



ACTION FOR UN RENEWAL

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

Spring
2009

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'Who rules the world? Global challenges and the role of the UN in peacekeeping, human rights and international law'

Speech by Lord Hannay of Chiswick, Chair of the UNA UK 9 September 2008



Lord Hannay, Rita Payne

It is a great privilege to be invited to give Action for UN Renewal's Erskine Childers Memorial Lecture. I was present in Luxembourg when Erskine Childers, who had just taken over as Secretary-General of the World Federation of UN Associations (WFUNA), was struck down; and his life ended in such an untimely way.

The question you have asked me to address – Who rules the world? world is no longer ruled, as it was during the Cold War, by the duopoly of the United States and the Soviet Union, each backed by massive alliances – and underpinned by the appalling military doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction. The UN is now required to keep the peace and to run multi-faceted peace operations worldwide to remedy the evils of state failure – more than 100,000 peacekeepers, both military and civilian, deployed; who would have dreamed of that not so long ago? Perhaps most unexpectedly of all, the international community has collectively challenged the culture of impunity for gross breaches of international humanitarian law and the right of every state to treat its own citizens as it wished. The international tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and now the International Criminal Court are evidence of

that; as was the unanimous decision in September 2005 by the UN Summit to accept

World Shortages and Global Security

Speakers: Lord Desai, Duncan Green (Oxfam), Rita Payne (Chair of the Commonwealth Journalists Association) and Vijay Mehta (Chair, Action for UN Renewal).

WDC annual conference Wesley Chapel, London 8th of November 2008

Lord Desai outlined the history of the present economic world order, from Bretton Woods and the setting up of the World Bank and the IMF, but noted that it now needed to be reconstructed in the light of today's political and economic realities. The 1945 settlement was for the benefit of the First World, and especially the US; a new settlement must include China, India and other centres. The West's boom of the past 15 years has been based on importing low-priced goods from China and low-priced services from India. "The East under-spends and over-saves, the West over-spends and under-saves." Global economic governance since 1945 has been one-sided; "now there is a chance to re-fashion the world in a new way – we need a world financial system to uplift the poor and the IMF should become a proper world central bank." The rich countries have been financially irresponsible, and used the IMF to force liberalisation on many Third World countries, causing them great harm. A total reconstruction of the world economic system is unlikely, but it can be improved.



Vijay Mehta, Lord Desai, Lord Archer, Brian Cooper

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Chair's Report Vijay Mehta

Dear Friends,

Welcome to a New Year of productive campaigning for a better world.

Action for UN Renewal has been around for 15 years. It is a network of organisations and individuals campaigning for a more effective United Nations in areas of:

- Peace and international security
- Human Rights
- Development and poverty reduction
- Climate change and the environment
- Upholding the UN Charter and international law
- Reforms of the UN

We, in Action for UN Renewal, highlight the UN's successes and at the same time work for its need for urgent Security Council and General Assembly Reforms. We organise events, participate in debates, publish newsletters, briefings and books.

What we did in 2008

In 2008, some of the events which I would like to highlight are our AGM, Oxford meetings, the annual Erskine Childers's lecture, the Lobby of Parliament and meetings in the House of Lords, Manchester and Scotland. In February 2008, we had our AGM and the highlight was a lecture by the eminent lawyer, Geoffrey Robertson QC on '**Human Rights 1948-2008 - Promotion And Protection**' - a fitting topic as we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In March and April, I represented our organisation at the UNA-UK conference in Exeter, a trip to Athens, Greece, speaking at the Global Governance Conference followed by a talk at the World Disarmament Campaign, Spring Conference. I was also invited to speak at Oxford University on '**The role of Global Institutions in Tackling Poverty.**'

At the end of April, we had a successful meeting with Tony Benn and the Lord Mayor of Oxford in Oxford Town Hall. The title was '**5 years of war in Iraq: What role can the United Nations play in building peace and security?**' It was nice to see lots of young people from the university in the audience.

The 2008 EC lecture, in September, was given to a large audience by Lord Hannay of Chiswick, the former UK ambassador to the United Nations. The title of his talk was '**Who rules the world? Global challenges and the role of the UN in peacekeeping, human rights and international law.**'

In October, we had the Lobby of Parliament and CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) annual conference. The Lobby of Parliament gives our members an opportunity to question their MPs about the urgent global issues of the day. The annual CND conference is a reminder that nuclear proliferation remains on the increase and urgent preparations are needed for the next NPT Review Conference to be successful in 2010. The keynote speaker to conference was Judith Le Blanc, from the United for Peace and Justice, USA.

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This was followed by a thought-provoking meeting in the House of Lords on **'Awakening the Global Conscience.'** The speakers were Lord Peter Archer of Sandwell, Sir Hugh Beach and Rita Payne, chair of Commonwealth Journalist Association.

In November, we had joint meetings with the World Disarmament Campaign on **'World Shortages and Global Security.'** Among the speakers were Lord Desai, Duncan Green of Oxfam, Frank Barnaby, a nuclear scientist, and myself. In between, I had television interviews with Friction TV and Press TV on nuclear disarmament, poverty reduction and terrorism, including the topic of **'Guantanamo Bay – end of an era'.**

In November, we had a meeting in Manchester on **'New World Order and the United Nations.'** The speakers were Rae Street, Frank Jackson and myself. In December, I was invited to visit Scotland where I gave talks in Edinburgh and St Andrews University on **'Reforming the UN for the 21st Century,' 'Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights'** and **'Ending Wars and Achieving Peace – A Dream or a Reality.'** The highlight of the tour was a event in which I had the honour to address children from three primary schools on **'The Rights of the Child, climate change and peace issues'.**

Plans for 2009

We at Action for UN Renewal have exciting plans for the forthcoming year. We are hosting a number of events, prominent, among them are:

- 17th February, annual Erskine Childer's lecture on **'Saving Succeeding generations from the scourge of war'** by Nobel Peace Laureate, Mairead Corrigan Maguire.
Venue: Friends House, London
- 28th February, UNA Lymington branch, **'Building better human rights'** by myself
- 7th March, Winchester Southern Region CND, **'Working for a world free of Nuclear Weapons – what can the United Nations and Civil Society do?'** by myself
- 9th March, Lancaster University, **'Responsibility to Protect – failing states from genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.'** Speaker: Luckshan Abeyesuriya, former director of Amnesty International and myself
- 21st March, joint meeting with World Disarmament Campaign, Spring conference, **'A New Cold War in Europe?'**
Venue: Wesley Chapel, London
- 28th March, Action for UN Renewal AGM
Venue: Friends House, London
- 3-5th April, attending the Amnesty International conference in Swansea, Wales. We will have a fringe meeting and a stall at the conference.
- 5-7th June, UNA annual conference. We will have a fringe meeting and a stall at the conference.
Venue: Edinburgh, Scotland

Other exciting plans include the launch of a climate change website and publishing a booklet for mitigating and containing the climate change crisis. We will be holding the Lobby of Parliament and other exciting events which are in the planning stage, which also include celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Commonwealth.

We work for reforms of the UN – peace and international security, management reforms, eliminating human rights abuses, much needed funding for the UN, gender issues including the empowerment of women, system wide coherence – that are urgently needed to make the UN an effective, transparent and democratic institution.

The United Nations is the most universal world body. The priority in 2009 would be for us at Action for UN Renewal to make the United Nations and its agencies to live up to their original mandate, which is to bring all nations of the world together to work for peace and development, based on the principles of justice, human dignity and the well-being of all people.

