

UNA-Westchester Global Connection



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

<http://www.unawestchester.org>

September 2009

Help Celebrate the UN's 64th Anniversary!

Cosponsored by Rotary International, Concordia College, and UNA-Westchester

Think Globally—Act Locally

Realizing the Millennium Development Goals
One Village at a Time

Concordia College, Bronxville, NY*

Thursday, October 15, 2009

6:30 P.M., Q&A and reception to follow

Featuring:

Patrick Haverman, UNDP Project Adviser on the Millennium Villages and Coordinator for Mali and Nigeria MDG Projects;

Doris Benson, Rotary Bronxville; and

Amanda Raz, Chair of UNA-Westchester's Young Professionals for International Cooperation (YPIC)

The Earth Institute, Millennium Promise, and UNDP are implementing the Millennium Villages Project in 10 African countries to show that the MDGs can be attained in rural Africa in five years. They are succeeding with a limited per capita investment in agriculture, health, education, and infrastructure in selected villages. Also, the Rotary Club in Bronxville is teaming up with Rotary Zambia to support specific villages, and UNA-Westchester YPIC has organized young professionals to provide financial support for these efforts.

For more information, contact: Doris Benson, dwbenson1@verizon.net, (914) 961-6554, or www.unawestchester.org



Patrick Haverman

* Concordia College is located at 171 White Plains Rd. (Rt 22), 1.4 miles north of Cross County Parkway exit 8, on the left-hand side. See: www.concordia-ny.edu.

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Editors: Marcia Brewster, Scott Monje

Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

This is a season of thank-you notes and positive reminders as UNA moves from its euphoric honeymoon to a more mature relationship with the administration and Congress. We have responded to the announcement by Susan Rice, US Ambassador to the UN, that the US will remit about \$2.2 billion in past and current assessments for UN Peacekeeping by expressing our gratitude to our Senators and Representatives. At the same time, the resolutions from the June UNA Convention and our Chapter's communications have sought to hold the administration and Congress to the encouraging commitments they made with respect to the Convention on the Law of the Sea, climate change, and the International Criminal Court. Like the proverbial housewife, our work is never done.



At our annual meeting on May 17, we elected a new Board Member, Narinder Kakar—a former UN official who currently represents the University for Peace and the IUCN at the UN. Since then, the Board has approved my two presidential appointments: Mary O'Neill Berry—who is an Organizational Psychologist and represents the International Association of Applied Psychology at the UN—and Amanda Raz, founder of UNA-Westchester's Young Professionals for International Cooperation (YPIC) and admissions assistant at Manhattanville College. I hope you will join me in welcoming them.

Speaking of YPIC, they already have over 10 members, have held two meetings, and are planning lectures and film events on international affairs for the fall. If you know of young people (between 20 and 35) who might be interested in this dynamic group,

please have them contact Amanda at raza@mville.edu.

Our Web site is now being revamped with the kind assistance of John Robinson. John is also helping UNA-Westchester reach out to members (you!), former members, and potential members with a survey. We want to find out what we do well and what we could do better to engage you and others in our programs and activities. I encourage your active participation in this effort when you receive the survey by email or hard copy.

Also, we are urging all members of UNA-Westchester to join our Advocacy Committee meeting on September 14. Details are in the box below.

As we look forward to our UN Day program on October 15, I wish you an engaged and rewarding fall.

Phil Reynolds, President

Please Join Us for Advocacy Action — September 14 in White Plains!

On September 14, the Advocacy Committee, chaired by Molly Bruce, will hold a meeting at 6:30 P.M. at the YMCA in White Plains, located at 250 Mamaroneck Avenue—across from the fire station and near the corner of Maple Avenue. This meeting is open to all UNA-Westchester members. We will be planning for lobbying and action on such important UNA-USA priorities as: the test ban treaty, human rights, the International Criminal Court, and climate change. We will be considering the best approaches for advocacy and influencing our policy makers. Please mark your calendars and be there, as advocacy is the centerpiece of UNA-USA and its main mission—to bring attention to the UN and support its international priorities.

Joan Katen

Highlights of the UNA Convention in Washington, June 2009

It was a privilege for me to attend the UNA-USA National Convention, held in Washington from June 12–14, 2009, and to meet our new CEO, Tom Miller, several times. The convention, held at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was a great networking event, where I met officers of many other chapters around the country, some of whom may wish to partner with us for future joint activities. Some of the highlights:

The welcoming plenary was opened by Larry Levine, chair of the Council of Chapters and Divisions (CCD) and the main organizer of the convention. He was followed by William McDonough, cochair of the UNA-USA National Board, and Tom Miller.

