



# Uniting for Peace

Action for UN Renewal and World Disarmament Campaign



## Chair's Report 2009 - 2010

Report for AGM and Spring Conference, 27th March 2010

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The past year has been busy with conferences and meetings, attended by myself and some of our officers and members. Looking back on the year, one of the finest achievements of 2009 is the historic decision to merge two old-established, vibrant, peace movements (Action for UN Renewal and World Disarmament Campaign). The committees and members of both the organisations should be commended for working hard towards making the merger a reality.

Now we have strengthened into one peace movement under the name **Uniting for Peace**. This merger will pave the way for us to work in an effective way for realising the goal of a peace and non violent world.

Since our last AGM, I have attended and given talks in over 20 meetings, seminars and conferences across the world. I'm just going to talk about some of the highlights of the year.

### **2009**

Our last World Disarmament Campaign AGM was held on **21<sup>st</sup> March 2009**. It was a success and a full report of it can be found in the World Disarm journal (July 2009). One of the historic decisions taken at the last AGM was the decision, to unite with Action for UN Renewal under the name of Uniting for Peace. The Spring Conference on the same day, "**A new Cold War in Europe,**" included contributions from Russian journalist, Pavel Andreev. Other contributors were Lord Archer, Brian Cooper, Frank Jackson and Vijay Mehta.

On **23<sup>rd</sup> March**, I gave a talk on "**Time Running Out: Transformation of the International Institutions in the 21st Century,**" at the Hellenic Centre, Marylebone, London (6-8pm). The speakers at the meeting were Lord David Owen, Vijay Mehta, Rita Payne, Jesse Griffiths and Dr Indrajit Coomaraswamy.

On **28<sup>th</sup> March** Action for UN Renewal held their annual AGM at Friends House, London. One of the notable things was the decision to merge with World Disarmament Campaign under the new name Uniting for Peace. The title of the meeting was "**Unity in Diversity: Celebrating the United Nations International Year of Reconciliation, 2009.**" The speakers at the meeting were Francois du Bois, Associate Professor and Reader, University of Nottingham, who discussed the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission; Professor Klaus W Larres, University of Ulster, there to discuss the Northern Ireland Peace Process and Hilda Rapp who talked about interfaith dialogue.

On **31<sup>st</sup> March**, I gave a talk at Cheltenham UNA on "**Building Better Human Rights in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**"

On **5-7<sup>th</sup> June**, UNA-UK held its annual conference, in Edinburgh, Scotland. I represented Action for UN Renewal and World Disarmament Campaign. The themes were **“Nuclear Disarmament and Climate Change”**. The keynote speaker was Sir John Holmes, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator and contributions from Lord Hannay and Sam Daws.

On **July 20<sup>th</sup>**, Action for UN Renewal and World Disarmament Campaign held a joint major conference on Disarmament at the House of Lords, under the title **“Beyond Obama – Priorities towards Nuclear Abolition”**. Some of the notable speakers were Lord Peter Archer, Lord Hannay of Chiswick, Vijay Mehta, Brian Cooper, Frank Jackson, Rebecca Johnson, Colin Archer and Frank Barnaby. An excellent report by Frank Jackson is published in the December issue of World Disarm available at the literature table. A booklet of the conference is in progress and hope to be published before the Nuclear non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference in May to be held at UN Building in New York.

Later that month, on **25<sup>th</sup> July 2009** I attended a meeting on **“The Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Britain and Ireland (TRCBI)”** in Belfast. During that session, we heard reports from people who were on hunger strike and people who were imprisoned during the continuing violence in Northern Ireland giving testimony to us. My speech, on that occasion, was reported in the Irish Times the next day. Copies of the speech are available on the literature table.

In **August 2009**, I gave a talk on **“The Relevance of the UN in Today’s World.”** The two day conference was hosted by UNA South Counties Region. It was held at Chichester University, Bishop Otter Campus. Some of the speakers included Sir Richard Jolly, David Wardrop, Peter Challeen, Catherine Ronderas and Selina Brewer.

**Tuesday 18th August 2009** ACT UN and WDC had a meeting on **“Inquiry on the Iraq War: Who is Accountable?”** at Friends House. The speakers were UN and Truth on Iraq War - Vijay Mehta, Legality and Conduct of Iraq War - Nick Grief, Role of Media in Iraq War - Robert Fox and Why the UK went to war in Iraq in 2003 - General Sir Hugh Beach and Nicholas Jones. It was chaired by Rita Payne. There was a strong media interest at the meeting. The members of Sir John Chilcott inquiry on Iraq war showed keen interest in our meeting and requested for the transcripts of the proceedings of the meeting. The report was sent to Sir Martin Gilbert, member of the Iraq war inquiry.

**Wednesday 28th of October 2009**, I gave a talk to a meeting on **“Iran on the footsteps of Israel: What is next –WMD or Non proliferation”** at House of Lords. The speakers were Mohammad Sahebi First Secretary Iran Embassy, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Baqer Moin BBC Journalist, Rita Payne Chair CJA

**Wednesday 18th of November, 2009,**

I gave a talk on **“Celebrating and learning from Diwali - Festival of Lights”** at House of Lords. The interfaith week programme was hosted by Universal Peace Federation and chaired by Lord Bhikhu Parekh. The other speakers were from Buddhist, Muslim and Jewish faiths.

On **24th November 2009**, Action for UN renewal and World Disarmament Campaign had a major conference on **“Escalating War in Afghanistan – Can Peace Return to the Troubled Region?”** at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London hosted by ACT UN and WDC. The other speakers included, Bruce Kent, Dawood Azami, Peter, Gilchrist and Michael Griffin and Vijay Mehta. There was a strong media presence including BBC, SKY and Press TV. It was a large turnout which included soldiers and their families who wanted to know why we are engaging a war with Afghanistan.