We at Action for UN Renewal 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.

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We have an excellent committee and volunteers in our organisation, to whom I owe gratitude for their dedication to make the Action for UN Renewal a vibrant and growing organisation.

Prue Wendt	vice-chair
Ailsa Moore	vice-chair
Carol Langdon	treasurer
Talyn Rahman	campaigns officer
Donald Prentice	representative for Scotland
Ananda Reeves	current secretary
Jess Blijkers	former secretary (6 months of 2008)
Karl Miller	website designer
Rosemary Addington	newsletter committee
Abdul Muhib	research
Mohammed Miah	website maintenance

We hope that you and your friends can join us in our campaign for a better world. We are looking forward to working with you in 2009!



Vijay Mehta
Chair
Action for UN Renewal

From page 1 – world shortages

In discussion, he said NGOs should seek a consensus for actions for a better world financial system. There was a need for a less aggressive NATO, while the Muslim “no interest” financial policy could have benefits. Capitalism renews itself through periodic crises.

Duncan Green painted a graphic picture of the “Age of Scarcity” we are entering. Food prices rose significantly from 2006 to August 2008, reversing the trend of the previous 20 years. Although they were now down a little, they were still high, hitting the poor hardest. Increased oil prices, more meat being consumed as some people – especially in China - become richer, and biofuels made from sugar, maize and oil palm competing with food crops for land use were the main causes. Maize in particular competes directly with food, and in fact uses more oil than it produces. One 4X4 tank of biofuel from maize uses the equivalent of food for a family for a year.

Growing water scarcity was another problem. Rivers were drying up and unequal access exacerbated the situation; in India alone 400 million have no clean water; half the world’s population has no sanitation. Tensions and conflict, not surprisingly, were the outcome.

The need for drastic action on climate change was emphasised. The science of the carbon cycle and the energy cycle was solid. To keep the rise in the average temperature of the earth below the recognised danger level of 2°C, CO₂ emissions per person should be 1 ton per year, while currently the average American is responsible for 20 tons and even the Chinese clock up 3 tons. The impact on the poor is to increase inequality. Of the world’s population 850 million are undernourished, while a similar number are overweight. Meanwhile, Tesco’s profits are up by 10%.

For the future there were three options: Make the political decisions needed to do what is known to be necessary, to give the 9 billion projected population a decent life; use rationing by price to control climate change which would allow some to have reasonable standards, with carbon footprint of about 2 tons, while others would have none; or drift until catastrophe strikes!

The action needed includes a new Bretton Woods international settlement, to provide finance for Third World projects, investment in agriculture, especially small farms, and active state involvement in development on the South Korean model. On the question of food miles, although controversial, it could be beneficial for the Third World to grow food for the First World. Although population growth was a factor, it was

not a major issue. It was projected to be 9 billion by 2050 and then decline, with the education of women a crucial determinant. Responding to comments from the floor about the basic nature of capitalism leading to the present problems, Duncan Green argued that there were "different capitalisms", instancing Scandinavian societies as examples.

Hotfoot from attending the UN World Urban Forum in China, **Rita Payne** said she was struck by the scale of urban growth, the impact of global shortages and the threat of possible civil unrest and even military conflict arising from the growing demand for housing and basic resources.

The world's urban population is expected to grow from 3.2 to 6.4 billion by 2050, 80% in Asia and Africa, and much composed of poor people. Already slum-dwellers make up more than two-fifths of the urban population of developing countries. China and India are seeing an ever-widening gulf between rich and poor. Riots in China have been brutally suppressed as the poor are evicted to make room for development. But China has also financed infrastructure services and other costs, allowing local governments to provide roads, utilities and housing, thus reducing slum growth to a minimum.

Beyond housing, the biggest concern is the shortage of oil and other energy resources, potentially leading to conflicts as countries compete for alternative sources. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, power shortages have destroyed their export industries; water and agricultural problems threaten their food supplies. On top of this, Pakistan has nuclear weapons and its strategic location is vital to the course of the insurgency in Afghanistan.

China and India are also beginning to suffer energy shortages, India's being more serious than China's. Although not yet as bad as Pakistan, blackouts and liquid fuel shortages are reported almost every day somewhere. As the crisis deepens India and China are in competition for new sources in Africa and Burma. But China's trade with Africa far surpasses India's. At present there are few open signs of tension between the two countries, but competition might become more combative as they get more desperate for oil and gas. Many regard Burma's rich energy resources, which China and India crave, as the main reason for their reluctance to be tougher on the Burmese military regime over its abuses of political and human rights.

Water is another major issue. A report for the Asian Development Bank warned of an unprecedented crisis in water quality management. It recommended major changes in water governance practices in most Asian countries, urging officials to study Singapore, which has harnessed technologies in recycling water and desalination to provide continuous, high quality drinking water to its population. Cambodia's Phnom Penh Water Authority also provides a continuous drinking water supply. Asian commentator Andy Mukherjee said the commodity that poses the biggest threat to long-term prosperity in Asia isn't oil, it's water.

In the last contribution **Vijay Mehta** reiterated many of the points made by the previous speakers, and emphasised their seriousness. With nearly one billion people going hungry, he contrasted the delay in responding to the food crisis – five months after \$22bn was pledged, less than \$2.2bn has been delivered – with the \$700bn given to the financial markets. On water – the "new oil" and the most precious commodity we take for granted – he listed some ways to tackle the problems: conserving catchments and wetlands; balancing conservation and consumption; changing attitudes to water; repairing ageing infrastructure; increase charges to farmers for water use; reducing water contamination; harvesting water and conserving rain water; adapting to more vegetarian diet; more study of water systems.

The climate change that is already happening will have economic, social and political consequences that threaten civilisation. The day we pass from a stable to an unstable climate will go unnoticed. Indeed we may already have passed the point of no return. Food scarcity and water shortage already fuel conflict both between and within states. Climate change will intensify these conflicts. Climate change is a security issue, but not a matter of narrow national security. It is about our collective security in a fragile and increasingly interdependent world. Achieving a stable climate is a problem we can still solve with knowledge, technology, capital and, above all, by mobilising political will in an unprecedented way.

In conclusion, he argued that to tackle the global risks of climate change, nuclear proliferation, extreme poverty, international security and terrorism, we need a unified global approach, cooperation among leaders and citizens to make a better life for all.

To achieve global security and peace, the international community needs to link development, environment and disarmament together, building partnerships at national and global level.

Report by Frank Jackson

From page 1 – Lord Hannay Speech

the ‘responsibility to protect’ those whose governments are unwilling or unable to.

Clearly peace operations are going to remain at the heart of the UN’s daily life and activity. First, the UN is still far from achieving its potential in the prevention of state failure and in stopping disputes slipping over the edge into hostilities. Partly this results from the unwillingness of member states to turn, either individually or severally, to the UN for help when matters are showing signs of getting out of control. Secondly, the UN is no closer to responding to the challenge of rapid and effective deployment when a peace operation is authorised. What is needed is a system that assures any country or group of countries that provide forces for rapid deployment that it will not be left in the lurch with no longer-term troop deployment coming in to take over from the rapid deployers. The current case of the lack of helicopters for the UN-African Union hybrid force in Darfur is a particularly shocking one. It really is scandalous that the Security Council should authorise an operation like that in Darfur which everyone knows cannot be carried out without a significant contingent of helicopters without having first assured itself that the necessary equipment was available at the UN’s disposal. Then, thirdly, the UN needs to develop much more sophisticated systems for mounting joint peace operations with those regional organisations that have a capacity and the will to do so themselves. Fourthly, the UN cannot and should not allow the issue of human rights abuses by its own peacekeepers and officials to rest in the complex limbo that currently exists. The problems are all too familiar. The UN itself does not exercise jurisdiction over these peacekeepers, nor could it without a major leap forward in international practice which is not likely to happen any time soon. The host country’s legal framework is usually in no state to handle such complex matters. And the troop-contributing countries are all too prone to hushing such discreditable episodes up. Before that the international community needs to be equipped with a whole toolbox of diplomatic

and economic measures which will make any further action unnecessary.

