes of threats to our security
- Ensuring that our actions - at home and abroad - live up to our proud record in creating human rights laws and norms
- Adopting arms control policies to which the rest of the world can aspire
- Increasing our contribution to UN peacekeeping, using our highly skilled troops to build stability overseas and keep us safe in the process
- Becoming a world leader in the transition towards a zero-carbon economy
- Making the protection of innocent people the focus of our privileged place on the UN Security Council
- Extending a warm welcome to those fleeing conflict and persecution in line with the letter – and spirit – of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention
- Shouldering the extra responsibilities that come with being a nuclear power by taking steps to further global disarmament

Sign up to and share our manifesto: <https://www.una.org.uk/manifesto-2017>

We will make sure that the next government, whatever form it takes, knows how many people care passionately about Britain's global role.

4. Resources

Please find links to our policy report, parties' positions on the UN; and useful links below.

A. UNA-UK's policy report 'Keeping Britain Global'

Now, more than ever, Britain's national interest and the UN Charter's vision of a peaceful and more just world are one and the same.

Britain's foreign policy needs to acknowledge this new reality by investing in the international order with the United Nations at its heart.

[Keeping Britain Global](#) is a report that calls for just that: a joined-up approach to the UK's role in the world.

The report contains briefings and recommendations on five key policy areas which contain opportunities for UK leadership on the world stage:

- [arms control](#)
- [peacekeeping](#)
- [nuclear disarmament](#)
- [atrocities prevention](#)
- [human rights](#)

Full report available here: www.una.org.uk/keeping-britain-global

B. Political parties' approach to the United Nations

In an effort to contribute to a meaningful debate on foreign policy, UNA-UK has written to all major UK political parties* asking for them for a statement setting out their approach to the United Nations. We hope this initiative will give voters and journalists the chance to explore parties' positions on the critical question of international cooperation, and at the same time provide us with a tool to hold the future government to account.

The statements that UNA-UK has received have been listed below in alphabetical order by party.

- [The Conservative Party](#)
- [The Co-operative Party](#)
- [Plaid Cymru](#)
- [The Green Party](#)
- [The Labour Party](#)
- [The Liberal Democrats](#)
- [The Scottish National Party](#)
- [The Ulster Unionist Party](#)

More information: <https://www.una.org.uk/news/general-election-2017-where-do-parties-stand-un>

* UNA-UK has requested a statement from all political parties that returned MPs to Westminster during the most recent (2015-2017) parliament. We have published all the statements that have been received to date and will add any others as they come in.

C. Links to political parties and their manifestos

List of the 12 parties that returned MPs to Westminster during the last parliament.

- Conservative Party
<https://www.conservatives.com/strongandstableleadership>
https://issuu.com/conservativeparty/docs/ge2017_manifesto_a5_digital
- Co-operative Party
<https://party.coop/>
<https://party.coop/policy-platform-2017/>
- Democratic Unionist Party
<http://www.mydup.com/>
http://dev.mydup.com/images/uploads/publications/DUP_Manifesto_2017_v2_SINGLES.pdf
- Plaid Cymru
<http://www2.partyof.wales/>
<http://www2.partyof.wales/actionplan17>
- Green Party
<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/>
<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/Green%20Guarantee%20summary%20online.pdf>
- Labour Party
<http://www.labour.org.uk/index.php/home/>
<http://www.labour.org.uk/index.php/manifesto2017>
- Liberal Democrats
<http://www.libdems.org.uk/>
<http://www.libdems.org.uk/manifesto>
- Scottish National Party
<https://www.snp.org/>
https://www.snp.org/our_vision
- Sinn Féin
<http://www.sinnfein.ie/>
https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2017/MANIFESTO_ENGLISH.pdf
- Social Democratic and Labour Party
<http://www.sdlp.ie/>
http://www.sdlp.ie/site/assets/files/43536/sdlp_manifesto_2017.pdf
- UK Independence Party
<http://www.ukip.org/>
<http://www.ukip.org/manifestos>
- Ulster Unionist Party

<http://www.uup.org/>

<https://uup.org/our-vision/ulster-unionist-party-manifestos>

The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK. Their website provides information and guidance for voters and campaigners:

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/>

<https://www.yourvotematters.co.uk/>