



ACTION FOR UN RENEWAL

Reforming the United Nations
Promoting peace, development, human rights and environment
Upholding the UN Charter and international law

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Summer 2008

HUMAN RIGHTS 1948–2008 - PROMOTION AND PROTECTION:

Talk given by Geoffrey Robertson, QC, to the
AGM of Action for UN Renewal
23 February 2008



Left to right: Vijay Mehta, Geoffrey Robertson QC

Report by our member, Frank Jackson

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights was signed on 10th December 1948. Together with the Genocide Convention and the Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War, it made up a triptych of international laws which introduced a new approach to international relations. Historically, the American and French revolutions had not included universal human rights as understood today. Marx dismissed what he called “bourgeois rights”. The League of Nations had no notion of human rights. A Penguin Special by Wells, “Rights of Man” was translated into 30 languages. During the war the Foreign Office arranged for a German translation to be dropped over Germany.

Roosevelt proclaimed his four freedoms - Freedom of Speech; Freedom of Religion; Freedom from Want; Freedom from Fear - as war aims. After his death his widow Eleanor became the main driving force in

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Pope's U.N. speech

'... motivated by the hope drawn from the
saving work of Jesus Christ'



Pope Benedict XVI address
U.N. General Assembly

Pope Benedict XVI told the United Nations that the international community had a responsibility to intervene if states failed to protect citizens from sustained human rights violations and the impact of humanitarian disasters.

Addressing the 192-member General Assembly on his first visit to the UN headquarters in New York, he said: “It is indifference or failure to intervene that do the real damage.”

His speech touched on an issue that often divides the UN. In an appeal to the UN Security Council on how to respond to global emergencies, he said: “When faced with new and insistent challenges, it is a mistake to fall back on a pragmatic approach, limited to determining ‘common ground’, minimal in content and weak in its effect.”

He referred to the principle of the “Responsibility to Protect”, a doctrine of global collective security still evolving since it was published in a Canadian-sponsored initiative in 2001 after the Rwanda genocide and war in the Former Yugoslavia.

The Pope said the principle had only recently been defined, but it was implicit in the origins of the UN. Referring to states’ duties to their citizens, he said: “If states are unable to guarantee such protection, the international community must intervene with the juridical means provided in the United Nations Charter and in other international instruments.”

There was also a responsibility to protect the weak. “I am thinking especially of those countries in Africa and other parts of the world which remain on the margins of authentic integral development and are therefore at risk of experiencing only the negative effects of globalisation,” he said.

Referring to the dominant position of leading world powers, he said it was a paradox that the multilateral
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consensus continued to be in crisis because it was still subordinated to the decisions of a few.

Addressing the UN during his first US tour as pontiff and in the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Pope did not refer to his opposition to the war in Iraq after discussing the Middle East with George W. Bush, the US president, in Washington.

Speaking ahead of a visit to the site of the 2001 terrorist attacks that destroyed the World Trade Center, he said the UN could count on the outcome of a continuing dialogue among religions.

Report of the Action for UN Renewal 2008 AGM

23rd February 2008

Report by Luckshan Abeysuriya and Vijay Mehta

About 40 people attended the AGM at Friends House, Euston, on Saturday 23rd February 2008. The meeting started with a big thank you to our late chair, Jim Addington for his excellent work for an effective and credible UN. Carol Langdon gave a membership and treasurer's report. The meeting took place in 3 different parts: the chair's report, election of officer bearers, and public meeting.

Chair's report

The past year has been busy with conferences and meetings, attended by Jim, myself and some of the committee members. In April 2007, Jim Addington, Karl Miller and myself attended the United Nations annual conference of the United Nations Association, at the University of Warwick. The keynote speaker at the conference was Dame Margaret Anstee.

In June, Jim Addington, made a submission to the Iraq Commission, in which he pointed out questions relating to the legality or otherwise of the war on Iraq. In the same month, the Annual Erskine Childers lecture was held at Friends House, the speech given by Kate Allen, Director of Amnesty International.

In July 2007, Craig Murray, former UK ambassador to Uzbekistan, gave a compelling talk about the relationship of the United Nations vis-à-vis the United States. In August 2007, Joseph E. Schwartzberg (Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota) gave a talk on 'Reforming the UN for the 21st Century.'

