

UNA-Westchester Global Connection



United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA) Westchester Chapter

<http://www.unawestchester.org>

February 2009

UNA-Westchester, Sarah Lawrence College and ACCION International are pleased to present:

“The World Bank in a Time of Global Financial Crisis”

Wednesday, March 11, 2009, 6:30 P.M.
Sarah Lawrence College, Heimbold Visual Arts Center
Bronxville, New York 10708*

Featuring **Guest Speaker Ferid Belhaj**, Special Representative of the World Bank to the United Nations. Mr. Belhaj joined the World Bank as a member of its Legal Department in 1996 and served as the Country Manager for Morocco before moving to represent the Bank at the UN headquarters in New York.



Mr. Belhaj will discuss the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (the “Bretton Woods Institutions”) and how their roles have evolved in response to changing conditions since their creation following World War II. With the financial crisis now confronting developed and developing countries alike, the role of the Bretton Woods Institutions is under scrutiny and likely to be re-invented (expanded or narrowed) once again.

A reception will follow the program

For more information, contact Doris Benson @ (914) 961-6554, or dwbenson@us.ibm.com.

**Directions:* Take the Sprain Brook Pkwy South to the Cross County Parkway West. Take exit 5 to Kimball Ave., make a right at the stop sign, and take a left at the first traffic light on Kimball Ave. At the next light, turn right onto Glen Washington Road, and then take the first left onto Mead Way. Take an immediate left into Westlands Gate. See: http://www.slc.edu/about/Directions_to_Campus.php

Coming next:

“Controlling Nuclear Proliferation”
featuring United Nations High Representative on Disarmament Sergio de Queiroz Duarte
Annual Meeting and Keynote Speaker
Bronxville Library, 17 May 2009
2:00 to 4:00 pm.

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Editors: Marcia Brewster, Scott Monje

Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

December 7, 2008 was a great day for our Chapter. It began with an elegant luncheon at the Siwanoy Country Club honoring Molly Bruce on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which she helped draft. UNA members and Molly's friends and family made the occasion truly festive. Then at 3:00 we were treated to a first-class presentation by Craig Mokhiber of the NY Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and a spirited performance by the Youth Band of the United Nations. Craig highlighted the considerable achievements of the UN in the human rights arena over the past 60 years. He then outlined the 2005 UN General Assembly Resolution on the "Responsibility to Protect", which empowers the UN to intervene in the internal affairs of a country whose government is unwilling or unable to protect its citizens from genocide or other crimes against humanity. Practical reservations by China and Russia have stalled efforts to intervene in the obvious case of the Darfur region of Sudan; but isn't it the role of the UN to be slightly ahead of its time?

In this issue of Global Connection, we highlight our program on the World Bank by Ferid Belhaj, the distinguished and dynamic representative of the World Bank at the UN in New York. You may just be surprised at all the things which this poorly understood institution does – and does not do.

Some months ago I invited you, the valued members of UNA Westchester, to submit your own editorial columns for the Global Connection. For this issue, Jacob Daniel has responded with an article from a Republican



point of view on improving American activism in global institutions, which he originally wrote for his Young Republicans organization. Once again, I invite your comments and your articles.

Those of you who have given us your email addresses received our first email notice for the UNA-USA Southern NY State Division conference held on February 6. Please email me your email address if you would like to get such special announcements (philreynolds60@hotmail.com). I promise there will not be more than a few messages each year.

On behalf of the UNA Westchester Board, I wish you and our Association a pleasant and productive 2009.

*Phil Reynolds
President, UNA-Westchester*

Obama Administration priorities in International Humanitarian Law

In her first statement to the Security Council on January 29, 2009, newly-appointed US Ambassador to the UN Susan E. Rice set out the priorities of the new administration in international humanitarian law. Excerpts of the statement are included below, and it can be read in full at:

http://www.usunewyork.usmission.gov/press_releases/20090129_020.html

The United States is deeply committed to supporting and advancing international humanitarian law – both as a matter of national policy and as a basic precept for the entire international community.

In his inaugural address, President Obama rejected the false choice between our security and our values. He acted quickly, and in his first week in office signed Executive Orders to close the Guantanamo detention facility within one year, to ensure compliance with the treaty obligations of the United States, including the Geneva Conventions, and to guarantee the safe, lawful, and humane treatment of

individuals in custody during armed conflicts, including by providing access to all detainees by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). He ordered the CIA to close all existing detention facilities.