On **11 – 13 December 2009** I gave a talk at a conference in Bergen aan Zee, Netherlands on **“Innovative Approaches to world Peace in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century - Why Peace Keeping is not effective - the Alternatives**

**Conference**” which was hosted by Universal Peace Federation. It was a well attended conference with prominent speakers and delegates from many countries.

## **2010**

In 2010, we have hosted, and I have spoken and attended several meetings, prominent, among them are: On **Tuesday 19 January 2010**, I gave a talk on **“The UN, Human Rights and Liberty Achievements, Failures and Prospects for the future”** at Putney Branch, UNA Hurlingham Yacht Club, Putney, SW15, 2NP. Other speakers include Sir Brian Barder (former ambassador) and Jeremy Corbyn MP. The meeting was chaired by Rob Storey.

In **January 2010**, I wrote an article for the publication, **Reforms in Global Governance and Democracy: for a Just, Peaceful and sustainable World**. The article was titled **'Reforms in Governance'** for Indian Institute of Public Administration/India.

On **Sunday 24th January 2010**, I gave a talk on **“Exploring Different Aspects of Peace and Nonviolence at the Personal and Universal Level”** hosted by Jain Vishva Bharati at SAYER CENTRE, Oxgate Lane, London NW2 7JN. The meeting explored ways in which peace can be achieved through nonviolence.

On **5th to 7th February 2010**, I attended a conference on **“The Third International Nonviolence Leadership Training Camp”** which was held at Anuvibha's Children's Peace Palace, Rajsamand (Rajasthan) Near Udaipur (INDIA). I gave a talk at the conference on **“Universal Peace in an Unstable World”**. There were delegates from Europe, America and different parts of India.

On **4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2010** I attended World Future Council meeting on **“Demilitarisation and Disarmament – A World of Peace”** It was attended by prominent delegates from many countries. Notable among them were Judge Christopher Weeramantry, David Krieger, Jakob von Uexkull (Founder of World Future Council). They have plans for publishing a booklet for the NPT conference in New York and proposals for starting a campaign for Disarmament for Development.

On **Tuesday, 9th March 2010** I gave a talk at a meeting on **“International Women’s Day”** and the title of the meeting was **“Crisis for Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo – How the UN and international community can help?”** It was held at Putney Methodist Church, Putney SW15. Other speakers were Martha Jean Baker (WILPF) and Nounou Bootoo (WILPF/IANSA). It was chaired by Rob Storey.

## **Future Programme for 2010**

With the merger of two organizations into **“Uniting for Peace”** has an ambitious programme for 2010, some of the highlights are below. Please put these dates in your diary:

On **Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> of April 2010**, we are hosting an event on **“Defending Rights of the Child and Building a Safer Future for Children”** at Amnesty International UK | The Human Rights Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA from 6:00pm – 9:00pm. The notable speakers are: Vijay Mehta, Kema Rajandran, Marianne Malky, Thana Narashiman, Herb Mallard, Hamid Kamali-Shervadani, Kathy Hill, Camila Batmanghelidjh, John Paul Flintoff and Dr Raymond Mills-Johnson. Some speakers are travelling from America to give a contribution and representative from UNICEF will be attending the conference.

**In May**, I intend to go to NPT review conference in New York and hope to participate in the conference and the peace march.

**In May**, I have been invited to participate in the conference hosted by “Nonviolence Peace Force” to be held at Lyon, France. Tim Wallis, director of Nonviolence Peace Force and Rachel Julian, also from Nonviolence Peace Force are here today and we will hear from them soon, about their forthcoming plans about 2010.

On **Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2010**, we are hosting our Annual Erskine Childers Lecture 2010 on the topic on **“Inequality and Millennium Development Goals”** at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ on 7:00pm – 9:00pm. The Keynote speaker will be Sir Richard Jolly, Former UN Under Secretary General for UNICEF.

In **autumn**, Uniting for Peace will be hosting their Annual Conference on the theme of **“The Peace Movement in the Light of the General Election Result”**. Prominent academics, politicians and activists are being invited to give talks on the conference. Watch for the date which will be announced soon.

In **autumn 2010**, a two-day weekend conference on **“Global Peace Leadership Summit”** is to be held in London on **2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of October**. It is being hosted by VM Centre for Peace and supported by Action for UN Renewal and World Disarmament Campaign. The summit will explore nonviolent solutions to violence, wars, terrorism, and nuclear proliferation among other themes. Prominent international speakers and delegates from many continents will be attending the conference.

As you can see, it has been another eventful year with many issues, including violations of peace, international security, human rights, and international law taking centre stage. With so many issues including the financial crisis, troubles in Darfur, Congo, the escalating wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the work of our organisation continues and remains ever so important.

The new organization will inform, educate and generate public debate to explore, implementation mechanisms and solutions for fixing the nuts and bolts of the international system to make the world a more humane place for us all.

I would like to thank the officers and the member of executive committee of Action for UN Renewal and World Disarmament and all the volunteers who have worked very hard during the last year to make our events a success. I would also like to thank our members and supporters who have responded generously to our appeal for donations, so thank you for your support and keeping our engine running.

The merger of “Action for UN Renewal” and “World Disarmament Campaign” into “Uniting for Peace” provides a momentous opportunity for putting our energies together to work for international peace and security and reforms of the United Nations.

I hope that all of you will join us in our campaign for a better world.

Thank you for listening,

**Vijay Mehta**

Chair – Action for UN Renewal

Co-Chair – World Disarmament Campaign