During 5-7th September 2007, the United Nations held the 60th Annual Department of Public Information Non-Governmental Organization (DPI/NGO) Conference in New York. This year's topic was 'Climate Change: How It Impacts Us All.'

On 24th October 2007, the Lobby of Parliament for the

UN 2007-08 was held jointly with UNA-UK whose themes including the Millennium Development Goals, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, combating climate change and implementing the 'responsibility to protect.'

On 6th November 2007, Action for UN Renewal members commemorated 'A Celebration of Jim Addington's Life' at Friends House. The event was chaired jointly by Rosemary Addington and myself. It was a large gathering, over 100 people, from various organisations which Jim was very involved with, including UNA, CND, Labour Action for Peace, among others. Tributes were paid by many others including Tony Benn, Bruce Kent, Jeremy Corbyn MP, and Kate Hudson.

In December 2007, we held an event on 'Bringing Democracy to Burma – What can the UK government do to promote and implement the rule of law and the UN Charter?'

In February 2008, on behalf of Action for UN Renewal, I went to speak at UNA Leeds (University of Leeds), a well attended youth and students meeting. The title was 'Reform of the United Nations, and the role of UN in peace and international security.' I had the privilege of speaking alongside Tony Benn and Jeremy Corbyn MP at the Labour Action for Peace AGM. The topic was 'Britain's special relationship should be with the United Nations, not the USA.'

Action for UN Renewal continues to produce quarterly newsletters. It contains news and comments on the United Nations and activities and meetings of Action for UN Renewal. I'd like to especially thank James Thring for compiling the reports on several of the lectures for the newsletters. Many others, though too many to mention, have contributed to the newsletter. I'd also like to thank them for their contribution. Some of our forthcoming activities include talks at Oxford University, St Andrews University (Scotland) and the conference of the News School of Athens, Greece.

I would like to thank our vice-chairs, Prue Wendt and Ailsa Moore, for arranging meetings and for their guidance and advice in the organisation. Thanks to our secretary, Kate Hodgson for keeping minutes and circulating the agenda and helping with the newsletter. We regret that she has to leave but we wish her well for the future. Thanks Carol Langdon, for keeping the finances and membership data in healthy order, Karl Miller for maintaining the website and our committee members, Donald Prentice, M A Qavi, Gordon Glass, Rosemary Addington, Luckshan Abeysuriya, for the smooth running of the organisation. The new committee members for 2008-09 were elected which can be viewed on the back page.

As ever, Action for UN Renewal remains a vibrant and important organisation and continues to have a vital role to play in campaigning for the reforms of the United Nations. Making it a credible and effective UN organisation for the maintenance of international peace and security, justice and the rule of law continues to be our ultimate aim. Let's continue to work towards that goal.

Book Review: The Palace of Crystals by Harry Davis

Review written by Frank Jackson

Harry Davis's Palace of Crystal is a truly democratic society, with all decision-making fully transparent. The phrase itself comes from Dostoevsky, but its proposed implementation is based largely on the ideas of Tom Paine and the other founders of the United States of America. Though today's US has deviated far from those early ideals, such a society, it is argued, would be far less likely to go to war than our present hierarchical and secretive system, where even in the most nominally democratic of societies, decisions are made behind closed doors by small numbers of people or even single Presidents or Prime Ministers.

Starting from the proposition – with which we fully concur – that the case for the abolition of war has been irrefutably made many times, Davis goes on to analyse in depth some of the reasons why it is so difficult (impossible, so far) to achieve in practice. Part 1 is largely historical, covering the changing nature of war and the rise of the concept of democracy, albeit still very imperfect in its implementation. Eight chapters are then devoted to the concept of leadership: the type of person who aspires to leadership, and the psychology of the people who desire “strong leaders”. He asks why so many psychopaths have achieved supreme positions, instancing Hitler, Stalin and Idi Amin among others. It is difficult to sum up a very closely argued case in a few sentences. But essentially the claim is that these are but extreme examples of common characteristics of “charismatic” leaders, and that it is precisely our desire for such leaders that produces this result. Certainly thought-provoking; there is much to be said for the view that those who most avidly seek power are the least fitted to exercise it.

