

UNA-Westchester Global Connection



United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA) Westchester Chapter
<http://www.unawestchester.org> December 2013

The UNA-Westchester board wishes its members peace, good health, and a better world in 2014!

Save the Date!

Coming Soon to the UN General Assembly Hall in New York!



The Sixth UNA-USA Mid-Atlantic Conference and Members' Day

"The United Nations: Building Peace in an Age of Upheaval"

Friday, February 7, 2014, An All-Day Event

UNA-USA Members' Day will take place in the UN General Assembly Hall. All are welcome. In the past we have had a turnout of over 800 persons, including many students. In addition to illustrious keynote speakers, panels will focus on: the Post-2015 Development Agenda; Making Peace, Keeping Peace, and Building Peace; Where Human Rights Are Controversial; and UNA-USA's work around the country.

Further details and registration information will be available soon.

***Directions to the UN General Assembly:** The United Nations is located on First Avenue between 42nd Street and 48th Street. All participants should arrive at the visitors' entrance, opposite 47th Street. Please allow 30 minutes for the security screening.

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Letter from the President



Dear friends,

We invite you to join us on December 10 for a Human Rights Day event sponsored by the UNA Southern New York State Division

and held at the Henry Wallace Center at the FDR Presidential Library and Museum in Hyde Park. The event will be participatory, with a keynote speaker – Ryan Kaminsky, the UNA-USA Leo Nevas Human Rights Fellow – followed by roundtables on topics related to the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the international theme “The World We Want.” We will focus on human rights, and the results will be submitted through the UNA-USA as a report to the UN secretary-general.

We had a fabulous celebration of UN Day in Mount Vernon on October 20. The theme was “Celebrating International Diversity in Westchester: Partnerships for Global Progress.” For those of you who were able to join us, I am sure you will agree. We had a record turnout and a program that featured dancers, drummers, singers, and messages from the president of the General Assembly and the secretary-general’s envoy for youth. The participants were welcomed by the mayor of Mount Vernon, Ernest D. Davis, and the African Village drum and dance troupe. The highlights of the event were award-winning videos produced by middle and high school students from Westchester County. This UNA video competition, on the theme “The World I Want,” was open to students from throughout southern New York State, but all the winners were

from Westchester. Congratulations to the students (and their parents, teachers, and administrators) from: Yonkers Middle School 27, Woodlands Middle School, White Plains High School, and Sleepy Hollow High School. The videos were extremely well done, and we were thrilled to be able to screen them and award the winners at our UN Day event. We were also honored to bestow the chapter’s 70th Anniversary Legacy Award to our outstanding board member Dr. Brenda L. G. Smith for her many contributions to our chapter. The videos, photos, and a full report of the event can be found at our website, www.unawestchester.org.

Some of our members participated in a roundtable on the Post-2015 Development Agenda on November 1 at the New York Times building in Manhattan. Photos and videos from that event, which was also sponsored by the Southern New York State Division, are available at flickr.com/photos/UNASouthernny and www.youtube.com/UNASouthernny.

In Washington, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is currently debating the UN Disabilities Treaty, which failed to be ratified by just 5 votes last year. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides a framework for countries to embrace independence and dignity for all people with disabilities (see Advocacy Corner on p. 7). Ambassador Samantha Power has expressly asked our help on this.

Also, SAVE THE DATE! The Sixth Annual Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference and UNA-USA Members Day will take place on Friday, February 7, 2014, in the UN General Assembly Hall. This event, the essence of our association and its alliance

with the UN Foundation, is open to all members. We also invite members to observe one of our board meetings, normally held on the first Monday of the month at the YMCA, 250 Mamaroneck Avenue in White Plains.

Finally, I want to thank all the members of the board and other supporters for all their assistance during this very busy year. It is such a pleasure to work with a harmonious group of people so dedicated to the work of the United Nations and world peace. Our board wishes you all a joyous holiday season and peace and good health in the coming year.

— Marcia Brewster

The United Nations and the Challenges of Development in the 21st Century

His Excellency Mr. John W. Ashe, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations and President of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, sent the following message to the UNA Westchester Chapter's meeting in Mount Vernon, N.Y., on October 20, 2013.

Your gathering today commemorates two anniversaries: the 68th anniversary of the United Nations and the 70th anniversary of the United Nations Association of the United States. These two anniversaries tell me that our two organizations – and the ideals upon which they were founded – continue to be important fixtures in the world and have stood the test of time. The importance of your organization as an advocate in promoting the work, goals, and values of the UN in this country cannot be underestimated. Through tireless advocacy and education efforts, you help the American public better

understand the purpose of the UN and what it seeks to accomplish. I know I can speak on behalf of many in the UN system when I say we are grateful for your friendship and support.

As supporters of the United Nations, I am sure many of you know, the United Nations was founded in the wake of the horrors and sorrows of World Wars I and II, compelling founding member states to create a global organization that might one day lead to a different kind of world – one founded upon peace, human rights, and prosperity for all.

