



## All-Party Parliamentary Group on the United Nations

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### MEETINGS CONVENED 2014/2015

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#### **Prospects for the UN and its Member States: 2015 and beyond** (6 Nov 2014)

*A roundtable discussion with UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson*

The meeting gave Mr Eliasson an opportunity to engage in a frank, informal discussion with civil society on the challenges facing the international community. Some 30 participants from NGOs, think tanks and media outlets joined MPs and Peers for the meeting.

In his opening remarks, Mr Eliasson spoke about the global context for the UN's work, noting that we are moving through a period of particular turmoil and rapid change. From a shifting geostrategic landscape to the effects of longer-term trends such as urbanisation, migration and women's empowerment, the net impact has been a convergence between international and domestic issues.

Mr Eliasson said that this poses a test for multilateralism and for national and international institutions. He went on to outline some of the challenges the UN was grappling with – notably extremism, unemployment and Ebola – before looking at UN initiatives to tackle them, including 'Human Rights Up Front'.

*The meeting was chaired by Lord Hannay and jointly hosted by the UN APPG and the United Nations Association – UK.*

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#### **Prospects for gender equality in 2015** (4 March 2015)

Speakers:

- Jessica Woodroffe, Director of the Gender and Development Network
- Lord Collins, Shadow Spokesperson for International Development
- Binti Alii Goga, Chair and founding member of Sauti Ya Wanakawe

On 4 March 2015, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the United Nations held the parliamentary launch of the report *Turning Promises into Progress* to discuss how three crucial UN negotiations taking place in 2015 can best be used to advance gender equality.

It is twenty years since the landmark Beijing Conference on Women and fifteen years since the ground-breaking United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was

adopted. The report looks at these key milestones and considers opportunities for progress on gender equality as the post-2015 development framework is agreed and implemented.

*The meeting was chaired by Lord Hannay and hosted by the UN APPG.*

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### **Pre-posting briefing session with Matthew Rycroft and Stephen O'Brien (12 March 2015)**

Speakers:

- Matthew Rycroft, incoming UK Ambassador to the UN in New York
- Stephen O'Brien, incoming Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs

Mr Rycroft began by acknowledging that with the UK's privileged position at the UN comes the responsibility to lead by example and support action at the global level. To illustrate this, he cited the UK's overseas development assistance bill, which "gives us a strong platform to be a leading member in the debates on a successor to the Millennium Development Goals." Mr Rycroft went on to explain that his tenure in New York will include a focus on the reform of the UN Secretary-General appointment process and opportunities for greater UK practical support for UN Peacekeeping.

The humanitarian challenges facing the international community were emphasised by Stephen O'Brien MP. Observing that 2014 constituted "a record year for humanitarian need" with over 17 billion dollars spent on assistance, Mr O'Brien noted the importance of a multilateral approach which incorporates global partners. He pointed to next year's World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul as a key opportunity to re-energise the humanitarian system and make it "fit for purpose".

*The meeting was chaired by Lord Hannay and jointly hosted by the UN APPG and the United Nations Association – UK.*

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### **Discussion on a Middle East Zone free of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) (18 March 2015)**

Speaker:

- Ambassador Jaakko Laajava, facilitator of the Middle East Zone free of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)

Ambassador Jaakko Laajava said he remains optimistic about the prospect of convening a conference with representation from all countries in the region. Mr Laajava explained that, whilst not yet ready to enter the negotiating phase, all states in the Middle East, as well as the four Conference Convenors (Russia, USA, UK and the UN Secretary-General), are engaging constructively on this issue.

However, citing the rise of ISIS and other non-state actors, as well as Iran's nuclear programme and the devastation in Syria, Mr Laajava acknowledged the magnitude of the challenge that lies ahead: 'Enormous cooperation is required between states that have very little mutual trust...At this stage, confidence-building measures are essential'

*The meeting was chaired by Mike Gapes MP and jointly hosted by the UN APPG and the Global Security and Non-Proliferation.*