The state of human rights under the UN system is not something which anyone who cares about these matters can currently regard with any degree of satisfaction. The new Human Rights Council, established with such difficulty as one of the main outcomes of Kofi Annan’s reform campaign, is arousing considerable concerns in its initial, so far fairly brief, period of operation. The first priority is to make a reality of the review of every single UN member’s human rights record which is now under way. The sooner the new US administration is elected to the Human Rights Council the better. Beyond that lies the scope for reviewing the Council’s machinery after an initial period of operation. Take the case of the Sheba’a farms, the one remaining territorial dispute on Israel’s northern border with Lebanon.

Meanwhile, as I said earlier, international criminal law is progressing by leaps and bounds. That event is surely part of the answer to those who criticise the action of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in proposing the indictment of the president of Sudan over the appalling crimes committed in Darfur. It is worth recalling the old adage that hard cases make bad law. One other major, rules-based set of international laws, those governing trade through the World Trade Organisation, is also passing through a difficult patch, with the renewed deadlock last month in the negotiations on the Doha Round.

I have already spoken too long; but perhaps the most striking thing is that I have not even touched upon some of the most demanding challenges and tasks facing the UN – the post-Kyoto negotiations on the environment, the work of the World Health Organisation and many others in checking and reversing the spread of communicable diseases such as AIDS, malaria and TB, and the enlargement of the Security Council. This should be a constant reminder to us of how central the UN’s role has now become in an increasingly interdependent world, of how crucial it is, too, that the UN should become more effective at carrying out the tasks its members pile upon it. And it should remind us too of how necessary it is for organisations such as Action for UN Renewal to continue their work, pushing for the continuous, incremental adaptation of the UN to meet new challenges, even if some of the more radical reforms, which some would wish to see, are likely to remain beyond our grasp.

Visit to Scotland by Vijay Mehta

December 2008

UN Reforms, Declaration of Human Rights, and Ending Wars - Achieving Peace

Report prepared by Talyn Rahman

Day One It was nice to be in Scotland, to give talks on peace, human rights, climate change and reforms of the UN. It was a packed agenda over two and a half days. The first day was a meeting at the prestigious Royal Overseas Club. The topic was **"Reforming the UN for the 21st century"**. The meeting was chaired by Donald Prentice, a committee member of UNA Edinburgh and ably assisted by Liz Simms. It was a good session with a heated question and answer round, which is always the best part of the day for me. One of the attendees, Geoffrey Carnall, gave his reactions and response to the lecture which can be found below. At the end of the meeting, Donald Prentice took us to dine at the Royal Overseas Club.

Day two We travelled to St. Andrews University in Edinburgh, a house of learning for the last fourteen hundred years. We looked around the university and its remarkable architecture, where we also met some students. It was a delight to see St. Andrews bay and golf course, which was simply stunning. In the evening around 5pm, I gave my first lecture on **"Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights"**. It was chaired by professor Andy Williams. There was a huge turn out, with mainly students of St. Andrews from many colleges. The event was hosted by UNYSA St. Andrews and the whole event was arranged by Haley and Anna, whom I'd like to say a great thank you to. The lecture was rounded up by an interesting Q&A session. Majority of young women in the audience were interested in gender issues, empowerment of women, and how to support their causes. Later on in the

Left to right Anne, Hailey, Caita

evening, the final lecture of the day was on **"Ending Wars and Achieving Peace"**, which was also organised by St. Andrews UNYSA. People were very enthusiastic to know the root causes of war and how they could be engaging themselves in bringing peace to our world. There was a long discussion on the Northern Ireland peace process, which we all agreed should become a template for solving other conflicts around the world. My wife Shanti and I were later treated to dinner at a restaurant.

The next morning before we left, it was an absolute honour to talk to children of three primary schools, who I believe are our future leaders. This arrangement was organised by Caita. I shared with them a piece I created for a school in Boston (Massachusetts), which details and



questions what world peace is and how

Donald Prentice, Vijay and Shanti Mehta, Liz Simms and members of Edinburgh UNA

children can help create world peace. I also shared with them the conventions of the rights of children, which they should read and claim for themselves. My how to guide on "Help Build better Universal Human Rights" was verbally distributed to encourage debates in school and open up young minds to these issues from an early stage, to protect their rights and freedom.

It was s a great opportunity to network with peace campaigners, especially with aspiring people who share the same values as I do.

I would like to say a personal thanks to Donald Prentice, his wife and daughter Ruth, who did a fantastic job looking after me and my wife during my trip in Scotland.

Note of thanks and comments



We take comments and responses from our members and those interest in our work very seriously, and would like to give more people the opportunity to speak and comment on the work we do. Please do email us if you would like your comments posted on the website.

My son, who now lives in France, is over to see my wife and me just now. He is interested in politics, particularly where environmental issues are concerned, and I asked him. He hadn't, although when I spelt out 'Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe' he said that now he came to think of it he had seen



Vijay and Shanti Mehta with students of primary schools and parents

From Geoffrey Carnall [Member of UNA-Edinburgh]

Dear Vijay,

Your talk earlier in the week was a model of its kind, and I was glad to have heard you speak. But I was disappointed that so much of the discussion was taken up with what seems to me the rather barren exercise of trying to get Dubya [President Bush] prosecuted - though I agree that he richly deserves prosecution, alongside Tony Blair. But it seems to me that developing techniques of conflict prevention and peacekeeping are central to efforts to fulfil the mission of the UN, and I would have liked to get your response to my comment about the automatic assumption that military methods are the effective ones, whereas the Kosovo affair indicates the exact opposite. What bugs me is that the OSCE intervention has been completely forgotten: there is just this one article by the Canadian general Michel Maisonneuve, and I think no discussion of the episode elsewhere at all. I have talked to several groups in the last six months, and have tried the experiment of asking people whether they have heard of the OSCE [Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe], and what the initials stand for. Not one person - not one! - had heard of the organisation.

something about it in 'Le Monde diplomatique'. I suppose the initials may be different in French' like OTAN for NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation]- so he's excused.

I think the trouble is that there is such a huge investment in the military, and so little in non-military methods, that alternatives to the military are virtually invisible. I would like Action for UN Renewal/WDC [World Disarmament Campaign] et al. put this issue up front.

With kind regards,
Geoffrey Carnall

From Haley and Anne [Members of United Nations Youth and Student Association, UNYSA]

Dear Mr Mehta,

Thank you so much for travelling all the way to St. Andrews in order to support UNYSA and join our celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. Understanding how deeply involved you are in working towards peace and supporting the UN, it is an honour to have you with us and to learn about your experience. Your perspective and first hand accounts help us broaden our understanding of human rights and what it means to protect them as well as give us a sense of future hopes and challenges.