Sixty-eight years have now passed, many more countries have joined this community of nations and given the nature and scale of global challenges, we can safely say that the United Nations is needed more than ever. As the world grapples with deadly conflicts and other incidents of violence, environmental degradation, inequality, and persistent challenges in meeting development goals, the UN provides a unique forum for all member states to discuss the matters that most concern the world's people and to work toward common solutions. Given the current global social, financial, and environmental challenges, the UN's current work on a new development agenda is one of the most critical initiatives undertaken by the organization in its history. The new agenda must ensure that member states fulfill their shared responsibility to people and planet, while also ensuring that all persons have an opportunity to live in peace and dignity. Over the years, our concerted efforts have led to great successes, in which we can all take pride: since 1990, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty has declined by half; over 2 billion people have

access to improved sources of drinking water; child mortality for children under 5 has dropped by more than 40%; and impressive gains have been made in the fight against HIV and AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. We can also proudly note the recent adoption of a historic treaty regulating the trade of arms.

Yet, with one billion people still living on less than \$1.25 a day, and a number of persisting or emerging development challenges, much more needs to be done. Many at the United Nations are keeping track of the days left to the deadline to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We now have less than 800 days and we need to fulfill our promises and demonstrate that we can turn our words into concrete actions that make a real difference in people's lives. Furthermore, as we begin setting the stage for the post-2015 agenda, we must pick up where the MDGs left off and overhaul our approach to both people and planet to create a universal and shared development agenda that leaves no one behind.

The reality is that as local politicians, city planners, and citizens, you are grappling with many of the issues with which the UN is dealing at the international level. Changing demographics and trends in urbanization will result in the majority of the world's people living in cities, places like Mount Vernon and wider Westchester. Development planning of the future on the micro-scale often mirrors the challenges and imperatives of planning at the macro-level. Some of these issues include balancing private needs and public rights; creating prosperity while protecting the planet; protecting greenspaces while maximizing the use of land and physical spaces; creating jobs and fostering

productive livelihoods; building social spaces where people of multiple ethnicities and backgrounds can live harmoniously and contribute to their societies; and providing increased housing and transport, cheaper energy supplies, and public goods and services while simultaneously shrinking our ecological footprint. These are issues that concern both you and the UN equally, and they impact both the local and international landscape.

On this dual track of both accelerating progress towards the MDGs and defining our new development agenda, let us take a moment to recall the ideals and values the founding members enshrined in our Charter. Let the inspiration that led to the founding of this family of nations guide us and inspire us in this new chapter of our shared history. And let us pay tribute to the values we share with you, in this City of Mt. Vernon with residents from 98 different countries – diversity, tolerance, respect, and unity of the human family.

I wish you joyful celebrations.

Opinion: The US-Iran Nuclear Deal

The following commentary is from Frank Brodhead, a historian and peace activist and founder of Concerned Families of Westchester. It was written on November 25, 2013. Your reactions are welcome.

The just-concluded US-Iran nuclear agreement is very important. Indicative of the deal's importance are the strong criticisms coming from those traditionally urging "bomb, bomb Iran"; another important sign is the strong support for

the deal within Iran itself. Following are some quick comments on why the deal is a step toward peace and away from war.

A Summary of the Agreement

The Obama administration is defending the agreement in part by enumerating the great many concessions that Iran has made to curtail its multifaceted nuclear program. In general, Iran has put almost everything on hold for six months, and will allow daily inspections by the UN nuclear inspectors to affirm that they are not renegeing on their agreements. Also during the next six months, further negotiations about Iran's nuclear program will investigate whether a permanent agreement is possible. Such an agreement would include ending economic and other sanctions against Iran, in exchange for further guarantees (with inspections and presumably some clear limits on what and how much of what can be produced). Ideally, a permanent agreement would abolish sanctions against Iran and allow an Iranian nuclear power program with as many safeguards as are needed to persuade *reasonable* people that Iran is not developing a nuclear weapon.

A Semi-Technical Digression

The US intelligence community has reported several times that Iran does not have a nuclear weapons program. However, it is in the nature of nuclear things that the first steps in developing a nuclear power program (processing raw uranium, building the industrial processes to "enrich" it so that it will start a low-level chain reaction, and building other nuclear infrastructure similar to what we have at Indian Point) looks more or less the same as the first steps in developing a nuclear weapons program. (Some analysts

believe that Iran seeks a status, similar to Japan's, of "nuclear latency," a basis from which it could develop a nuclear weapon relatively quickly.)

The government of Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel and the US congressional hawks look at this picture and see a *weapons* program, based on their belief that having nuclear weapons is an Iranian goal. Unlike the United States – which opposes an Iranian nuclear weapon – Israel's official position is to oppose Iran's development of a nuclear *capability*. By definition, developing a nuclear power program is to develop what Israel calls a nuclear capability. In its diplomatic language, the Bush and Obama administrations, in turn, have squared this circle by opposing Iran's "nuclear ambitions," thus aligning the United States in practice with Israel's demands that Iran not be allowed to develop a nuclear capability (i.e., especially to learn how to enrich uranium).