Civilian protection is not just a moral duty; it must be a core element of military operations. The United States government understands that protection of civilians is a vital priority – indeed that it must be an essential part of our missions.

We must find more effective means to protect innocent civilians around the world.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the fighting rages on and is reported to have resulted directly or indirectly in more than 5 million deaths, as well as countless rapes, sexual assaults, recruitment of child soldiers, and other major human rights violations.

In Sudan, the genocide in Darfur continues. More than 2.5 million persons have fled their homes and hundreds of thousands have died in the conflict to date. Recent fighting between rebels and government forces has put countless civilian lives at risk, and the Government of Sudan continues its bombing campaign on innocent civilians. In both the Congo and Sudan, all parties to the conflict must stop the killing and abide by their obligations under international law.

The United States is determined to act to prevent such violations of international humanitarian law. This means, in practical terms, preventing conflicts in the first place, keeping existing conflicts from escalating to mass atrocities, acting early and decisively when they occur, and ensuring that peacebuilding and post-conflict assistance consolidate peace durably once conflict ends. As agreed to by member states in 2005 and by the Security Council in 2006, the international community has a responsibility to protect civilian populations from international humanitarian law violations

when states are unwilling or unable to do so. But this commitment is only as effective as the willingness of all nations, large and small, to take concrete action.

The United Nations is at the center of our collective efforts to promote respect for international humanitarian law. Through peacekeeping, the United Nations protects vulnerable populations and helps to end violent conflict. Through the promotion of accountability, the United Nations helps to end impunity. Through the provision of humanitarian assistance, the United Nations reduces human suffering.

Yet, more needs to be done to clarify the role of UN peacekeepers with regard to civilian protection, to ensure that they have the resources necessary to accomplish their mandates and to accelerate their effective deployment in times of urgent need. UN peacekeepers must respect international humanitarian law themselves and abide by the highest standards of conduct.

The United States supports the efforts the Secretariat has taken to address the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, but additional work is required to develop doctrine, standards, and training for peacekeepers so they adhere to and promote the highest standards of humanitarian law and conduct in all missions, and in all their activities. Anything less is unacceptable.

The ad hoc war crimes tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and the hybrid tribunals in Cambodia and Sierra Leone, are actively prosecuting crimes involving violations of international humanitarian law. The International Criminal Court, which has started its first trial this week, looks to become a credible instrument for trying to hold accountable the senior leadership responsible for atrocities the Congo, Uganda, and Darfur.

The United States pledges to work together with the United Nations and international organizations such as the ICRC, in support for international humanitarian law. In this spirit of cooperation and determination we will seek to use this body of international law to minimize human suffering and protect vulnerable populations.

In case you missed it: Mid-Atlantic Conference and Members' Day gets high marks

An outstanding event – the Mid-Atlantic Conference – was held for the first time at UN Headquarters for a full day on February 6th. The idea of the conference was hatched by Catherine D. White, Chair of UNA's Southern New York State Division. She conceived it as "Year of Change: New Prospects for America at the United Nations". Because it was held soon after the inauguration of President Barack Obama, who promises to be much more engaged with the UN than his predecessor, the timing was perfect for examining ways for the US to re-engage and provide leadership to the organization. UNA-USA decided to combine the conference with its Members' Day, as a separate Members' Day will not be held in 2009.

The conference attracted a huge amount of attention and participation. More than 650 persons registered, and Conference room 3 was packed from 9:30 am until 5:00 pm. It was difficult to get people to leave! A majority of the participants were students from colleges and universities in the tri-state area. They were extremely enthusiastic and well prepared, with excellent questions for the panelists.

The day included an opening session, addressed by UNA-USA President Bill Luers and Ambassador Rosemary DiCarlo, the Alternate Representative of the US to the UN for Special Political Affairs. They both provided insights into how the US can better engage with the UN. Ramu Damodoran of the

UN Department of Public Information, gave a UN perspective of the US.

The three panels – on Peace and Security, Human Rights and Climate Change were all excellent, with exciting and knowledgeable speakers and moderators. Questions from the floor were provocative, and the responses from the panelists very thoughtful.