Resolutions. We discussed 23 draft resolutions in three small groups on: Human Rights and International Law; Peace, Security, and Disarmament; and Development, Climate Change, and UN Reform. I attended the third group which was ably facilitated by Herb Behrstock and Katy Hansen. We made comments on the six resolutions in our area and sent them back to the Committee on Resolutions. On the final day, the Convention passed four of our group's resolutions by consensus. Following the suggestions we made, two resolutions were combined into one, two were adopted with amendments, and two were not accepted. The Convention's 18 final resolutions are available at www.unausa.org.

In the afternoon we heard from Esther Brimmer, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs. She discussed her job in terms of three themes: human security (human rights, economic and social development, trafficking, and climate change); peace and security (16 peacekeeping missions, peace building); and global systems

(air travel, postal systems, health, etc). She stressed that President Obama is interested in the US relationship with the UN, and in hearing from lively citizens' organizations such as UNA-USA.

The next segment was on UNA-USA's partners in engaging the American public, featuring speakers Gillian Sorensen of the UN Foundation and Peter Yeo of the Better World Campaign. Both suggested ways for people to voice their support for peacekeeping, treaties and conventions, and other work of the UN. Ms. Sorensen stressed the opportunity now for the UNA and UN Foundation to be real partners, and noted that UN Day and UN Week were good times to reach out to local groups and stimulate dialogue.

The next talk "The Global Financial Crisis: Impact on Poverty and the MDGs," featured Kemal Dervis, former UNDP administrator, who is now at the Brookings Institution. He outlined the main challenges faced by the UN that had to be dealt with on a global level, such as climate change and health pandemics.

Regional Assemblies. Saturday morning's session featured separate meetings for each of the nine Regional Assemblies, ours being the Mid-Atlantic Region, chaired by Jeff Laurenti. We first elected our regional representatives to the CCD—Catherine White and George Garland. Then the group of about 15 discussed regional activities, including the Mid-Atlantic Conference in February 2009, which had been a big success. The Division has decided to do it again, and George Garland and Catherine White agreed to be cochairs for the 2010 conference. YPIC will be a big part of the next conference, and promoting new membership will be built into the program. We also discussed what to do about weak chapters in our region. We need contact people for each of the chapters that are part of the mid-Atlantic region but not part of our Division.

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World Peace as a “Free Ride”

Speaking at New York University in August 2009, Ambassador Susan Rice, the U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations (and no relation to Condoleezza), said the Obama administration’s approach to the UN is guided by three core premises. First, today’s global challenges cannot be met without the leadership of the United States. Second, while necessary, U.S. leadership is insufficient. Success will require the collaboration of a broad range of other nations. Third, others will be more likely to share the burden if the United States leads by example and forges strategies in partnership with others. What does this tell us? Basically, it says that the Obama administration understands the nature of “public goods” (or “collective goods”).

Now, if you happen to have an advanced degree in one of the social sciences, that term may well be familiar to you. If, on the other hand, you are a normal person, you have probably never heard of it and are quite skeptical at this point as to whether you should even continue reading this jargon-laden diatribe. To stop here, however, would be a mistake, for public goods affect us all, even if they are sometimes difficult to define. A public good is not a “normal” good; it is usually not even a material good. A public good is such that, once it has been created, then by its very nature no one can be excluded from partaking of it. Moreover, one person’s partaking of it does not diminish it or make it less available to others.

An apple is decidedly not a public good. I can own an apple. I can sell it, or I can decide to give it away or share it with others or hide it for later, or I can eat it all myself right now. An apple is a normal good, a “private” good.

World peace is a public good. As long as it continues to exist, no one can be excluded from enjoying it. If they could, then it would

not be world peace. Moreover, one person’s or one nation’s enjoying it does not in any way detract from others’ enjoyment. If I reach into my bank account and spend my life’s savings creating world peace, then I will have created it for everybody. They’ll all be enjoying it just as much as I, but they’ll also still have their life’s savings, whereas I will be destitute and wallowing in the misery of my own folly. Ay, as Hamlet would say, there’s the rub. “Public goods” attract “free riders.”

The classic example of a public good is the village commons. If you had grown up, say, in a colonial New England village, you would have been familiar with the commons, a green place where all the residents of the village were allowed to graze their cattle. The perpetual problem was that no one wanted to pay for its upkeep because free riders who paid nothing would still take advantage of it. The reluctance to pay and the widespread free-riding led to the deterioration and ultimate demise of many a village commons. This is the heart of the public-goods problem. Enjoyment is free as long as someone else pays. Those who do pay eventually get fed up with those who do not. The public good—if it is produced at all—eventually withers and fades away. The larger the group is, the greater the free-rider problem is likely to be.