We hope you enjoyed your time in St. Andrews and that however small our group may be, you appreciate our passion for UN goals.

Thank You
Sincerely,
Haley and Anne (UNYSA)

“ COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT OF GAZA BY ISRAEL IS PROHIBITED BY INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW AND SHOULD END IMMEDIATELY”

says Nobel Peace Laureate, Mairead Maguire’ (In Larnaca, Cyprus).

Gaza

On 22nd September, 2008, I flew to Larnaca, Cyprus, at the invitation of the Free Gaza Movement to join them on a mission from Larnaca to Gaza. The purpose of the mission was to break the blockade of Gaza. In Larnaca, I joined a 22 person international delegation of doctors, parliamentarians, and human rights workers in the hope of setting sail aboard the SS Hope for Gaza. This was to be the second mission into Gaza following upon the very successful sailing on 23rd August, 2008, of the SS Free Gaza and SS Liberty, when 42 International delegates broke the Siege and landed in Gaza, carrying Hearing aids for children. These were the first boats to dock in Gaza Port in over 40 years since the military occupation of Palestine by Israel. Over 40,000 Gazans welcomed the boats when they arrived last August, and we were assured that a warm welcome was being prepared for us by the people of Gaza. The fact that 10 Palestinians (5 medical doctors) were in our delegation added to the excitement of the Gazan people.

Unfortunately as things turned out, after a hold-up of some days, it was decided to delay the return to Gaza for a future date. The problem was that the two original boats were not suitable for another trip, so the Free Gaza Movement decided to buy or lease a sturdier boat. Every time they thought they had reached an agreement with a boat owner, it fell through (they believe due to outside pressure). The second problem was that strong winds on the seas meant we would have to wait for another week before we could even consider sailing. Hence the Free Gaza Movement decided wisely to temporarily delay our voyage.

We will return to sail to Gaza as soon as the boat is ready and bring with us Medical supplies. These are urgently needed, as despite unilateral evacuation of 7,000 settlers, the Gaza strip remains Occupied territory. Israel continues to control its 6 land crossings, (many of which are closed for long periods of time), airspace, territorial waters, population registry, tax system, supply of goods, freedom of movement and access to healthcare. Israel has military control over 26%of the Strip’s total territory as ‘border security zones’. The International community

was led to believe that Israel gave back Gaza, but this simply is not true. Israel even prevents fishermen from going to sea in Gazan water, despite Oslo allowing them a 20 nautical mile fishing area. Gaza, is like a ghetto, a huge prison, with Israel holding the keys to all the doors. Israel controls everything in the lives of the Gazan people. Many Gazans have been killed, including children, caught in the crossfires of Israeli collective punishment. Armed Palestinians try to hit back at their occupiers with crude weaponry, such as the Qassam Rocket attacks on the Jewish town of Sderot, where 4 Jewish people have been killed, and hundreds injured. Gazan hospitals have been paralyzed, 40% of Gaza City residents have been deprived of access to clean water. Children are living in the cold and dark. Gaza pumps 40 million litres of untreated sewage into the sea every day, because of a lack of electricity to run the treatment plant, and lack of pipes to replace old ones (Israel argues they will use the pipe as bombs, so none are allowed into Gaza, nor are they allowed cement and therefore cannot build hospitals, homes, etc..).

I sympathize with Sderot’s residents, exposed to traumatising Qassam rockets for the past 7 years but siege and collective punishment are no answer, and denying basic necessities, driven to the edge of starvation, and constant military Israeli offensive (1,000 Palestinians were killed in 2007, including many civilians) is against Geneva Convention. In the meantime several Palestinian ceasefire offers have been rejected out of hand by the Israeli Government, and they are by their repressive policies encouraging extremism. Gaza is a traumatized, broken society, where 80% are unemployed and 20% work for the UN and NGO’s, therefore 100% of Gazans rely on the benevolence of the outside world.

The International Community must end its Silence on the suffering of the Palestinian people, live up to their obligations under the Fourth Geneva convention and take action to challenge Israel’s collective punishment of 1.5 million residents of the Gaza Strip.

They must also insist that Israel, end the blockage, end the occupation of Palestine, and implement the political solutions to what is a political problem and solvable. Israel has partners for peace, and the International community must no longer listen to the old mantra, that Israel has no partner for peace. The truth is that Israelis and Palestinians can be friends, and this is not a clash of civilizations as some would have us all believe. This is a political

problem exacerbated by failed and repressive policies of the Israeli Government and as they are the stronger party and occupying power they have the legal and moral responsibility to end the conflict. Also an end to violence by all Palestinian armed group and Palestinian Unity are necessary for peace.

The Israeli/Palestinian people are tired of violence and war, they want justice and peace Gaza

and it is now up to the political leaders through unconditional, all inclusive dialogue to deliver that peace to all the people.

So we will return to Gaza soon and we encourage people from around the world to join us in defying Israel's blockage of Gaza. We also invite some country to be the first in the world to join us and send boats or Planes of medicines, sewage pipes, etc., to save the children of Gaza.

Mairead Maguire (Nobel Peace Laureate)
www.peacepeople.com

UN- Human Rights Council - Geneva 2006-2008 - A short Resume

Luckshan Abeyesuriya MA
Grange over Sands

October 2008

After the failed Human Rights Commission which was replaced by the UN General Assembly in June 2006, there has been both hope and expectation that its successor the New Human Rights Council shall be free of excessive regional bias and bloc - politics and bureaucracy.

The new custodian of human rights, both promotional and protection is now vested in a council of 47 member states elected by the General Assembly over a two - three term, voted by an absolute majority of the UNGA.

The Council will meet as a quasi-standing body. Its agenda and programme of work provides the opportunity to discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that require the Council's attention throughout the year. " Its rules and procedures and methods of work shall ensure transparency, predictability, impartiality and will enable genuine dialogue and be results-oriented"- Council Monitor programme.

The current President of the Council, serving an annual term 2008-9 is a Nigerian HE-Dr Martin Ihoeghian Uhomobi.

The Council sits longer than its failed predecessor(which only sat in short period of the year) and has held 9 sessions from its inception in 2006, it has an Advisory council of 18 members, elected from within its membership with regional bias and has several key features deemed to be an improvement from its failed Commission.

The Council whilst it is representative of UN-regions, it is too early to assess whether it will behave with excessive regional bias. On the vexed subject of Bloc - politics which was a unfortunate feature of the failed Commission, it is too early to conclude that it may follow the same negativism.

The new Council has long and interesting Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs), where it intends to review the human rights record of all the UN- member States ,based on a 4 year cycle, with 48 States to be reviewed each year including all members of the Council, this is a long process and many States who are gross violators of International Standards, may not be brought to book for a long time, this could be a defect which gives a false sense of security to the worst culprits. It also has Special sessions on matters which are very urgent on an Ad hoc basis-like Darfur. Where the human rights and humanitarian situation is dire, it needs a majority of one third of the Council Members States to approve a Special Session. Note the minutes of the very special session on Darfur of Dec 2006, appended to this paper by permission of Council Monitor programme.

The Council is already been accused that it has given too much time and energy to the question of Palestinian rights and that it may be Anti - Semitic in its case against Israel. Many serious violations including charges of genocide and rape and violence against women in Darfur , against Sudan has gone without proper reprimand, in the case of Sudan with help from China are able to even defy the UN-Security Council sanctions.

