

UNA-SF Courier



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Academic Impact—the Way Forward

Ramu Damodaran, Deputy Director for Partnerships and Public Engagement in the Outreach Division of the Department of Public Information of the United Nations.

In his address to delegates participating in the 1945 San Francisco Conference, which finalized the idea and Charter of the United Nations, President Truman remarked: “All progress begins with differences of opinion and moves onward as the differences are adjusted through reason and mutual understanding.”

His was a perception valid as much for the political, developmental and inter-state worlds as it was for the national and the academic. Today, it remains valid when all five of these worlds intersect at so many points and at so many levels, when “reason”,

the most essential attribute of scholarship, is sought to move from the wrong to the right, from promise to performance.

Sixty-five years after its San Francisco moment, the United Nations has realized many of the promises inherent in its creation, even as the canvas of its expected performance has grown. Issues directly affecting the “dignity and worth” of the human being, in the phrase of the Charter, now command international responsibility, rather than as being reserved entirely within the domestic domain of nations. > 2

It’s Time for a Genuine US–UN Partnership with Africa

Hossein Kamali, Board Member, UNA of San Francisco

This year the United Nations General Assembly is devoted to A New Partnership for Africa’s Development, building on previous declarations stressing the eradication of poverty as the greatest challenge facing the world today, and calling for the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on the implementation of the resolution to its sixty-fourth session.

President Clinton’s historic tour to Africa in March 1998, and the subsequent visits by African leaders to the United States, opened a new chapter of US-Africa relations. The primary policy of President Clinton’s administration towards Africa under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) was focused on integrating Africa through trade, promoting democracy,

and conflict resolution.

In his keynote address at the National Summit on US-Africa held in Washington D.C. in February 2000, President Clinton said “We must pledge that we will never again allow Africa to be marginalized in the United States. We must pledge that in this new millennium, we will help forge a genuine partnership with Africa, one founded on the principle of mutual respect, trust, and good will.”

Africa entered the twenty-first century as the poorest region and has been deprived for decades of international attention. The World Bank and IMF structural Adjustment Programme made the African countries more dependent on foreign aid, a program failure indicating that a needs > 3

Greetings

Thomas Miller, President and CEO, UNA-USA

Dear Colleagues at UNA of San Francisco, Allow me to wish you all the success in the world as you begin your 2010 activities.

Yours was the first chapter/division I visited when I took over at UNA-USA six months ago. I was quite impressed with your programs, your energy, and your creativity then and remain so now. You set the standard for the entire organization and should rightfully be proud of all you have done.

As we move into 2010, I believe we have a lot to be optimistic about: an Administration that believes in the value of multilateral diplomacy, a national organization that continues to connect the American people with the important work of the United Nations, and a vibrant grassroots membership that is both our lifeblood and our uniqueness. Whether it be Global Classrooms or Model UN, our important work in the human rights area, our leadership on ICC issues, our efforts to get the Administration to sign on > 2

Calendar

Membership Holiday Celebration and Commemoration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Thursday, December 10, 6 – 8 pm, at 101 Lombard Street, San Francisco.

UNA-USA 2010 National High School Essay Contest, open to high school students. Deadline for submission is Tuesday, January 5, 2010. See page 3 or unasaessaycontest.com for information.

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And the exercise of this responsibility demands new minds, new patterns, new partners.

When Secretary-General Ban publicly announced the Academic Impact initiative a year ago, he spoke of the United Nations “continuing to open our doors to new partners. The academic community is surely at the top of that list.” He saw in the Impact the “hope to build stronger ties with institutions of higher learning...to benefit from your ideas and scholarship.”

The Academic Impact seeks to build upon the robust base of study and research “on” the United Nations in areas such as international relations, history and political science and encourage the investment of scholarship in areas which can have a durable, if not immediately self-evident, UN dimension, “for” the United Nations.

Science, not diplomacy or politics, is the principal source of clarity and conviction on climate change, for instance. And science too will be the principal source for its solutions, although the choice to affect them will necessarily be diplomatic and political. The “Academic Impact” seeks to effect change and raise the individual voice of scholarship to a collective position of inquiry, exploration and creative solutions. To borrow a phrase from a dear and cherished friend, Sue Zipp, “what would be one lonely step alone now becomes a collective giant leap forward in unity.”

Details about the “Impact” are accessible at academicimpact.org. There is no cost associated with affiliation; the only expectation from participants is an activity each year that supports one or more of these principles. The Impact’s framework allows institutions to work with the UN and with each other to aggregate a still greater impact in supporting universally accepted principles, including those in the areas of human rights, literacy, sustainability and conflict resolution.

