

UNA-SF Courier



The Voice of the United Nations Association of San Francisco • una-sf.org • Spring 2004

UNA-SF Annual Meeting

Thursday, May 13, 7:00 pm

3220 Sacramento Street, San Francisco

In addition to our annual business meeting with an election of board members and officers, we will view two recent videos: *The UN Year in Review—Accomplishments of 2003*, and *Strengthening the United Nations*, featuring US ambassador to the UN John McDonald. All members and friends of UNA are invited!

World Environment Day

Saturday, June 5, 2004 and Sunday, June 5, 2005.

World Environment Day, commemorated each year on June 5, was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 to stimulate worldwide awareness of the environment.

Through World Environment Day, the United Nations empowers people to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development, promotes an understanding that communities are pivotal to changing attitudes toward environmental issues, and advocates partnerships to ensure that all nations and people enjoy a safer and more prosperous future.

In San Francisco in 2005, World Environment Day will be a joint project of the United Nations Environment Programme, UNA-SF, the Commission on the Environment of the City and County of San Francisco, and other organizations. For more information see www.unep.org/wed/2004 and www.wed2005.org.

Sustainable World Symposium

Saturday, June 19, 9:00 am to 6:00 pm

at St. Mary's Cathedral Conference Center. A one-day conference for the general public, giving an overview of critical global issues, solutions, and actions on environment, human rights, and economic issues. See page 5.

Toward a Democratic United Nations for the 21st Century

Thursday through Sunday, June 24 to 27,

San Francisco State University. A participatory conference on the reform and revitalization of the UN, featuring former UN Assistant Secretary-General Dr. Robert Muller and others. See p. 6.

UN 60

The sixtieth anniversary year of the founding of the United Nations in San Francisco will feature many public programs beginning in January 2005. Join the UNA now and be part of this year-long celebration. See www.unausa.org for membership information.

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EDITORS AND WRITERS FOR THIS ISSUE:
Diana R. Trimble, Ivelina Todorova, Nancy L. Peterson, Gail Karpinski, Lola Kristof, Henry S. Dakin.
E: unasf@earthlink.net • W: www.una-sf.org

Patricia DiGiorgio selected national winner of Arnold Goodman Award

Long-time UNA–SF activist and board member Patricia DiGiorgio was selected as the 2004 Arnold Goodman Award winner—the highest award the United Nations Association bestows. She received this recognition March 6 at a gala banquet in New York City.

Pat has been active in the UNA for many years. Her interest in world peace and justice began when she was a young woman, and adopted Eleanor Roosevelt as a role model.



She joined the UNA and worked actively, becoming president of the UNA–SF in 1970. Under her leadership UNA–SF had its highest membership ever—perhaps 800 to 900 people belonged to UNA.

Her leadership accomplishments during this period included commemorations of the signing of the UN Charter in San Francisco. Secretary General Kurt Waldheim came to celebrate the UN’s twenty-fifth anniversary; the thirtieth was observed by a special salute to UNICEF. UNA–SF had a UNICEF store on Union Street at that time, with 200 volunteers working on behalf of the needs of the world’s children.

In addition to her continuing UNA–SF responsibilities, Pat also leads the formation of the World Centre, whose basic precepts include “sustaining the founding principles and ideals of the United Nations.”

Ms. DiGiorgio is believed to be the only person who has served simultaneously on the UNA Board of Governors, the National Board and as a Chapter President, a period of service spanning 15 years.

We salute Pat DiGiorgio for a lifetime of work and accomplishment toward the support of the United Nations.

Fernando Corredor honored as Young Global Advocate

UNA–SF was pleased to have Fernando Corredor, the leader of our Young Professionals Group, honored nationally with the receipt of the Young Global Advocate Award in New York on March 6.

Fernando and about fifty younger people he works with initiated the Minesweepers™ program. They participate in major national marathons every year, and thus far have raised over \$23,000 for minefield removal.

The group meets regularly and has a speakers’ program concerning current topics before the United Nations.

Fernando modestly describes working for peace and justice as “the family business.” He makes major contributions to our board of directors, adding professional insight to the many projects we undertake.

We are honored to have Fernando Corredor with us in UNA–SF.



UNICEF’s Worldwide Accomplishments

- Unicef increased worldwide access to clean water from 77 to 82%.
- Worldwide deaths due to diarrhea disease have decreased 50%.
- Worldwide mortality rates for children under five have declined 11.8%.
- Malnourished children in developing countries have declined by 24 million.
- Vitamin A supplement for children have prevented as many as 1 million child deaths in the past 3 years.
- The number of polio cases has fallen 99% since 1988.
- Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus immunization has reduced the number of deaths by 54%.