That, in a nutshell, is why government was invented (or if it wasn’t the main reason, it should have been). Government compels all to pay taxes and then produces public goods in the name of the community—be it road building, law enforcement, defense, diplomacy, or maintenance of the village green. (All right, sometimes some shenanigans go on in government, but that’s a story for another time.) Government operates at the local level and at the national level, but of course there is no world government and there is not likely to be one in the foreseeable future. So where does that leave us? It leaves us with the problem of collective action—of convincing independent and willful entities to

act in their own interest instead of waiting for someone else to do it for them.

Some years ago, a fellow named Mancur Olson—a highly influential political economist whose name you probably have never heard and never will again—noticed that some groups (among those lacking governments) are better at producing public goods than others are.¹ Now, you might want to believe that the successful groups will be the righteous ones or the liberal ones or the free-market-oriented ones (depending on where you're coming from), but you'll be disappointed. The successful groups are the ones that have one big member who dominates the whole group. Groups of true equals are the least likely to succeed because they require the most organizing and the most convincing. The key is that the big member wants the public good, too, and because of its numerous and far-flung interests may want it more than the other members. In many cases, if the big member wants it enough, it just gives up on the rest, produces the public good out of its own budget for its own benefit, and puts up with the free-riding of the others.

For many years, this is essentially what the United States did in the name of world peace, or world stability in any case. This is how it acquired the reputation of a “world policeman.” At times it involved unilateral intervention, often accompanied by complaints about the failure of others to bear their full share of the burden (whether the burden of the moment was defending South Vietnam or infusing liquidity into the world financial system). Sometimes it worked well, sometimes not so well. Sometimes countries did not agree that the goal at issue was the right one. The problem from the point of view of providing public goods, however, is that the United States is not the dominant power it was, say, in 1945, when much of the industrial

¹ Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

world lay in ruins. It cannot be expected to produce public goods in a unilateral fashion indefinitely.

But wait, Mancur Olson has not abandoned us. Sometimes, he says, a large-but-not-overwhelmingly-dominant member can organize the rest of the group for collective action. This is where the vision of the Obama administration fits in. As Ambassador Rice says, U.S. leadership is necessary but not sufficient. A large member can organize the group, but the goal will not be achieved unless the group as a whole contributes. The group's members will not contribute unless the leader makes the effort to draw them in, takes their views and interests into account, and convinces them of the necessity of the task. The process will not be fast, smooth, or pretty, but success requires it.

The United Nations is a ready-made forum for this sort of activity. It has already brought the necessary members together in one place, including the ones we do not necessarily like (the ones domestic political opponents will attack you for talking to) but cannot exclude if a given public good is to be produced. As an added benefit, the United Nations comes with an underlying presumption that cooperation is the appropriate mode for achieving goals. The rest is up to us.

World peace, of course, is just one example of an international public good and an ambitious one at that. There are many others: stopping the smuggling of drugs, guns, or nuclear materials; combating pandemics or climate change; sustaining sanctions against rogue regimes. None of these things could really be accomplished by one country even if it were willing to bear the costs. The actions of non-cooperators would effectively undermine the goal. However, the provision of public goods in an anarchic (i.e., ungoverned) environment is what the UN was invented for. Let's at least try to take advantage of it.

Scott C. Monje

Convention (Continued from page 3)

UN-Related Issues. Three working groups were formed on: UN strengthening and reform; the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the rights of women; and nuclear non-proliferation. All emphasized how UNA could influence the US government into taking action. I attended the session on CEDAW, which Tom Miller also attended as it was the topic he knew least about. Presenters Sarah Albert, Penny Wakefield, and Ketayoun Darvich-Kodjouri were knowledgeable and experienced with CEDAW. They gave us a detailed historical overview and discussed why the US has not ratified CEDAW and other treaties and conventions. Tom suggested that UNA-USA prepare a paper showing the contradiction between the US effort to be a moral leader in the world and how nonparticipation undermines US credibility. We discussed how to make these conventions of interest to senators and others. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea will be the first to go to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (John Kerry, chairman). If that one passes (67 votes), the others will be easier.