Part 3 goes on to describe the Palace of Crystal, what would be required to achieve it, and how it would cope with problems such as terrorism. It is claimed that the specific measures proposed are quite modest, although some are more radical than others: Abolish the Royal prerogative; decisions not to be taken behind closed doors – the reasons for everything to be in the public domain; separation of powers between the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary to be realised in practice, not just in theory, with executive power reduced to the absolute minimum necessary; a Written Constitution; “devolved lawmaking” – the Swiss example is quoted; provision for the impeachment of a leader who had broken the law; the disestablishment of the Church of England. With regard to the last of these, it is only discussed briefly, almost like an afterthought, but includes the remarkable statement that “all religions are by their nature mild and moral”. This does not quite chime with the reference in the same section to the Crusades and the thousands of heretics burned at the stake, or the Old Testament God-approved massacres related in Numbers and quoted in Chapter 2.

As already noted, this is one of the most thought-provoking books to come our way recently. It has

significant weaknesses, which in fact it recognises to some extent, in that it does not deal with political and economic forces which influence leaders. Space does not permit a detailed critique of this aspect. We can only recommend everyone who wishes to understand why the abolition of war seems so impossible to read it and draw their own conclusions.

THE PALACE OF CRYSTAL -- A World Without War, by Harry Davis, Arena Books, 6 Southgate Green, Bury St Edmunds IP33 2BL, pbk £20.99
ISBN 13-978-0-9556055-0-5

Saving the planet means carbon cuts of 80 %

Rich countries must commit to cutting carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2050 and developing nations must agree that by 2020 they too will set their own targets, said leading economist Nicholas Stern.

He said the only way the world could defeat the climate crisis was by ensuring that global carbon emissions peaked within 15 years, were then halved from 1990 levels to 20 billion tonnes a year by 2050, and cut to 10 billion thereafter. "There is a real hurry for this. The developed world must lead by example," Stern told a meeting to publish his latest work on global warming, "Key Elements of a Global Deal on Climate Change."

The global carbon market had to be expanded and improved, there had to be massive investment in research and development in low carbon technologies, and rich nations had to bear the brunt and help the poorer world leapfrog into a low carbon era. Stern said the developing world, where emissions are booming as economies grow, should be given time to prepare to sign up to caps and cuts but that time should have a strict limit and by 2020 they too should be reducing emissions.

Stern, a former British Treasury economist whose seminal work on the economics of climate change galvanised the international agenda, said the emission target was based on the goal of halting the temperature rise to two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. That in turn meant achieving global average carbon emissions of just two tonnes per head -- 20 billion tonnes divided by the anticipated world population of nine billion people -- from the current average of seven tonnes per head, he said.

"Everything flows from the figures. That is the simplicity of the argument. If you buy into stabilisation at 500 parts per million (atmospheric carbon -- equivalent to two degrees rise) the rest is arithmetic," explained Stern. As emissions in the United States already stood at 20 tonnes per head, with those in Europe and Japan between 10 and 12 tonnes, that meant the bulk of the efforts had to come from the rich world.

But even China, whose economy is growing at 10 percent a year and which is building a coal-fired power station a week, was already emitting five tonnes of carbon a head and India was close to two tonnes and would soon exceed that. That meant that they too would have to slow, halt and reverse their emissions. **Written by Jeremy Lovell**

Thinking about important things

Report by Rosemary Addington

'Think in Kingston' is a Festival of Ideas, organised by Kingston Council, this is the third year. So far it has covered a wide range of issues such as philosophy, human rights, fair trade, and environment. As it is the 50th anniversary of CND it seemed to us at Kingston Peace Council/CND a good opportunity to invite Kate Hudson to speak on 'Now More Than Ever - 50 years of CND – what will the next 50 years bring?' The meeting was attended by about 40 people, admittedly a lot of them already are our members, but not all. Kate provided an excellent account of the organisation's history. She reminded us how weapons development had always been met by CND with protest, together with information and lobbying, and that membership peaks at times of heightened threat. At present it is growing steadily. She pointed out that CND itself, with its well-focused campaign for a nuclear-free world, had become a prototype for a range of campaigning groups which developed after World War 2. Greenham too was an inspiration not just for campaigners but also for women across the world.