Some thirty international networks of universities and other institutes of higher education and research have endorsed the Impact and encouraged their members to join. More than two hundred fifty individual institutions have done so, representing a global diversity of regions and a thematic wealth of disciplines. Many are institutions whose programmes may not immediately suggest a United Nations link but whose work and experience has a direct relevance

on what we, as an Organization and system, are trying to do. Schools of medicine, for instance, can have bearing on our work in health-care; those in architecture can yield innovative models for swift, economical housing in the wake of natural disasters. Research on conservation in a faculty of art can offer the means to preserve the creative work of indigenous communities. A campus that is able to efficiently and economically move to non-conventional energy sources for its power needs can offer a replicable model. An institution that grants credits for student involvement in specific developmental or intercultural activities offers similar example.

These are illustrative instances of how every subject and discipline can have a UN imprint. What we are trying to do is to get relevant institutions to recognise this link and, often without additional effort or expense, undertake activities that can directly support United Nations mandates and objectives.

For our part, we would transmit details of such activities, including studies or projects undertaken, to the nodal department or office best placed to act upon them. Such action could include inputs into policy formulation or the sharing of the specific experience with other institutions and, indeed, with member states.

The Impact can sustain what UN Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information Kiyo Akasaka calls “intellectual social responsibility”, benefiting both society as a whole and the academic community itself. And just as CSR readily identifies corporate social responsibility, “ISR” too may soon emerge as a familiar, and powerful, term, reflecting the realisation by thinking minds not formally within the United Nations that the very specific areas of their intellectual and creative activity can have global relevance and resonance through the United Nations. This is a lesson United Nations Associations have long taught us, and it is a lesson we have learned.

For more information please visit AcademicImpact.org.

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to many conventions/treaties, our widely acclaimed publications and webpage, or our efforts to help the UN help itself, UNA-USA is that indispensable player in this country that helps the American people understand the important work of the United Nations. Chapters and divisions like yours are that key link in this entire process.

Please accept my congratulations for all you do and my best wishes for the coming year.

All the best,

Tom Miller

President and CEO, UNA-USA

Winter Notes

Susan J. Zipp

President, UNA of San Francisco

During 2009 UNA-SF partnered with Bay Area UNAs to welcome our new UNA-USA president, Ambassador Tom Miller, to Northern California. He returned again in September to commemorate the UN International Day of Peace and to outline exciting goals for the future. We are delighted to work together toward strengthening the United Nations and will continue to bring quality cultural and educational programs for peace to our community.

We welcomed five new members to our Board of Directors, and said farewell to past president Kimberly Weichel as her family relocated to Washington DC, and a sad “goodbye” to past president Nancy Peterson who passed away unexpectedly.

The Young Professionals for International Cooperation (YPIC) hosted Dr. George Assaf, UN Vienna, with the assistance of Hossein Kamali and Ted Anderson. Lawrence Wong invited Brazilian Consul General Mauricio E. Cortes Costa to a YPIC After Hours program. We established a new Women’s Committee and supported co-chairs Bronwyn Galloway and Sonia Gaemi with leadership training to promote the UN CEDAW initiative.

Our October 24 United Nations Day program was hosted by SGI-USA with distinguished speaker Dr. Ervin Laszlo. Over 200 people attended, and representatives from our YPIC group had the unique opportunity to meet for dialogue personally with Dr. Laszlo prior to his public address. On December 10 we commemorate the 61st anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights with a year-end celebration, and

The UNA-USA 2010 National High School Essay Contest

JoAnn Aviel, Vice President of UNA-SF and Co-Chair of the UNA-SF Education Committee.

The UNA-SF will be participating in the UNA-USA's 2010 National High School Essay Contest on the United Nations. We would appreciate every UNA member informing any high school student, teacher, or administrator you know about this opportunity for students to learn more about the United Nations and earn valuable prizes. Please make announcements about this contest in any appropriate meetings you attend or through e-mail listings or Internet accounts.

Since 1986, the National High School Essay Contest on the United Nations has inspired students to engage global issues and the work of the UN through scholarship and critical thinking. Each year, The United Nations Association of the USA publishes a topic and question of particular importance to the international community. Students then conduct research and write a response to the question, based not only on the information they have found, but also on their own views and opinion.

It is vital to engage high school students in learning about the UN's role, especially as it becomes ever more apparent that all people must think of themselves as citizens not only of a particular town or country, but

of the world as well.