In addition to Catherine White, the conference planning committee included Jeffrey Laurenti, a National Director of UNA, Jim Nelson, President of the New Jersey Division and George Garland, who served as Executive Director. UNA-Westchester Vice President Marcia Brewster was very much involved in the organization of the event, and she moderated the final panel of the day on Climate Change.

The evaluations of the event were overwhelmingly positive. It was a very stimulating conference and a great networking event, which everyone would like to see repeated each year.

Marcia Brewster

2009 Advocacy Agenda

This will be an important year for advocacy action by our Westchester Chapter now that the new administration and the 111th Congress have assumed office. The UNA-USA Advocacy Agenda for 2009, entitled "Restoring U.S. Leadership through Global Cooperation" was adopted by the national Board of Directors on December 15, 2008. It has a new and improved format this year, which outlines several actions taken by the previous administration which urgently need to be revised. It also recommends action that chapters might take relating to six priority issues, namely: Strengthening the US-UN Relationship; Advancing Human Rights and International Justice; Renewing the United Nations; Building International Consensus on Climate change; Achieving the Millennium Development Goals; and Promoting Arms

Control and Disarmament. The full text of the Agenda is accessible at:
<http://www.unausa.org/site/pp.asp?c=fvKRI8MPJpF&b=328637>.

Our chapter has had only a general discussion of the 2009 Advocacy Agenda to date. It has agreed that our target audience should include: President Obama, the new US ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice; Congress (including our new Senator Kirsten Gillibrand) and other elected officials at the state and local levels; the media; and the general public. Personal contacts, petitions, letters, op-eds, phone calls, visits, and public meetings are all useful channels for advocacy. We may act both individually and as a Chapter, although we have not yet had an opportunity to adopt a specific Chapter plan of action.

The world news is not very encouraging these days, but we may keep in mind that President Obama has stated his view that “No country has a greater stake in a strong United Nations than the United States.”

Margaret K. Bruce

Mt. Vernon Students pay an enlightening visit to the UN

Students of Mt. Vernon High School visited the United Nations on December 12th. Sponsored by the High School's UN Club, the trip was funded by a generous grant from the Verizon Foundation. Their teachers provide their views on the visit below.

Constituent countries for the United Nations each give the UN a rare, priceless gift, which is displayed at the UN Building in New York City. On Friday, December 12, the UN gave the students of Mt. Vernon High School knowledge and inspiration, no less a priceless artifact than the exquisite tapestries a member nation might bestow upon the international organization itself. The freshmen class of Mr. Mihailidis and Mr. Glazer was granted a rare look at the internal workings of the renowned international relations body.

The day began at the German Consulate, where Dr. Jens-Christian Gaedtke enriched the students' understanding of international affairs. With subjects covered from the ramifications of the global financial crisis to the soccer premier league, the students got a taste of how interdependent the world has become in everything from business to leisure. “I never realized how much our economic troubles hurt the rest of the world. Germany's banks are even getting a huge bail out, like ours,” noted freshman Marsha Wilson. Hope still reigns supreme, however, as Gaedtke noted, President Elect Obama drew 200,000 for his speech in Berlin, an unheard of figure for any politician of any nationality. The group was accompanied by long-time UN staffer and Vice President of UNA Westchester, Marcia Brewster.

Hope would become a prevailing theme of the day as the next stop was UNICEF, which hopes to one day aid all the children of the world in becoming healthy and educated. A presentation on issues plaguing the world's children left many of the students in tears. “We have to take action,” declared Rashida Brown, among the moved students. Information was gathered for future plans, as students learned how they could help children in their communities. Many students remarked at the sheer luck that robbed these children of the privileges the Mt. Vernon students enjoy. Especially inspirational was a visit from former Mt. Vernon Schools Superintendent Brenda Smith, who is now a representative of a non-governmental organization to UNICEF. Her presence showed the children that people from their own community, even those they already know, can truly make a difference.

And a difference truly needs to be made. During a guided tour at the UN building itself, many students were again nearly moved to tears as they were told about landmines destroying children's lives. “What possible point could that have?” questioned freshman,

Jess Antunez, when told that certain mines were made to look like rocks and children's toys. Students were impressed to find that Colombian artist Jose Paredes had turned an AK-47 machine gun into a working guitar. "It's great that he was able to turn an instrument of destruction into one for music," remarked Lucinda Dass. The tour guide was quite impressed with the students' knowledge of the Millennium Development Goals of which they were now getting first-hand knowledge. As Donae Stokes remarked, it was truly "a day none of the freshmen would ever forget."