With the International Criminal Court(ICC,) indicting the Sudanese President for charges of genocide and crimes against humanity, the Council's ability to send a special mission to Darfur has been frustrated. Fact - finding missions have no mandatory power, and the Council is unable to punish States like Sudan

who have openly defied the UN-system including the UNA-MID, peace force in Darfur.

The Council so far in its short history is free of bloc - politics, but it has no real teeth, It can only recommend action for the UN-Security Council and General Assembly to act. The Council is working well with NGOs and is very sensitive to press and observer's comment its general sessions are open to the public, 11 has retained the 1503 Complaints procedure from the failed Commission, this procedure is held in camera, and may become a victim to bloc - tampering like happened to the Commission.

It is still too early to make an objective assessment as to efficacy of the Council and how much of it is an improvement from its failed predecessor. The initial reaction of the media is positive but rather guarded. It has to rise above narrow national state interests, and really focus on the defence of human rights both at its protection and promotional level to be considered effective.

It is upon the whole UN-system to put human rights standards to the top of the agenda as we celebrate 60 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, principally the UN-Security Council and the General Assembly has a generic duty to foster the work of its new progeny the Human Rights Council.

Development Goals and Women's Rights in the Poor World

Ray Newton, Darfur Training Committee

2008 is the UN Year of Human Rights. Most people in the World are denied these rights especially women. This is not an academic problem There is a connection between the facts and figures of poverty, illiteracy, poor health and the lack of women's human rights. It struck Oxfam International that where women struggled for justice and equality it illustrated what development should be about - poor, marginalised women feeling strong enough, despite multiple disadvantages, to use their rights as a weapon to defeat social injustice together when they might feel powerless as individuals.

Discrimination against women, whether direct or indirect, is one of the most destructive forces in the world today. It causes vast poverty and suffering and is a major brake on development. The scandal of mass poverty and many of today's most pressing issues are bound up with the denial and abuse of women's human rights.

Neither do I want to lump together all women in the global South and imply they are all poor.

Gordon Brown and the Minister for International Development have both publicly declared their ongoing commitment to ending world poverty, and have led some very good initiatives on development. But they have made only one glancing reference to the overwhelming discrimination and lack of human rights and the women's struggle for justice and equality. The UN Millennium Development Goals are the latest development policy initiative and must be connected at every stage to women's rights. All studies show that ill health and premature death, lack of access to education and other basic services result in social exclusion and vulnerability to harrassment, threats, violence, social humiliation and the denial of human rights.

Focussing on women's empowerment

Although the human development approach is very helpful in analysing how poor women are more disadvantaged than poor rmen In the global South, it stops short of explaining why this is so. It is the inequalities in the power to make decisions which help to create and perpetuate poverty. This is true whether it is inequality between rich and poor, different ethnic and religious groups but also between men and women. The rights-based approach to development

This reflects the agendas of many civil society organisations and social movements. The rights-based approach comes from an essential political understanding of development, based on analysing cross-cutting inequalities among different races, classes, ethnic groups, men and women and othe factors that distinguish groups of people from one another. Many of Oxfam's partner organisations combine practical activities for women like skills-training, micro-credit and literacy awareness about rights and discussing important issues such as domestic violence. that women involved in such activities will become agents for positive change rather than passive recipients of mainly women and children, who have survived only by international aid.

UN -"The three greatest global problems are the violation of human rights, war and abject poverty. For further information contact Ray Newton, 10 Buckstone Way, Edinburgh, EH10 6PN Email:newton@raypat.plus.com www..darfurtraining.org.uk

Are NATO and the UN Comfortable Bedfellows?

Marguerite Finn

A few days ago I received some information that I found disturbing. It was a copy of a document that has only just now appeared in the public domain. It is a Joint Declaration on Cooperation between the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation signed by the Secretary-Generals of the two bodies, in September this year.

NATO

The Declaration covers five sections aimed at showing how both organizations could work together for the greater common good.

This could be seen as a good thing: the coming together of two vast organizations to jointly tackle the world's problems. Both the UN and NATO have agreed that their cooperation will be guided by the UN Charter and by internationally recognised humanitarian principles and guidelines. They intend to focus on 'issues of common interest' including information-sharing on the protection of civilian populations, training and exercises, planning and support for contingencies, taking into account each organization's specific mandate, expertise, procedures and capabilities. The intention is to improve international coordination in response to global challenges. Could this joint declaration strengthen the arm of the United Nations – so mercilessly criticised for its ineffectual responses in certain situations? Would this information-sharing and interactive diplomacy rein in the more provocative and aggressive expansionist policies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)?

I don't think so. The fact is that NATO and the UN do not make comfortable bedfellows. NATO is a nuclear-armed alliance of 26 member states and stands for over 70 percent of the world's military expenditure. It was founded in 1949 ostensibly as a defensive organisation. In response, the 'Warsaw Pact' was founded by the Soviet Union and its allies. At the end of the Cold War, The Warsaw Pact was dissolved, but NATO was not. Rather than scaling back its global military presence, the US advanced to fill the positions vacated by its previous rival. This indicated that NATO considered itself no longer restricted to its own territory and therefore free to consider military intervention anywhere in the world. Nowhere is that more clearly

demonstrated than by the continuing US-driven eastward expansion of NATO, currently looking greedily at the Ukraine and Georgia. The US sees NATO as a solution for what the United Nations cannot offer them: a military alliance which restores world order on their terms, without having to take other countries with fundamentally different interests into account. NATO's nuclear policies also conflict with the legal obligations of the signatories to the UN-backed nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Articles 1 & 2 of the NPT forbid the transfer of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapon states, but US/NATO nuclear weapons in Europe are located in non-nuclear weapons states. As stated by former UK Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, in 2005: 'a policy of no first use of nuclear weapons would be incompatible with our and NATO's doctrine of deterrence'. Yet to be prepared to sanction the first use of nuclear weapons inevitably condemns to oblivion a huge number of civilians the UN is pledged to protect from the scourge of war.

The United Nations is a global, non-partisan organization of 192 member states. The UN Charter's preamble states that war shall be abolished. More specifically, Article 1 states that peace shall be brought about by peaceful means. Why have other regional organisations that work with civilian means – like the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) or the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) - not been offered a similar cooperative status with NATO? It is to be feared that a UN Secretary-General who believes that the UN and NATO have the same goals will be unable to perform his role as defender of the UN Charter. To say the least, the UN/NATO Declaration should have raised a few eyebrows but Western mainstream media have hardly mentioned it. It ought to have been impossible for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon to sign such a document with any military alliance, let alone to do so without the consent of all the member states of the United Nations. And what about the non-NATO members like Russia, China? Are they likely to be reassured by this new direction in the policy of the world body?

The Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research (<http://transnational.org/>), who provided me with the information on the Declaration, believes that it is high time to stimulate a public debate on UN-NATO cooperation. I shall be writing to my MP about this and I think that other MPs need to be asked to address it too.

New Regular Feature

Action for UN Renewal are pleased to publish a series of lectures given by Erskine Childers, a UN free-thinker, critic and constructive analyst. As we have been holding lectures annually in his honour from 1997, we thought it be timely to start a regular feature in which we will be publishing his speeches and remarks on various issues on reforming and strengthening the United Nations system. These lectures have been kindly provided by his wife, Marjolijn Snippe. The lectures are from 1993-96. The first one is below.

Strengthening the United Nations System In a time Beyond Warnings

(pages 13 – 16)

Conference on Reforming the United Nations

University of London

23 January 1993

I want to begin with a few broad definitional observations and corrections of fairly standard myths about the UN in this part of the world.