And today? There are still 27,000 nuclear weapons in the possession of 9 countries. The UK has around 200 warheads, each 8 times as powerful as the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Last year in the run-up to the Trident debate in the House of Commons 72% of those questioned for a poll (Populus/More 4 Survey, February 2007) were

against the renewal of Trident. Over 180 countries *don't* have a nuclear arsenal. Are their citizens in constant danger and less safe than us? Even Henry Kissinger and George Schulz, previous US Secretaries of State, are now working to alert the world to the dangers of nuclear conflict. This may make satirists despair but it's still a good thing. Work is also being done on a UN Nuclear Weapons Convention to outlaw all nuclear weapons.

As for the future, Kate was hopeful that the tide is turning and we will manage to move towards a world in which nuclear weapons have no place. But this will not happen without our continuing hard work and support for CND.

We were pleased to have taken part in "Think in Kingston", and intend to do so again. So far we do not believe there has been a speaker on the United Nations, and we feel that this would be an excellent topic. Another idea is to hold the meeting in Kingston University and try to get students involved. The event takes place in March and April, so we have plenty of time to plan for the next year. You can find more information at www.kingston.gov.uk/arts.



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promoting these ideas leading to the three conventions. Post-war, the Nuremberg trials established new principles. Now top Nazis were to be tried. The deadlock was broken by Stalin, who loved show trials. So Nuremberg became the progenitor of the human rights triptych.

The US would not ratify the conventions and make them into a binding Treaty until Reagan visited a cemetery at Bitberg, Germany, where Nazis were buried, while Michael Moore held up a banner (saying what?). The reaction to that led to Reagan subsequently ratifying the Genocide Convention. Since the end of the Cold War some progress has been made. The failure of the UN in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda created pressure to do better. The Pinochet case represented a breakthrough. From having tea with Thatcher to house arrest and ultimately to indictment in Chile was significant progress, although he died before actually facing trial. This did not prevent George W Bush from incarcerating thousands in Guantanamo, and subjecting them to abuse despite the US Supreme Court ruling that the conventions were part of US law. He claimed that Guantanamo was outside the Geneva Convention.

9/11 changed the way we looked at civil liberties: physical rights such as life itself and freedom; psychological rights – privacy, etc; second generation rights relating to work, conditions of work and children. Darfur is ongoing, with China supporting the Sudan government, and only very low level people on trial. The question of sovereignty remains. The US threatens the veto whenever action against Israel is proposed, while China does the same for action against anyone. The UN besetting sins are internal: staff give up their rights, leading to nepotism, harassment and sex discrimination. It needs a proper management structure. The UN is more relevant than ever.

It would probably be judged by the Security Council, so prosecution of our leaders was unlikely. On freedom from fear, legitimate fear could become paranoia. Self-determination was tricky. The principle was accepted but it was dangerous for states.

A good Q&A session followed the talk. Geoffrey Robertson was thanked for his informative and wide-ranging talk by the chair, Vijay Mehta.

UN to draw up comprehensive plan to address world food crisis

The United Nations is aiming to have a comprehensive plan to tackle the global food crisis in place by the beginning of June, "around which the institutions and leaders around the world can coalesce," Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes said today.

On the role of biofuel production in the current crisis, Mr. Holmes said: "It is something that needs a new look in present circumstances without wanting to fall in any sense into knee-jerk reactions of saying all biofuels are bad or good. We need to look at it in a careful, sophisticated and differentiated way, between different regions of the world and between different products."

The Under-Secretary-General also said the crisis was not affecting every country in the same way. "For many countries and population groups it is inconvenient, a problem for their daily budget and their purses, but it is not a matter of life and death. In some places and for some groups, particularly those living on less than a dollar a day, that quickly could become a matter of life and death, or certainly of increased suffering and malnutrition." The UN's action plan is to be in place in time for a meeting of UN agencies in Rome at the beginning of June.

UN promotes peacebuilding in Kenya after election crisis

United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) have brought together 120 national leaders from around Kenya for a peacebuilding workshop following the violence and unrest that broke out after the country's recent election.

Kenyans from the sports, music, media and education professions took part in the training, as well as members of faith organizations. The aim of the workshop was to promote community dialogue in collaboration with the Government.

Volunteer leaders from the workshop will use their skills to carry out conflict resolution in their own communities, as well as to promote control of small arms and to provide humanitarian relief. Jeremiah Kemboi, a 32-year-old marathon runner, said that holding dialogues with his fellow athletes would contribute to peace and reconciliation.