UNA-USA Priorities. Participants were divided into two groups on building membership and strengthening chapters. I attended the one on building membership. Roger Nokes, the resource person, talked about the student alliances and noted that membership is high at universities where a member of the UNA Board is on the faculty and where students can participate in Model UN programs and campaigns. Good Web sites and e-mail communication are essential to reach the younger generation.

There were a number of suggestions on giving incentives to members who renew each year, and on the perceived benefits of UNA membership. Suggestions included: making events free for members and \$10 for non-members, and providing tangible benefits to

members, such as a US-UN flag lapel pin, bumper sticker, DVD, hat, or publications. Some chapters support students through their membership. One has member appreciation nights (social events with a speaker), an active YPIC group, and a Model UN. Another has a monthly “Lunch and Learn” session with a speaker and buffet. Others sponsor career fairs, discounts for purchases, and UN week.

On Sunday morning, I attended the policy and advocacy group, where actions such as the following were proposed:

- Giving grades to senators (like Citizens for Global Solutions);
- Arranging a public affairs event to present UNA’s resolutions to the president;
- Defining a time cycle for resolutions;
- Communicating the essentials of the resolutions as bullet points for senators;
- Educating our local communities and networks to build a base of support;
- Expanding contact lists among those who are not UNA members;
- Meeting with legislators’ staffs and keeping them informed of priorities;
- Presenting a package on conventions and treaties that shows the advantages of US ratification and leadership;
- Appealing to students and youth to get involved in UNA’s priority issues.

My Observations:

1. It should be noted that the UNA-USA Board and all senior leadership of the organization are men. There are almost no minorities or women on the Board. This needs to be changed.
2. The overall spirit at the convention was very positive and collaborative. I met a lot of people with whom we could work, and spoke to several people who want to help us work with students and Model UN.
3. There seem to be too many layers in the organization. Maybe the chapter, division, region structure could be rationalized.

Marcia Brewster, Vice President

Follow-up Meeting with Rep. Nita Lowey's Staff, July 2

During UNA-USA's Advocacy Week (June 27 to July 3), Lee Bloom and I met with two of Representative Nita Lowey's staff, Stephen Papas and Virginia Noriega. We conveyed our sincere thanks to Rep. Lowey for all her support on the issues that matter most to UNA, such as funding for the UN and the Clean Energy and Security Act (both recently passed). As chairwoman of the House Appropriations subcommittee responsible for writing the annual foreign aid bill, Rep. Lowey is crucial to gaining US support for the Millennium Development Goals, Peace-keeping Operations, and other important priorities of UNA-USA. We provided copies of all the resolutions from the UNA-USA National Convention, and asked for her particular support on those dealing with the rights of women and children, human trafficking, the International Criminal Court, climate change, and international education.

Marcia Brewster

Third-Graders Learn about Peace

For the fifth year in a row, members of the UNA-USA Westchester Chapter presented the peace/art project, "Peace Makes the World a Better Place," in 24 third-grade classes in the Yonkers public schools. Our volunteers engaged the students in an exploration of what peace means both for the world and for the community, drawing on the children's own experience and backgrounds. The students learned about the work the United Nations does around the world, and then made creative drawings illustrating the topics discussed.

Several of the classes wrote thank-you notes to the volunteers afterwards, touching on some ideas that stood out for them. We are sharing one of those letters, below:

May 11th, 2009

Dear U.N. Visitors,

Thank you for teaching us about United Nations. We learned alot about peace and war. We learned about United Nations helping people. The wars are putting bombs everywhere. Alot of people are dying and being sick. The United Nations people are helping these people. They bring medicine and other things to help the people. United Nations people are really helping people who need help. The people are getting healthier because of the United Nations. The United Nations people bring peace to the world. They also stop wars. The people are suffering. So the United Nations care about them and help them. The United Nations people are very cool.

Sincerely, BB

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

____ Please renew my membership

____ Please enroll me as a member of UNA-USA at the following level:

- () Lifetime (one-time payment) \$1,000 () Member \$40
- () Patron \$ 500 () Introductory (first year only) \$25
- () Sponsor \$ 100 () Student \$10

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

- () Westchester Chapter \$ _____
- () National Office \$ _____
- () Total enclosed \$ _____
- () My company matches employee contributions. (My company's matching form is attached.)
- () Please send me information on making a Planned Gift.

Name _____ (Please print)
 Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
 Tel: _____ E-mail: _____

Please make your check payable to UNA-USA.
 Or Charge payment to your Credit Card: VISA MC Am. Express
 Number: _____ Exp.Date: _____

Signature _____

Return this, with your payment to UNA-USA, to:
 UNA-USA WESTCHESTER CHAPTER
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