



**UNA-UK**

United Nations Association – UK  
3 Whitehall Court, London SW1A 2EL

t. 020 7766 3454, f. 020 7000 1381  
richardson@una.org.uk  
www.una.org.uk

Sir Mark Lyall Grant  
UK Ambassador to the UN  
UK Mission to the United Nations

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Dear Sir Mark,

I am writing from the United Nations Association – UK (UNA-UK) to convey my concerns over the proposed budget cuts to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

OHCHR does a worthy job in promoting human rights, one of the UN's three pillars. The High Commissioner shines a light on the most pressing global human rights issues, from alleged war crimes in Syria to access to education for girls. OHCHR's Geneva office and 59 field offices work to service the international framework of human rights and assist states with implementation.

It does this whilst receiving less than three per cent of the UN regular budget in support of its work. This leaves two-thirds of its budgetary needs reliant on restrictive voluntary contributions from member states and others.

Meanwhile OHCHR's workload has risen considerably over recent years. The success to date of the Human Rights Council and the Universal Periodic Review has placed a significant extra burden on OHCHR. Resolutions creating new special procedure mandates, commissions of inquiry or calling for greater technical assistance are rarely combined with an equivalent increase in funding, stretching OHCHR's limited resources ever-further.

Despite this, the General Assembly's Fifth Committee is discussing reducing OHCHR's already disproportionately small budget by five per cent, or \$8.3 million, in 2014-2015. This is in addition to the 12 per cent cut already made by the Office this year.

As Navi Pillay, the current High Commissioner, recently put it at an event in the Houses of Parliament, "global demand for UN services to human rights is dangerously outstripping the supply". I call on the UK to urgently address this situation and ensure, via its engagement with the Fifth Committee, that OHCHR is adequately funded. It is vital that member states act now to show their support for OHCHR's essential work.

Yours sincerely,

Natalie Samarasinghe  
Executive Director, UNA-UK

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Beth Laurents  
Francoise Carré  
Brian Wellington  
Carol Tarrant  
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