Key dates in UN diary 2008

- 21 May **World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development**
- 22 May **International Day for Biological Diversity**
- 29 May **International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers**
- 4 June **International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression**
- 5 June **World Environment Day**
- 17 June **World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought**
- 20 June **World Refugee Day**
- 26 June **International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking**
- 7-9 July **G8 Summit**
- 11 July **World Population Day**
- 9 Aug **International Day of the World's Indigenous People**
- 12 Aug **International Youth Day**
- 8 Sept **International Literacy Day**
- 21 Sep **International Day of Peace**
- 1 Oct **International Day of Older Persons**
- 6 Oct **World Habitat Day**
- 16 Oct **World Food Day**
- 17 Oct **International Day for the Eradication of Poverty**
- 24 Oct **United Nations Day**
- 6 Nov **International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict**
- 16 Nov **International Day of Tolerance**
- 20 Nov **Universal Children's Day**
- 25 Nov **International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women**
- 29 Nov **International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People**
- 1 Dec **World AIDS Day**
- 2 Dec **International Day for the Abolition of Slavery**
- 3 Dec **International Day of Persons with Disabilities**
- 5 Dec **International Volunteer Day**
- 9 Dec **International Anti-Corruption Day**
- 10 Dec **Human Rights Day** (60th anniversary of UDHR)
- 18 Dec **International Migrants Day**
- 19 Dec **UN Day for South-South Cooperation**

Darfur: head of UN/AU peacekeeping force voices 'impatience' for positive change

The head of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, known as UNAMID, said that he is just as anxious as people on the ground are for progress. "It has almost been 3 months into the launch of the joint peacekeeping mission in Darfur: The people of Darfur have endured enough," UN/AU Joint Special Representative Rodolphe Adada said in Khartoum. "They are impatient to see positive change and I am just as impatient as they are."

At full deployment, UNAMID is expected to have some 26,000 troops and police officers, making it the world's largest peacekeeping operation, but to date, only 10,000 uniformed personnel have been deployed. According to the UN, as many as 300,000 people are now estimated to have died in Darfur since early 2003, when rebels began fighting Government forces and allied militiamen. Aside from the death toll, more than 2.7 million Darfurians have been displaced by the fighting, the vast majority still living within the arid region on Sudan's western flank. Around 260,000 refugees have had to flee to the east of neighbouring Chad.

An ambassadorial effort on the part of the Sri Lankan People

Article by V.A. Singam

Sri Lanka is a relatively little well known country off the southern coast of India. Now simply saying it could be stated as a case of Tamils vs. Sinhalese, but the actual reasons and conflict in the civil war run deeper in the country's history. Sri Lanka was a Portuguese, Dutch and British colony in the past. Sri Lanka was a key cog in the British Empire during this period for Britain as it battled to control India, the jewel of the empire's crown.

During these periods there was no sign of severe ethnic divisions, the Portuguese forcibly converting both Sinhalese and Tamils. The British much like the Dutch did not focus on the ethnic divide of the country instead favoured the educated, 'Westernised' class of both Sinhalese and Tamils. That said, there had been always a rivalry between the two groups from olden times, the Tamils traditionally being Hindu and Sinhalese Buddhist. The UNP (United National Party) was elected into power as well as 21 independent seats and 6 appointed seats. Then in 1949 this was expanded so that Indian Tamils could not vote. That said the Tamil National Congress (the main Tamil Party in the house) supported the notion as they too looked down upon the Indian Tamils like 2nd class citizens.

Following the years of WWII the country was in a remarkably good economic state. Then in 1952 a key figure of the UNP split and formed an entirely new, radical party called the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), meant to provide another option from the UNP. Significantly the SLFP gained enough votes to be leader of the opposition, taking over from the Lanka Samaja Party or LSSP, in the 1952 elections although they were defeated. In the run up to the elections, the now leader for the UNP Sir John Kotelawala (Dudley Senanayake had resigned before then) stated that he would legislate for the parity of Tamil and Sinhalese, effectively saying that the official languages of Sri Lanka would be both Sinhalese and Tamil. The UNP, quick to counter, but too late, made their policy to make SINHALA the official language, with no reference for Tamil. This was worrying as if both those parties, the main parties in Sri Lanka at that time now came to power; the usage and survival of Tamil would be under threat. However now there was no British seeking to keep the country in unity.