This year's National High School Essay Contest on the United Nations focuses on the UN Millennium Development Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development, and asks students to tackle the challenge of promoting development through international partnership.

Students are asked to write a letter to the President of the United States answering the following questions:

1. How can the United States build an international system that promotes good governance, development, and poverty reduction?
2. How can the United States promote sustainable development and economic growth in developing countries?

All essay entries must be submitted electronically by midnight January 5, 2010. Essays must be no longer than 1,500 words, typed and double-spaced. The UNA-USA National High School Essay Contest is open to all US students in grades 9 through 12.

One first-place winner will receive an honorarium of \$1,500, as well as airfare and accommodations for him/herself and one parent or guardian to attend UNA-USA's Member's Day, held at the United Nations

Headquarters in March 2010, as an honored guest. There the winner will receive his or her award in a formal ceremony before UNA-USA's members. One second place winner will receive an honorarium in the amount of \$1,000. One third place winner will receive an honorarium in the amount of \$500. Each winner's essay will be sent to President Obama through appropriate UNA-USA channels.

UNA-SF will provide judges to select semi-finalists from this area. The names of these semi-finalists will then be forwarded to UNA-USA headquarters for review and selection of finalists by January 30, 2010. Qualified judges of the UNA-USA staff will evaluate the submissions of the semi-finalists using the National Judging Criteria. From these evaluations, the first, second and third place national winners will be selected on or about February 27, 2010. UNA-SF will honor the semifinalists from our area at our annual meeting in the spring.

For more information on the high school essay contest, please visit the UNA-USA website at unusaessaycontest.com. If you have any questions, please contact JoAnn Aviel at javiel@sfsu.edu.

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assessment must be conducted in the field in consultation with the local community, traditional leaders and those engaged in the private and informal sectors.

President Obama's historic victory and his first presidential visit to Africa raised hope and huge expectations among African people for a change in US-Africa relations. In his address to the Ghanaian Parliament, President Obama said that "the West has often approached Africa as a patron and a source of resources rather than a partner, but the West should not be blamed for everything that went wrong in Africa". President Obama further stated: "The time has come for Africans to take control of their destiny ... you can conquer diseases, end conflicts, and make change from the bottom up, you can do that, yes you can".

Now is the time to initiate a genuine US-UN partnership with Africa with the

objective of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Here are two suggestions:

- As President Obama stated in his address to the United Nations, "democracy cannot be imposed on any nation from outside", but promoting democracy and sharing experience in governance can be integrated in technical cooperation with African nations, when appropriate;
- Africa needs help to recover from the current economic crisis. When addressing Climate Change, special attention should be given to the impact of global actions on the poor. The root cause of this serious issue is nothing but poverty and the absence of basic education. While the international partnership can contribute to challenging poverty related issues in Africa, there is a need for public-private partnership where decisions are made in consultation with the people concerned.

Now is the time to initiate a genuine US-UN partnership with Africa with the objective

of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Suggestions are currently being discussed in UN meetings and global think-tanks. To add your voice to this dialogue, please write to info@una-sf.org or visit una-sf.org.

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warmly welcome 2010, when we will honor the 65th anniversary of the UN Charter signing.

Our upgraded website features articles on the UN, global issues, and dialogues, and will soon be the new site for the *Courier* online newsletter. Please let us know if you are unable to access the Internet and we'll be sure to continue mailing the *Courier* directly to you. You can contact us by calling 415-674-9701, via email at info@una-sf.org, or visiting una-sf.org.

Warm wishes for a happy new year from UNA-SF!

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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 nonprofit membership organization dedicated to building understanding of and support for the ideals and vital work of the UN among the American people.

Its educational and humanitarian campaigns allow members to make a global impact at the local level. In addition, its policy and advocacy programs stress the importance of nations working together and the need for United States leadership in the United Nations.

UNA serves many constituencies, such as community-based members and activists, affiliated organizations, business leaders, educators and academic and foreign policy specialists. The 135 chapters work locally throughout the United States, promoting and carrying out these programs, which benefit both local and international communities. Local chapter efforts are further supported at the regional and national levels through the UNA-USA Council of Chapters and Divisions and the national membership services staff.

As a member of UNA, you will be involved in a valuable service as a community activist. UNA volunteers educate their communities; mobilize support for UN and US leadership; serve as liaisons with the media, educators and public officials in their states and communities; and provide visibility at the community level. Our members are a source of new leadership, ideas and energy. For information on membership, see unausa.org.