Among some three-quarters of humankind in the so-called Third World the very reverse is the case: having clung down the decades to the United Nations as their focus of diplomacy and general hope for the future, their faith and trust in the UN has never been lower. In the smaller Western countries -- the Nordics, Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Austria among others -- interest in the UN never disappeared. The renewal of interest in the United Nations is among the Western powers plus Japan, and this is viewed in much of the rest of the world in highly ambivalent terms.

Next, I need to make clear why I have criticisms of the UN System and why I do advocate reforms. I advocate reform of the UN to improve on the already extraordinary; to strengthen a System that has already recorded breathtaking advances on the great canvas of world history. Next, according to the standard Western media sneer the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council are "mere talking shops". It would be to the eternal credit of a single, homogeneous country if its parliament had in that span of time produced the International Bill of Rights, which is changing human society forever.

I can cite only one other achievement in my limited time, one that illustrates the UN System working at its best in four ways: harnessing global expertise to analyse a common problem; getting states to agree a global strategy and action plan; strengthening the capacities of weaker ones to help implement that plan; and then working it daily, simultaneously, everywhere.

The UN System mobilised for this effort. In 1980 the World Health Assembly declared this dreaded disease eliminated from the planet. The total staff of the United Nations System -- the UN proper, and all its specialized technical agencies and development funds -- world-wide and excluding only the World Bank and IMF staff who are paid very differently, and peace-keeping troops who are temporary, numbers 51,500ⁱ. Let me repeat that: counting all staff, drivers to directors, 51,500 to serve some 180 countries, in the work of the General Assembly and other organs of the UN, and in everything from civil aviation to agriculture, from human rights to health, from children and education to population planning, from industry and telecommunications to the World Weather Watch, and all the other technical work of the System around the planet. To serve over 5,000 million people, 51,500 civil servants.

It provided the roots of the Kassebaum amendment, and a resultant 13 per cent slashing of an already perilously understaffed UN System. This morning there are 36 major armed conflicts across the world. The total annual normative costs of the whole UN System are about what Western children spent last Christmas.

The UN is staffed by human beings, many of whom work in isolated places, and its Medical Service has yet to invent some sort of inoculation against human frailty. Media in this part of the world also love to

sneer at the UN as "a gigantic paper factory". The United Nations does indeed produce a great many documents every year, all at the request of governments, and requested by them in six languages. Traditional nation-state structures are weakening. The ratio of 20:80, or worse, dominates our world today. As the 1990s opened, the 20 per cent Northern minority of humankind had 82.7 per cent of world gross national product; 81.2 per cent of world trade; had 94.6 per cent of all commercial lending; 80.6 per cent of all domestic savings; 80.5 per cent of all domestic investment, and 94 per cent of all research and developmentⁱⁱ. That is ten times all Northern "aid" to the developing countries. Before long, when the frenetic North-North trade competition begins to peter out and Northern countries anxiously look South to its potentially gigantic markets, if these absurdly short-sighted policies persist they will find several billion people still too poor to buy anything from them. Only 270 million people in North America now consume every day as much energy as all 4 billion people in the South. I hope that this necessarily terribly cursory sketch of our real world -- the world of five and a half billion human beings, not what the G-7 mean when their communiqués refer to "the world economy" -- suggests what we urgently need of the United Nations System. The UN must become root-cause directed, not merely responsive.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali has made a start in reorganizing the UN Secretariat as a tighter working organism. It is often said that the UN system of agencies was not designed by its founders for the degree of multi-sectoral policy coherence and programme co-ordination that our present era demands. By the time the San Francisco Conference on the United Nations opened in 1945, sectoral "functionalism", as it was called, was already entrenched in international thinking. First, they wrote into the Charter strong mandates in economic and social policy and action; and their records show that by "economic" they meant that the UN should co-ordinate all the commanding heights of world macro-economic policy -- money, finance, trade, communications, transport. It states, with the imperative, that the UN "shall" make recommendations for the co-ordination of the policies (and activities) of the specialised agencies brought into agreed relationship with the UN ... categorically to cover the Bretton Woods institutions and all other specialised agencies, including the then intended International Trade Organization (ITO) which the United States refused to allow be created.

Then too, the Preparatory Commission recommended that the headquarters of agencies should be at the same place as the UN. The task of the United Nations in co-ordinating the policies and activities of the specialized agencies, they wrote, "can be performed only if Members individually will assist in making co-ordination possible".

But on each and every one of those crucial prescriptions for making coherent sense of the loose system already being formed, member governments failed miserably. Article 58 making mandatory that the UN co-ordinate the policies of the agencies has never been worked. The Secretary-General is not the Prime Minister of the UN System; it does not have one, either functionally or of course constitutionally. Governments in the governing bodies of each agency formulate its own policies and set its own budgetary resources. In the present reform discussions, however, there is no sign that governments are ready to amend the agency constitutions and create a new, unitary United Nations. The parliaments of member states should have a single committee on all policy issues in the UN System -- diplomatic and sectoral -- and should exert greater vigilance every year over the behaviour of the executive branch in these absolutely make-or-break matters.

If we could secure this co-ordination where it must start, in home capitals, then the heads of the agencies could be formally instructed by governments in their governing bodies that they constitute the collectively responsible Cabinet of the System under the empowered leadership of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

We have got to reform the UN System so that in fact governments also actually meet together with the right sectoral expertise on their own delegations to formulate the multi-disciplinary macro-policies needed for today's profoundly systemic problems and dangers. The work of the Economic and Social Council must be shaped so that on each major theme or problem area -- for example, food security, or natural resources, or debt or global fair trade -- the Council meets with members of the relevant agencies' governing bodies integrated in the Council delegations of member governments. The work of ECOSOC and the General Assembly must be rationalised and a realistic annual calendar established to enable governments there to formulate top-priority strategies for the world.

We must also urgently work for the development of a United Nations capacity to manage the international environment of economic and other factors that technology has accelerated out of the sovereign control of even the most powerful nation-states. Note, of course, that the IMF was inert throughout this world-wide chaos.

Developing countries are not too keen on more cohesion within the UN System, because in their fear that its leading organisms are being taken over by the Northern powers, they see a tighter System only the more able to impose Northern conditionalities on them. We face in this a dangerously rigid impasse: we need to enable the UN System to overcome this North-South divide and develop truly global policy leadership for all members; but Northern policies have so widened the divide that it acts itself as a countervailing force to those very reforms.

Running through every aspect of needed reform like a weakening seam there is the crying need for greater mutual trust among states, developed through genuine practice in the UN of democratic policy negotiation. One argument used is that Northern states contribute most to the UN System's budgets. Then there is the argument that many Third World states that make up the majority, with one-nation-one-vote, are not democratically governed. Apart from the awkward question of who installed or nourished the dictators, the curious thing is that Western powers are if anything more resentful, and quite as unheeding of the policy positions in the UN, of the very Third World countries that are democratically governed! Finally on this critically important issue, while we watch pluralist governance now emerge in more and more UN member countries (and pray that it will not be subverted by any power), it does so happen that the proportion of votes of the North and South in the General Assembly almost exactly matches their respective shares of world population. The problems emerging as nation-state structure weakens, and suppressed communities invoke the UN's Human Rights, have no appropriate forum in the UN. We need, I am convinced, a UN Council on Representation and Governance, either by amending the Charter to convert the now scarcely used Trusteeship Council, or by the General Assembly creating it under Article 22 as a subsidiary body.