The reason for Sinhalese resentment of the Tamils is down to the common usage (to a certain degree) of language with the Sri Lankan Tamils and the Tamils of Southern India. As I have said before the British brought a large population of 'Indian Tamils' to Sri Lanka, but in fact a large portion of southern India spoke the same language as the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Increasingly worrying bills were being brought to the fore, the SLFP stated that they would, once in power bring the in the Sinhala only Bill. There were also other isolated attacks on Tamils in other parts of the country.

Religious tension did not abate and train carrying Tamils to a party convention in May 1958 was sabotaged resulting in several Tamil deaths; then a bomb mysteriously exploded in another part of the country in which some Sinhalese people were killed. A vote of no confidence in the government was successfully passed and parliament dissolved and elections scheduled. In the resulting 1960 elections the Tamil Federal party was in a position to determine the next ruling party.

The widow of the assassinated prime minister SWRD Bandaranaike was made leader of the SLFP who then won. Now importantly, the Tamil Federal party was thrown to the way-side, as the SLFP had an absolute majority. Under pressure from Sinhalese extremists and Mrs Bandaranaike proceeded to make Sinhala the official language on the 1st January 1961. Poor economic performances and amongst other things meant that in 1965 elections the UNP regained power once again under the leadership of Dudley Senanayake with the help of the Federal Party.

This meant the Federal party stopped supporting the government and yet another opportunity for reconciliation was lost. It seemed that the UNP and Dudley Senanayake had neither the power, nor the political bottle to fight the growing number of religious and nationalistic extremists in the country. Any policy of national reconciliation was ridiculed and defeated by the other parties.

The Federal Party had joined other Tamil groups to form the TULF (Tamil United Liberation Front) which became the leader of the opposition. The prime minister was now the leader of the Senanayake house, Dudley Senanayake having died in 1973. Then in 1983 a group of Tamil militants ambushed an army patrol killing 13 Sinhalese soldiers. This sparked off violent retaliation of Sinhalese against Tamils in their area, particularly in Colombo. Anywhere between 500 and 10,000 Tamils were killed in a spat of violence across the country that displaced 10,000 to 300,000 Tamils as refugees. In time, by 2001 the LTTE would establish its political and military prominence, and carry out numerous attacks on first Tamil then Sinhalese officials. Although the cease fire is still in effect people are dying daily in the country and the autocratic government is still in power, with no end in visible sight. The country's economy is shattered after the civil war, and there are thousands of Tamils and Sinhalese people displaced from the fighting.

The latest situation is that the Norwegian peace brokers have been sent home and the conflict is ongoing.

Peace Talks in the beautiful surroundings of St. Andrews University, Scotland

Report by Vijay Mehta

Our Action for UN Renewal member, Donald Prentice, picked Shanti and myself from Edinburgh airport, took us to lunch and drove us to St. Andrews University for the meeting. St. Andrews is a place where since 1410 students from United Kingdom and around the world have come to Scotland's first university for higher learning. The scene of St. Andrews bay and golf course was absolutely stunning. We stood there admiring the scenery.

We were then met by Haley and Pawel, from United Nations Youth and Student Association (UNYSA), who took us to the university campus for the meeting. The title of our talk was "*How effective is the UN in Peacekeeping and mediating Conflict?*" There were two speakers on the panel. The other panellist was Dr. Martin Barber (former director, UN Mine Action Service, New York), who spoke about his experience working in the United Nations and how the UN system deals with peacekeeping and mediating conflict.

In my contribution, I highlighted the UN's triumphs and failures, what went wrong in Rwanda and Kenya and what lessons we learnt. I explored the role of the UN in preventing conflict and post conflict development and reconstruction. How the UN, global institutions and the power politics of the 21st century can effectively deal with peacekeeping and mediating conflict. In conclusion, I elaborated some steps which students can take to promote non-violent solutions to wars like conflict resolution and peace education, including the reduction of military expenditure, which are some of the cheapest and effective ways to promote international peace and security. This was followed by Q&A session which was vibrant and challenging.

It was a delight to be in St Andrews' beautiful surroundings and among wonderful people who are going to be our future leaders. Many thanks for the hospitality of Donald Prentice, Pawel, Haley, Anne and the students, who made the talk a successful occasion.