-- Aaron Glazer and Demetrios Mihailidis

Opinion: A Republican Argument for improving American activism in global institutions

This opinion piece represents the personal views of the author. UNA-Westchester invites other readers to share their opinions on the UN and international affairs.

My purpose in writing this article stems from a concern that the Republican Party has taken a cynical, even inimical, view of global institutions and multilateralism at a time when the US faces many global challenges that are interconnected. I visited the GOP Web site to view the latest platform positions on this subject. Although global institutions were briefly mentioned in the campaign platform document, it focused on American sovereignty and points of contention rather than the use of, and the reform strategies needed for, multilateral organizations to be integrated effectively into US foreign policy. The site's issues section only mention of an international organization was the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the stated objective was to "Strengthen NATO ties."

I liken this objective to a couple owning a mint-condition car that collects some dirt after some use but can easily be washed. Continuing with this analogy, the bigger

problem is that the couple is now at odds on how and when the car should be used. So, the Web site only reaffirmed my concerns.

Now, it is not without reason that there are grievances against the polymorph of international organizations. A few of their objectionable actions include:

- United Nations 1975 resolution equating Zionism to racism;
- IMF involvement in the Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s;
- International Court of Justice ruling in favor of the Sandinista communist government;
- GATT policies harming American farmers.

Our trust further eroded after witnessing the results of the Clinton administration blindly working with multilateral systems. The culture of that administration was to maintain cordial relations, irrespective of long-term American interests. This attitude manifested itself in a number of poor policy decisions such as Clinton's signing of the Rome Statute of 2000 regarding the International Criminal Court (ICC), which would have made the US unduly beholden to the ICC. Clinton also signed the Kyoto Protocol, which provides unfair advantages for developing countries, such as delaying their time to implement the agreement's mandates, while forcing American companies to absorb billions in costs of emissions reductions.

Unfortunately, Clinton's misuse of multilateralism led to George W. Bush's virtual non-use of global institutions. This irrational fear has impacted the ability of the US to secure the peace in Afghanistan and Iraq, emboldened the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to keep oil production below world demand, and strengthened such regional coalitions as the European Union (EU) and the Assn. of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) that challenge American influence.

Relying on either administration's extreme view will not solve the major foreign policy issues that Republicans have made their own, such as promoting and protecting free trade and democratization and ending radical terrorist movements. Rather, Republicans must take the lead in shaping and leading the institutions needed for global governance. Global governance is not a replacement for national sovereignty or necessary unilateral engagements. It is simply a natural evolution in maintaining order in our new "flat" world. Effective global institutions enable nations to work together in solving "common" problems. Strangely enough, securing consensus on a definition of the word "common" is what frustrates most multilateral institutions. Another inhibitor to success is the procedural inefficiencies entangling these institutions.

By leveraging America's greatest strengths, its democratic traditions and sole superpower status, Republicans can institutionalize American values and leadership needed for global stability and prosperity.

Below are some historical examples of multilateral successes of the US:

- 1778: Revolutionary War becomes a coalition war consisting of allies US, France, Spain, and the Netherlands.
- 1823: Monroe Doctrine proclaims American leadership over the Americas and the right of democratic self-rule by peoples of the Americas.
- 1899: Open Door Policy keeps China accessible for American businesses, while preserving Chinese sovereignty.
- 1905–1909: America leads various multiparty arbitration missions, such as the Portsmouth, Algeciras, and Pan-American conferences.
- 1917: World War I garners America a seat at the victors' table, and uses its status to propose the League of Nations.
- 1941: World War II shifts world leadership to the US and begins global decolonization

- 1962: UN aids in de-escalating Cuban Missile Crisis.
- 1979: International Court of Justice decides in favor of the US in *US v. Iran* and demands release of US hostages.
- 1989: Cold War ends after 40 years through the efforts of US, NATO, and non-NATO allies.
- 1990: US-UN Coalition removes Iraq from Kuwait.
- 1995: WTO's new Dispute Settlement Understanding increases participation in world trade.

Although some of these are far from perfect, they show that America's brightest international moments are more often found when we work with partners committed to solving problems of mutual interest.

-- Jacob Daniel

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- () Sponsor \$ 100 () Student \$10

In addition to my membership dues, I would like to contribute to:

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