At the same time, however, we must vigorously strengthen the UN's capacities both to promote Human Rights and to protect people against the vicious horrors that pent-up cultural and ethnic forces can inflict on others. The UN Centre for Human Rights this day has only one professional to support six Special Rapporteurs, less total staff than Amnesty International, lacks even proper telefax equipment, does not even have a full-time senior head, has less than \$10 million a year for all its work, and barely \$100,000 for explicit public information about Human Rights among 5 thousand million citizens. Human Rights in the UN need a full-time Under-Secretary-General, and the additional leverage around the Secretary-General of being part of the responsibility of one of the four Deputies I have urged.

We have just a chance to make some progress at this year's UN world Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. But all such chance is overladen with the distrust in the South -- including democratic governments -- that the Northern powers seek only to make the UN an intrusive instrument of their realpolitik, and of their continued double standards in human rights.

The Secretary-General should have a committed panel of eminent, manifestly disinterested women and men from around the world, ready to act as his Peace or Human Rights Commissioners on 36 hours' notice. The UN must also far more seriously encourage regional peace capacities under Chapter VIII. The thoroughly worked out proposal of Mr. Justin Walker of this country, for contributed United Nations Airborne Rapid Rescue units, should also be strongly supported.

The Secretary-General's resultant "Agenda for Peace" also alludes to these needs. Under Article 24 the Members of the United Nations -- all the Members -- "confer" on the Security Council "primary responsibility" (note, only primary) for the maintenance of international peace and security" and agree that under this responsibility the Council, and I quote again, "acts on their behalf". Until, however, we see the major powers ready to respect Article 24, the primacy of the General Assembly, and the numerous Charter references to the obligation of all Members to respect the equality of nations, we will have great difficulty over realising the capacities in this area so manifestly needed by the UN.

It is no less outrageous that only 5 out of 179 member governments can veto amendments to the Charter. I come finally to perhaps the ultimately most important reform in the UN System.

I quote him: "We need a new study for the purpose of creating a world assembly elected directly from the people of the world as a whole, to whom the governments who form the United Nations are responsible ... not (as) a substitute for it but rather a completion of the development of it".

¹ *An Agenda For Peace*, by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *passim*, United Nations, 1992.

¹ Report of Secretary-General to the 47th Session of the General Assembly, UN Doc. A/47/593, Table 8 (levels as of end-1990), United Nations, 3 November 1992. ¹ UNDP *Human Development Report 1992*, (New York/Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 34-36. ¹ UNDP *Human Development Report 1992*, *op. cit.* ¹ Data in foregoing sentences from *The State of World Rural Poverty, an Inquiry into its Causes and Consequences*, International Fund for Agricultural Development, Rome, 1992. ¹ World Health Organization.

Upcoming events in 2009

From International Peace Bureau calendar (www.ipb.org)

January 5 – 10, 2009, 12th International Conference of International Philosophers for Peace (IPPNO), Kolkata, India

International Philosophers for Peace is calling for scholarly papers within the broad framework of "freedom, harmony, and peace" for presentation at its 12th International Conference. This theme, which is the subject of a larger peace conference of which IPPNO will be a part, has been left intentionally broad to accommodate a wide variety of papers on the topic of peace. More info at <http://philosophersforpeace.org/>.

January 11-18 2009, 22nd Winter Course on Nuclear Futures, Andalo (Trento), Italy

This course entitled 'Nuclear Futures: what would nuclear disarmament look like?' will focus on all aspects of nuclear disarmament – social, political, economic, scientific and technical dimensions, and what can be done to move this process forward.

January 27 to February 1, 2009, World Social Forum, Belém, Brazil

During World Social Forum's International Council meeting, held in Berlin, Germany, at the end of May, it was decided the next world event will take place in the Amazon region.

17 February 2009, Annual Erskine Childer's lecture

'Saving Succeeding generations from the scourge of war' by Nobel Peace Laureate, Mairead Corrigan Maguire. Venue: Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ Public meeting. Contact Vijay at vijay@vmpeace.org

February 20-21, 2009, War crimes, retrospectives and prospects conference, London

Details, including the programme and the booking form will be available on the SOLON, IALS, and CCBH websites: <http://www.perc.plymouth.ac.uk/solon/>; <http://ials.sas.ac.uk/>; <http://www.icbh.ac.uk/icbh/news/welcome.html>

Saturday, 28th March 2009 Action for UN Renewal AGM

"Unity in Diversity": *Celebrating the United Nations international Year of Reconciliation, 2009*. Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ Public meeting. Contact Vijay at vijay@vmpeace.org

March 31 – April 2, 2009, World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, Bonn, Germany "Moving into the second half of the UN decade", more on this conference co organised by UNESCO and the German government.

May 4-15, 2009, Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT): Third Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, New York

More on the conference and background info at <http://disarmament.un.org/WMD/npt/index.html>

Obituary - Douglas Holdstock

(24 October 1933 – 30 November 2008)

I came to learn about Douglas' death while attending a meeting in London. He was a visionary peace campaigner, totally devoted to nuclear disarmament. It was his medical background that provided him the extra edge to look at the issue of nuclear disarmament in a different light from other peace campaigners.

I could never forget Douglas' generosity and kindness in assisting me to bring my book, 'The United Nations and its Future in the 21st Century' book to fruition. He was instrumental in getting permission for copyright for the lectures, guiding me on the direction of the book, recommending me Jayantha Dhanapala (Former UN Under-Secretary for Disarmament) to write the foreword and reading the proofs with his wife, Mary. It all happened in a chance meeting at the House of lords when I told him that I has been entrusted to write the book. He gave me one look and understood how naive I was in the field of publishing and took the job of doing everything into his hands. I am immensely thankful to him for his guidance during that time.

He was a shy man, but once you knew him, he was your friend for life. I remember giving a lecture in Friends House when he interrupted and corrected me in the middle of my talk. So one could say that his sharp intellect was always on guard which will not let any slip ups happen.

Douglas Holdstock MSc MD FRCP qualified in physiology and medicine at University College, London and UCH Medical School in 1959. He was a member of the Medical Association for Prevention of War and a founder member of the Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons, which joined MAPW to form Medact, the UK affiliate of International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War. He edited *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* from 1985-2006 (initially as associate editor under the title of *Medicine and War*) with Jeffrey Segall. Many wise editorials followed and he summed up his 23 years as editor in Volume 23 number 4 Oct-Dec 2007 under the title "Twenty-three years of *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*: retrospect and prospect. He was still working on the journal as editorial consultant a few weeks before he died. He edited two books with Frank Barnaby "Hiroshima and Nagasaki: retrospect and prospect in 1995" and "The British Nuclear Weapons Programme 1952 – 2002" in 2003. He supported many other peace and development organisations, worked hard to get a Nuclear Weapons Convention to ban all nuclear weapons particularly with the World Court Project which declared that the nuclear nations had an obligation to achieve nuclear disarmament and he looked forward to the day when wars would not be a legitimate way of settling differences between nations and peoples.

Douglas was a polymath with extensive knowledge of astronomy, archaeology, ancient history, the natural sciences and nuclear issues. He read widely and was a mine of information for his colleagues and friends. He was a true and loyal friend. No question was too trivial and he would research and give a considered answer whether it was about health or peace, justice and the environment. He gave many talks on the science behind climate change and global warming and was concerned by both the unsustainability of both perpetual economic growth and population. His last article (his first to published as an Internet only article) is entitled "Environmental Health: Threats and their Interactions."