Some of the positive feedback and the photograph was sent by Anne (UNYSA member) who said the following about the meeting: "*We had very good feedback for the event and on a personal note I would like to say that you have inspired myself and the committee of UNYSA St Andrews in thinking about our events and campaign next year. We are holding a workshop to discuss details and you can be sure that your list of "jobs" for us will be considered. So thank you very much for your inspiration!*"

Pawel (vice-president, UNYSA St Andrews) also expressed gratitude and said "*It was a great pleasure to meet you and learn from you of some of the challenges for UN, in general, and for our society at St Andrews, in particular. The very Panel was a great experience and I believe a success. We will try to follow your guidelines in the activities of our UNYSA!*"



Left to right: Pawel Kuznicki, Vijay Mehta, Haley Priebe, Dr. Martin Barber, and Anne Peters

Our long standing member and peace campaigner, Richard Crump

Dear Carol,

I am not so able to get about these days so have to ration effort but hope to be at the AGM and talk on February 23rd.

Jim was very tolerant of my critical views about the UN and permitted me to display slogans to that effect. The worst abuse of the UN as at present constituted is the dominance of the aggressive superpower, the USA, of the organisation and its overriding hold over the Security Council. It is not Renewal but complete Reform of the UN which is required and the HQ should not be in New York. As witness over the invasion of Iraq 2003, the USA had its way, and ignored the UN.

Shame on Britain to ally itself to the super bully. If any other nation acted thus, it would at least be censured or expelled "to rid the world of the scourge of war" sounds good, but from its inception, the 5 permanent members all nuclear armed, have a greater or lesser degree, exported wars to many countries away from themselves, by manufacturing and exporting weaponry. Hypocritical eh?

Cheque for renewal and donation included.

Best wishes. In Peace. Richard Crump.

Jess from Kings College takes the reins of secretary at Action for UN Renewal

This is what our new secretary has to say:

Dear members of Action for UN renewal. I am a student at King's college, London, where I'm presently following an MA degree in Human Values and Contemporary Global Ethics. I was born in Belgium, but I spent most of my childhood in England (Bournemouth) and then France. Since I moved to London in September 2007, I have attended several public meetings organised by UNA-UK, the World Disarmament Campaign and Action for UN renewal.

I was immediately very interested by these organisations, especially by ACT-UN, which seems to embody my belief that the UN is a crucial agent for justice in the modern world and as well as my conviction that it is currently in great need of reforms to be more effective and strong. This is why I am very happy to be standing up for the secretary position. Being a student and therefore having access to youth circles and student organisations, I will do my best to make Action for UN renewal more attractive to the youth, who can effectively bring a breath of fresh air to the organisation with new ideas for action. Finally, I thank the ACTUN team, whose values I share, for giving me this opportunity, and I look forward to meeting you all very soon.

Jess Blijkers



Left to right: Jess Blijkers, Vijay Mehta, and Ines Vierra Ferraz

Why Join Action for UN Renewal?

Because

- We work to reform the United Nations and work with the UK government to adhere to the UN Charter and international law.
- We work for UN institutional reforms, especially the reforms of the Security Council and General Assembly
- We highlight emerging threats like the climate change crisis and how can we save the planet from it
- We work for the protection and promotion of human rights
- We work for the maintenance of international peace and security, reaffirming the UN Charter's preamble of "saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war."
- We work for poverty reduction, development and the completion of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)

We hold regular public meetings to highlight these issues. Our organisation has 2 prominent events every year. One is the Lobby of Parliament, held jointly with UNA-UK. The other is the annual Erskine Childers lecture, highlighting important threats and challenges.

Why not join our campaign and make a difference. We need supporters to campaign for making an effective and credible United Nations.

This is our new membership leaflet – let us know what you think. Any comments, suggestions most welcome.

Action for United Nations Renewal

Patrons: Tony Benn, Bruce Kent, Caroline Lucas MEP.

Chair: Vijay Mehta
Vice-chairs: Ailsa Moore, Prue Wendt.
Secretary: Jess Blijkers
Membership & Treasurer: Carol Langdon
Website organiser: Karl Miller

Committee members:
Rosemary Addington
Gordon Glass
Donald Prentice
Maureen O'Mear
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