[Source: www.unicef.org]



“What’s Ahead for the UN?” A challenging panel discussion explores possibilities

“What’s Ahead for the UN? Is Reform the Answer?” was the theme of a dynamic program held March 31 at the First Unitarian-Universalist Church in San Francisco.

A panel of four academic specialists and two Consuls General challenged an audience of 85 people with this often discussed topic. Dr. Rita Maran of UC Berkeley, president of the East Bay UNA chapter, served as moderator and opened with this insightful comment: “The UN today is a crucible of complexity. It is both an antique, run by the victors of World War II, and a receptacle of global visions of hope for the future. It is a sunrise organization, providing the only village counsel for our shrinking global village, and a sunset organization, based on the strange principle that nation states pursuing national interests will somehow take care of our global commons.”

The two Consuls General on the panel described their experiences with the UN. Mr. Donal Denham, Consul General of Ireland, and Mr. Georges Lamaziere, Consul General of Brazil, have served on the Human Rights Commission in Geneva; Mr. Lamaziere has also served on the UN Conference on Nuclear and Chemical Weapons. He stressed that the permanent members of the UN Security Council are all proliferators of nuclear weapons.

Dr. JoAnne Aviel of San Francisco State University addressed the issue of what the UN can and cannot do regarding terrorism. She cited positive actions taken in the past: freezing the financial

assets of terrorist groups, mobilizing and coordinating databases on terrorism, and providing intelligence gathering by organizations such as Interpol. She noted that roadblocks hampering the UN were its inability to enforce coordination, and the unwillingness of the five permanent members of the Security Council to support changes in the UN organizational structure.

Dr. Norman Bowen of California State University at Hayward spoke from a historical perspective and stated that the main problems facing the UN are lack of coordination between UN agencies, inadequate oversight and authority, and suggested that there is a need for a decentralized structure.

With respect to the Security Council veto, Dr. Christopher O’Sullivan of the University of San Francisco argued that the US uses the veto to achieve its own political ends. Between 1945 and 1970, the US did not use the veto at all; since 1970 the US has vetoed 75 resolutions, 35 of these involving criticism of Israel.

Dr. Moran challenged the audience to form a “think tank” to work on reform issues, and offered to disseminate its recommendations to appropriate decision makers.

In a letter to UNA–SF after the program, Consul General Lamaziere wrote “It is very important and effective to have debates and dialogues such as [this] to bring together individuals committed to the important global programs established by the United Nations.”

The UNA Film Festival – an attempt to discuss international human rights issues through art

On March 11 the fourth annual United Nations Association Film Festival (UNAFF) was held at San Francisco State University. This year's program, occurring in the same week as International Women's Day, raised questions on critical issues threatening the rights and the dignity of women around the globe today. Hosted by SFSU and UNA-SF, the festival successfully attracted over eighty participants.

Both documentaries were remarkably powerful and provocative expositions on labor, immigration, war, exile, and a quest for liberation. The first film, *Discovering Dominga* (Guatemala/USA), concerns a young Iowa housewife who unseals repressed memories of her early childhood in Guatemala where she witnessed and survived a horrifying massacre of Maya Indian villagers. Although some viewers criticized the filmmaker, Patricia McCarthy, for including reenactment scenes, the overwhelming reaction was one of being profoundly moved. As one audience member commented later, "... (this) was such an important film to see to understand the depth and connections and secrecy surrounding the indigenous communities and individual's experiences of the civil war."

The second film, Tia Lessin's *Behind the Labels: Garment Workers on US Saipan* (USA), took a behind-the-scenes look at the plight of Chinese and Filipina women working in the dismal garment factories on the pacific island of Saipan. There, it is possible for unscrupulous manufacturers to exploit not only workers, but also loopholes in US laws that allow them to sell products bearing the "Made in USA" label, while avoiding standard labor and immigration regulations, duties and quotas. One student mentioned being struck by discovering the United

States' involvement in human rights violations and the lack of governmental effort to correct working conditions in sweatshops.

UNAFF was founded by Stanford film critic and educator Jasmina Bojic in 1998 as an initiative dedicated to enlightening the public on international politics and human rights questions through the artistic medium of film. Since its creation, the festival has received more than 250 submissions from around the world—all of them committed to focusing collective attention on international human rights violations. Un beholden to commercial interests, the UNAFF stands out as a unique arena where various political issues, otherwise neglected, are being exposed, while also creating an occasion for like-minded and concerned people to unite and become active. The wide range of entries includes films on war, peace, refugees, racism, education, and women's and children's issues.