He leaves his wife Mary, two daughters and four grandchildren. He will be missed by us all. An immense loss to the peace movement.

Action for UN Renewal committee members
Shanti and Vijay Mehta

Prelude to Partnership

Vijay Mehta

It is often said time and again that there are too many peace organisations duplicating each others work. Perhaps because of that they are fragmented weak and not effective in pursuing their agenda, and goals. To address that challenge, two organisations WDC and ACT-UN have decided to explore possibilities of working together.

Both the organisations have been experiencing declining membership, loss of active members, and lack of adequate finance. The current situation with declining overall support for peace movements has forced us to take stock of narrowing down our priorities and consider opening up other venues.

World Disarmament Campaign and Action for UN Renewal, both had brainstorming sessions in which wide variety of luminaries from Peace, Development and Interfaith Organisations were present. They presented wide ranging ideas for going forward and dealing with the current situation.

The purpose of writing this article is to briefly describe the way these organisations operate and invite comments and suggestions from our esteemed members and wider readership, in the hope that a decision can be made by early 2009.

	Action-for-UN-Renewal	World Disarmament Campaign
Aims and objectives	<p>Reforming the United Nations</p> <p>Promoting international peace and security, development of the poorest regions, protection of human rights and environment.</p> <p>Upholding the UN charter and international law</p> <p>Saving succeeding generations from scourge of war</p>	<p>Nuclear and general disarmament</p> <p>Promoting international peace, security and environment</p> <p>Campaign against militarism, reducing demand for arms and Highlighting causes of war. Diverting resources to peaceful purposes.</p> <p>Highlighting injustices, inequalities, religious and ethnic tensions and finding solutions in interfaith dialogue.</p>
	How they work and strive to achieve the above objectives	
Flagship events	<p>Annual Erskine Childer's Lecture</p> <p>Lobby of Parliament (annual)</p>	<p>Spring Conference</p> <p>Annual Conference</p>
Newsletter	<p>Action for UN Renewal</p> <p>4 times a year</p>	<p>World Disarm</p> <p>4 times a year</p>
Lobbying	Government, Ministers and MPs	<p>Government, Ministers and MPs</p> <p>Churches and Interfaith work</p>
Joint Meetings	Participating in national and international conferences	Participating in national and international conferences

As we can see from the above, that there is overlap of certain areas in which both the organisations operate. There is duplications in competitions and telling each other what we already know. Also wasting resources on duplication of subjects, hiring venues for conferences and committee meetings.

What is proposed is to work together to save the finances and improve the effectiveness of both the organisations.

If a decision is reached to work jointly, then the following method of working is suggested:

- A new name for the organisation which will reflect both the organisations
- Amalgamation of both the organisations membership
- To form a new committee which will incorporate the committee members of both the organisations
- A new governing structure to run the new organisation
- To join finances of both the organisations for working in a more effective way
- A new joint leaflet for attracting new members
- A meeting to launch the new organisation
- Increase the number of Patrons

The above proposed merger is suggested as a way of making a single united and more effective organisation for carrying forward the agenda in a more concerted way. The true test of success of any organisation is when politicians can take notice of its agenda and agree to implement as part of their policies. Can we, by joining hands we be that organisation which can produce results?

Your comments and suggestions are most welcome.

Vijay Mehta is Chair of Action for UN Renewal and Co-chair of World Disarmament Campaign

Letters

From Eileen Daffren on accepting to become a life member of Action for UN Renewal

Dear Carol

I am rather late replying to your letter of 29th of August inviting me to become a life member of Action for UN Renewal but I have been away and only got your letter a few days ago. I hope my writing is fairly legible as I broke my word processor yesterday.

Of course, I accept and feel honoured to do so ! when Bruce Kent, was CND secretary and Mary Brennan and I were on CND international committee in the 80's, we ran workshops on the UN at CND conferences. You mentioned my talk on Women Hour – thank you for publicising it (Action for UN Renewal is also mentioned in the chapter on peace and political environment page 212). I see the organisation as a beacon of hope. I knew Jim Addington but don't think I have met Vijay but thank him and thank you all for the life membership.

Sincerely

Eileen Daffren, 11 September 2008

187 Eastern Road, Kemptown, Brighton, BN2 5BB

From Noel Hamel on the submission to the select committee and foreign affairs enquiry:

Dear Vijay,

I spoke to you about the Kingston Peace Council submission to the select committee on inquiry on Global Security and non-proliferation at CND annual conference and agreed to send a copy.

The reason I thought I might interest you because of our emphasis upon the enhanced role of UN which we believe is central to the issues of security and non-proliferation. I/we don't see the current arrangements working well. Since certain international players assert power and authority, interpreting events to suit their own political agenda without considering how their actions are viewed by others from different perspectives and viewpoints. The result is that instead of communication and understanding the results of their actions are to increase tensions and promote distrust. The latter is the best recipe for proliferation of all aspects of military preparation. Really the only answer is the UN. To some extent UN renewal is doing it already, in which your support and work has undoubtedly contributed to the result.

Yours sincerely

Noel Hamel, 21 October 2008

73 Northcote Road, New Malden,, KT3 3HF

Pinter on Gaza

Harold Pinter, a Jewish himself stated his strong criticism of US policies, Israel and Zionism. Earlier this year he was earlier this year, he was one of the signatories of a letter published in the Guardian (30 April) that read in part: "We cannot celebrate the birthday of a state founded on terrorism, massacres and the dispossession of another people from their land. We cannot celebrate the birthday of a state that even now engages in ethnic cleansing, that violates international law, that is inflicting a monstrous collective punishment on the civilian population of Gaza and that continues to deny to Palestinians their human rights and national aspirations. We will celebrate when Arab and Jew live as equals in a peaceful Middle East." He would probably have strongly criticised the Israeli air attack on Gaza which is occurring right now. (Mike Barnes, 30 December 2008, Guardian letter page).

Annual Erskine Childers Lecture 2009

"Saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war"
Building a non-killing, non-violent culture for the human family

Keynote Speaker: **Mairead Corrigan Maguire**
Nobel peace Laureate
Special Guests: Marjolijn Snippe and David Childers (wife and son of Erskine Childers)

Tuesday 17th February 2009
Friends House, 173 Euston Road,
London, NW1 2BJ

Public meeting. Free. All welcome.
7.00 – 8.30 pm

Action for UN Renewal AGM

"Unity in Diversity"
Celebrating the United Nations international Year of Reconciliation, 2009.

"South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission"
Speaker: High Commissioner of South Africa (invited)

"Northern Ireland Peace Process"
Speaker: Dr Harold Good & Father Alec Reid (invited)

"Inter-faith dialogue"
Donald Prentice

Saturday, 28th March 2009
Friends House,
173 Euston Road,
London, NW1 2BJ

Public meeting. Free. All welcome.
2.00 – 5.00 pm

Action for United Nations Renewal

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

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Vice-chairs: Ailsa Moore, Prue Wendt.
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Newspaper committee Rosemary Addington
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Address: 97 Commercial Road, London, E1 1RD

Your suggestions for topics, speakers and comments on the newspaper are welcome.

Newspaper committee: Vijay Mehta, Rosemary Addington
Abdul Muhib, Talyn Rahman

**A larger version of the newsletter, with articles, speeches and reports, is available at the Action for UN Renewal website.
(action-for-un-renewal.org.uk, click on newsletter section)**