The problem for the US-Israel "no enrichment" camp is that the right to develop a nuclear program for peaceful purposes is enshrined in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and (until recently) this right has been understood to include the right to do what needs to be done to develop a nuclear power program indigenously, i.e., producing components of a nuclear power program, such as enriched uranium, domestically.

A Brief Analysis

A clue to the significance of the agreement may be seen in the enthusiastic demonstrations in Iran in favor of the deal. Iran is suffering under the most intense round of economic warfare in

modern history. Some of this suffering has been due to the blundering nondiplomacy of former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad; and the landslide election of Iran's new president last June was in part a rejection of the Ahmadinejad approach to the world.

Thus, in the eyes of a large majority of the Iranians, the US-Iranian nuclear deal marks the beginning of the end of economic sanctions, a reopening of the door to normalizing Iran's relations with "the West," and an implicit acceptance of Iran's right to enrich uranium and, by implication, to achieve an indigenous capability for developing a nuclear power program.

From the perspective of, say, the US intelligence community, which maintains that Iran is not working on a nuclear weapon, Iran gave up very little in a deal that was intended to stop an Iranian nuclear weapons program. Having achieved its goal of gaining the right to develop a nuclear power program, Iran has no incentive to "cheat" in the direction of a nuclear weapons program, which it did not want in the first place.

This much of the nuclear deal is symbolic: it prevents an Iranian nuclear weapons program, which Iran does not want, while opening the door to a nuclear power program, which Iran does want.

Coming Distractions

Ah, if life were only so simple! Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Israel has repositioned its foreign policy and for the last 20 years has claimed that Iran was its main enemy. And for these 20 years it has

claimed that an Iranian nuclear weapon was just a year or two away. No matter that Israel has 100–200 nuclear weapons and Iran has none; Israel has succeeded in making the threat of an Iranian nuclear weapon a major political issue in the United States. Indeed, the notion that Iran is striving for a nuclear weapon has become an "existential" reality for Israel.

Israel has termed the US-Iran interim nuclear deal a disaster of historic proportions, and is once again talking about "all options on the table." It has vowed to use its formidable PR apparatus to generate opposition to the deal within the United States, and especially within the US political elite. Israel's rejectionism resonates with most Republicans and a great many Democrats. The current division within the Congress is primarily between those who want to implement additional sanctions on Iran immediately (contrary to the terms of the interim agreement), and those who want new sanctions legislation, but to take effect only if Iran "violates" the agreement or after six months have expired and there is no new, permanent (or next stage) agreement. In New York, Senator Charles Schumer appears to be among those who want new sanctions against Iran immediately, while Congressman Eliot Engel wants additional sanctions, but only to go into effect after six months. (No word yet from Nita Lowey or Kirsten Gillibrand.)

It doesn't seem likely that Israel will attack Iran's nuclear facilities while the next stages of diplomacy are under way, but we can expect a tsunami of criticism of the nuclear agreement from Israel and its congressional and media allies. To work for peace in this environment, it seems to

me, means that we need to learn the basic facts about the agreement and about Iran's nuclear program, and be prepared to counter distortions that undermine the possibilities that the interim nuclear agreement could lead to a more-or-less genuine peace in the region.

Advocacy Corner

The US Senate will soon vote on whether to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the "Disabilities Treaty"). In an earlier vote, last year, the treaty fell just five votes short of the necessary two-thirds majority. We urge all UNA members to show your support for this treaty. You can contact your senator through the following link:

<https://secure.globalproblems-globalsolutions.org/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=482>

Young Professionals Launch

UNA-Westchester's Young Professionals program was launched at Fogarty's in Bronxville on November 20. The event was a great success and surely marks the beginning of an exciting year.

After a brief opening by UNA chapter president Marcia Brewster, our featured speaker, Asif Khan of the UN Foundation, inspired the attendees with his commitment to human rights for all and his insights into career possibilities in the UN and the UN Foundation. It was wonderful to see so many graduate students join us to learn about becoming members of the UN Association. We hope to see you all at the program's inaugural meeting this month.

Want to get involved? E-mail unawestchester@gmail.com, attn: Emma Clancy, YP Chair

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION (this can also be submitted on line at www.unausa.org):

_____ Please renew my membership

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

- | | | | |
|--|---------|---|------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime (one-time payment) | \$1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Member | \$40 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$ 500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Introductory (first year only) | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor | \$ 100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Student | Free |

Please indicate your choice of Westchester Chapter (#126) in your application.

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

- Westchester Chapter \$ _____
- Lee Bloom Memorial Fund \$ _____
- National Office \$ _____
- Total enclosed \$ _____
- My company matches employee contributions. (My company's matching form is attached.)

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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