As a result of a largely extended interest and an overwhelmingly positive media and audience reaction, the UNAFF is now touring many of the 175 UNA chapters in the nation. Soon after the March 11 event, UC Berkeley and the East Bay UNA chapter hosted the screening of another three documentaries, entitled *The Three That Remember* (Iran/Canada), *From Chechnya to Chernobyl* (Russia/USA) and *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin* (USA), all of them tremendously moving.

You can learn more about the UNAFF on its website www.unaff.org. You can also be actively involved with the festival, by becoming a volunteer and helping with its organization for future dates. Your help is always welcomed!

— Ivelina Todorova



Sustainable World Symposium

Saturday, June 19, 2004

9:00 am–6:30 pm

St. Mary's Cathedral Conference Center, San Francisco

Join national leaders in a day-long, hands-on exploration of solutions to global issues of environmental destruction, social injustice, and economic inequality.

Featured presentations

- Environment, Natural Resources: Randy Hayes, co-founder, Rainforest Action Network; Michelle Perrault, Sierra Club International VP and former sustainability consultant to the Clinton Administration.
- People, Communities, Culture: Medea Benjamin, co-founder, Global Exchange; Anuradha Mittal, director, Food First.
- Economy, Commerce: Jerry Mander, president, International Forum on Globalization and co-author, *Alternatives to Economic Globalization*; and Jim Garrison, president, State of the World Forum.
- Actions for Sustainability: Kevin Danaher of Global Exchange.
- Breakout sessions on Environment, Social Justice, Economics, Sustainability for Educators, and the UN.
- Powerful documentary videos; display booths; Ubuntu cultural village; Local Action Teams; *Sustainability SourceBook*.
- Entertainment: headliners to be announced; multi-cultural ceremony; Sustainable World Ensemble Sherry Glaser Theater; Youth Poetry Slam; Sparlha Swa Music.

Producer: Sustainable World Coalition, a project of Earth Island Institute, San Francisco. Co-sponsors (partial list): Global Exchange; United Nations Association of San Francisco; United Nations Association, Northern California Division; Institute of Noetic Sciences; California Institute of Integral Studies; Media Alliance; New Dimensions Radio; Bay Area International Development Organizations; New College of California; Straus Communications; Clif Bars.

Tickets: \$45 online with advance payment; \$55 at the door. Students, seniors, nonprofit employees: \$25.00 online with advance payment, \$35 at the door.

For more information: 415-785-1888, www.swcoalition.org, info@swcoalition.org



Toward a Democratic United Nations for the 21st Century

A conference on the reform and revitalization of the UN

Thursday–Sunday, June 24–27, 2004

San Francisco State University

Given the way we are structured ... many important regions and countries are not able to make their voices heard... [we] are in need of radical reform.

— Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the UN

The UN Charter was signed in San Francisco 59 years ago, when today's many global problems could scarcely be imagined. The time has now come to reform that original Charter so as to better meet the new challenges to humanity in the 21st Century.

Featuring former UN Assistant Secretary General Robert Muller as keynote speaker, and calling on some of the world's leading experts and visionaries, this global conference will prepare a detailed program for the reform and revitalization of the UN. This document will be presented to the world's governments for their review prior to the UN's 60th anniversary celebration.

We the Peoples of the United Nations means you and me, the public citizenry; it is vital that we take immediate action to insure that our voices are heard.

Key issues to be discussed will include

- The resolution of conflicts between nations and peoples through the framework of enforceable world law;
- Reform of the Security Council and the General Assembly;
- Participation of civil society in global decision-making through the establishment of a People's Assembly;
- Effective management of economic globalization to achieve social justice and environmental sustainability.

For information on participation in this event, please contact San Francisco People's Assembly, 55 New Montgomery Street, # 224, San Francisco, CA 94105; T: 415-896-2242, E: gdp3nc@yahoo.com, W: www.acgc.org/. The conference is sponsored by the San Francisco People's Assembly, in association with the United Nations Association of the USA / San Francisco and East Bay chapters, the Association of World Citizens, the World Federalist Association of Northern California, Pathways to Peace, the First Unitarian-Universalist Church of San Francisco, the Unity Foundation, and other organizations.

Bush needs the UN after all

As the situation in Iraq worsens, a shift in mainstream newspapers is increasingly noticeable: a year ago, the prevailing tone in US journalism was one of derision for the UN's reluctance to endorse the invasion, but now it is becoming obvious that the world needs the United Nations. The following article, which appeared in the Cincinnati Post "Opinion" section on April 19, 2004, is representative of this journalistic shift. The author, James B. Pinkerton, is a columnist for Newsday. Distributed by the Washington Post-Los Angeles Times News Service.

For a complete statement outlining the UNA-USA's position on the UN's role in Iraq, check www.unausa.org; for perspective on the 'Oil for Palaces' issue, watch 'Democracy Now!' on Free Speech TV (www.freespeech.org) and read the UN Oil-for-Food page (www.un.org/Depts/oip/). — Diana Trimble

President Bush is known for his "straight talk," but he just threw a curve (a flip-flop, actually).

Exhibit A is the United Nations. It hasn't changed, but Bush has.

In his speech to the UN General Assembly on Oct. 12, 2002, the president said that the world body would be "irrelevant" if it didn't approve a new war resolution.

The UN Security Council refused and, of course, Bush went to war anyway.

This sequence of events delighted neoconservatives in the administration. For example, Richard Perle, the former chairman of the Defense Policy Board, wrote on March 22, 2003, just as the Iraq war was beginning, "Saddam Hussein's reign of terror is about to end. He will go quickly, but not alone: in a parting irony he will take the United Nations down with him."

In the minds of these neocons, the United Nations is a hotbed of anti-American and anti-Israeli feeling. And, of course, they're not entirely wrong.

But the right-wing critique of the UN went further. It wasn't just the world's opinion that was a problem, these critics said; another problem was the UN bureaucracy. And, once again, they had a point. The United Nations' Oil for Food program—in which the UN served as a middleman, overseeing exports of Iraqi oil in return for selected non-embargoed imports—has long been an ongoing scandal. For two years, the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page has been digging into the sordid details. An April 7 editorial described the program as "so secretively run that it seemed almost designed to facilitate the corruption that fleeced of billions of dollars in aid."

But, of course, the *Journal's* mission went far beyond cleaning up corruption. As the editorial explained, the

problem wasn't just crooked bureaucrats, but the international organization as a whole: "The UN Secretariat and three of five permanent Security Council members knowingly facilitated Saddam's 'Oil for Palaces' program." That is, the money wasn't being used for food, but for Saddam's wasteful extravagance. And so, the *Journal* concluded, Iraqis should ask if they "can trust the UN to play a major role in the future of their country."

So it must've been a Maalox moment for the *Journalists* when Bush put the UN at the center of his Iraq policy Tuesday night.

In his opening statement, he lauded "international institutions ... for stepping up to their responsibilities." Then he added, "We're working closely with the United Nations envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi ... to determine the exact form of the government that will receive sovereignty on June 30th."

And who is Brahimi? He is the former foreign minister of Algeria, also a former undersecretary-general of the League of Arab States, now special adviser to Secretary-General Kofi Annan. In other words, he is the quintessential Third World international-crat—exactly the sort of person Perle and the neocons wanted to render irrelevant.

Indeed, his official UN biography cites his participation in "Algeria's independence struggle" against France from 1956 to 1961. So, if Brahimi's background is one of Arab nationalism and anti-colonialism, what does that suggest as to his innermost feelings about the US occupation? Now, in the wake of the worsening violence in Iraq, Brahimi is the man the president is turning to for help.

Indeed, Brahimi isn't just helping the Americans; he is leading them.

When a reporter asked, "Mr. President, who will we be handing the Iraqi government over to on June 30th?", Bush answered: "We'll find that out soon. That's what Mr. Brahimi is doing. He's figuring out the nature of the entity we'll be handing sovereignty over (to)."

A year ago, critics of the Iraq war warned that toppling Saddam would lead to his replacement by Islamic fundamentalists. That may still happen, of course. But in the meantime it looks as if America's armed forces will be used after June 30 to defend a deal hammered out by an Arab nationalist working for the UN

So it looks as if the UN is still relevant after all.

3220 Sacramento Street • San Francisco, CA 94115-2007

United Nations Association of San Francisco



United Nations Association of San Francisco
3220 Sacramento Street • San Francisco, CA 94115-2007
T: 415-674-9701 • E: unasf@earthlink.net • W: una-sf.org

Chapter Officers:

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Of Counsel: Kenneth L. Valinoti, Esq.

The United Nations Association of San Francisco

(UNA-SF) is the San Francisco chapter of the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA), a national, nonpartisan, and nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing US participation in the United Nations system and to strengthening that system as it seeks to define and carry out its mission.

UNA-USA, based in New York City, carries out its action agenda through a unique combination of public outreach, policy analysis, and international dialogue.

UNA-USA is the largest foreign policy association in the nation. Its nationwide network of chapters and divisions reaches a broad cross-section of the American public.

UNA-USA provides information and educational services on the work of the UN and on global issues for students, scholars, Congress, and the media. A membership application and its publications, including *The InterDependent* are available from its web site www.unausa.org. Each year UNA-USA coordinates the observance of Charter Day (June 26) and United Nations Day (October 24) in hundreds of communities across the nation.