



newsletter

of the Maine Chapter of the United Nations Association

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PROGRAM ACTIVITIES - recent:

Water For Life Symposium

14 April 2005

co-sponsored with the Chewonki Foundation

The symposium, hosted by the Chewonki Foundation, was well attended. Three speakers described the crucial importance of water as a dwindling vital resource from their respective perspectives. Elizabeth Burleson, environmental lawyer, discussed international water courses and their potential for harmony or friction between riparian states; John Banks, Director of the Penobscot Nation's Department of Natural Resources, told us of the importance of "The River" (the Penobscot) as a source of sustenance for his people; and Selam Gerzher Alemayo, an Ethiopian graduate student at the University of Ohio, discussed the role of water in rural villages in Africa. A vigorous debate between the panelists and members of the audience followed the presentations. UNA board members participating in the symposium organization were gratified by the effective contributions of the Chewonki Foundation and hope that this will be the first of many cooperative endeavors between the two organizations.

World Law Day Forum

1 May 2005

at the University of Maine School of Law

On World Law Day, UNA-Maine, in collaboration with other members of the Maine Alliance for the International Criminal Court (MAICC), presented a forum on "Africa and International Criminal Justice". It was a provocative discussion of the travails of international machinery striving to prosecute crimes against humanity in the face of unremitting opposition to the Court by the United State and of the complications of threats to human rights rooted in the "war on terror". A distinguished panel experienced in various aspects of the ongoing pursuit of justice in Africa led the discussions. Presentations were made by Adotei Akwei, Amnesty International USA Campaign Director; Wasana Punyasena, Deputy Convenor of the American NGOs' Coalition for the ICC; James Cockayne, who worked with the Special Court for Sierra Leone; and Togolese lawyer Désiré Assogbavi, of the worldwide Coalition for the ICC, following which a community panel of local residents from African countries under investigation by the ICC gave their perspectives and addressed questions to the guest panelists.

"MeMunc" - next page

Model United Nations (“MeMunc”) 2005

UNA-Maine, through the generosity of members & friends, will donate \$5000 toward costs of Model UN 2005. In the seven years of our sponsorship of Model United Nations Conferences, these exciting events have grown steadily in size, complexity, and relevance to the international issues of the day. In six of those years, the Conference has been co-sponsored and hosted by the University of Southern Maine under the effective leadership of professor Lynn Kuzma and her students. The USM students, who act as officials of the Conference, visit participating high schools to brief faculties & students on procedures.

From May 17th to 19th, 350 students from 13 secondary schools in Maine (and one each from NH, MA and CT), representing 142 governments, met in five mock UN forums: the Disarmament Committee of the General Assembly (questions of weapons in space and nuclear disarmament); the UN Development Program (millennial development goals for elimination of poverty); the Security Council (Middle East road map for peace and UN restructuring); Special Session of the General Assembly (natural disaster prevention and rehabilitation); and the Organization of American States (drug trafficking and exploitation of women). High school students prepared for their participation by studying the countries they were assigned to represent and the agenda items assigned to their UN body. Also, a few students were assigned to the Conference Press Corps, which produced a newsletter called “The MeMunc Junk”, summarizing Conference results. A few excerpts:

• General Assembly Disarmament Committee: “After two days of heated debate, delegates in the General Assembly reached consensus on an encompassing nuclear non-proliferation resolution, which won support by targeting the interests of less influential nations. It promotes complete disarmament in 20 years at a rate of 5% annually and requires nations utilizing nuclear energy to sign a UN pact that guarantees use for peaceful purposes only. . . . The committee took up a resolution introduced by the Delegate from Denmark which bans all weapons from outer space and asserts that space is an international territory”.

• Organization of American States: “The Committee was stunned yesterday evening by news that the deadly Marburg virus had escaped from a laboratory in Manitoba, Canada. After questioning a scientist from the National Microbiology Laboratory . . . the delegates were handed yet another Press Corps Newsflash stating that the virus had spread to Argentina and Chile as well as possibly the United States.”

• General Assembly Special Session on Natural Disasters: “On Wednesday morning the session passed two of four proposed resolutions. . . . The second, presented by Korea, Spain and Romania, focused on providing jobs for construction of safe housing and rebuilding in the aftermath of a natural disaster, to hit two birds with one stone.”

• “United Nations Development Program passed eight resolutions on poverty. The delegate from Turkey (Elizabeth Doyle from Westbrook High) said ‘UNICEF and its sub-committees have helped create opportunities for immunization and nutritional information to her people’.”

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES - future:

Torture Accountability and Prevention Waldoboro, Maine Sunday, 17 July 2005, noon–4pm

This educational session for UNA and Amnesty International members will include:

- an introduction — by Professor Ken Rodman of Colby College — to the UN’s human rights mechanisms and standards, in particular those relating to torture;
- a review — by Shenna Bellows, Maine Civil Liberties Union Executive Director — of the United States’ legal obligations concerning torture, and updates on current lawsuits by the ACLU & others;
- an outline — by AI-Maine member Steve McAllister — of the current Amnesty International Denounce Torture Initiative;
- discussion of possible public efforts on this topic.

Everyone welcome. Picnic lunch and directions to the site will be provided, so RSVP to <thesil@midcoast.com> or 832-6863.

United Nations Day 2005

The General Assembly has designated the 24th day of October, the day in 1945 on which the United Nations Charter became effective, for observation world-wide as “United Nations Day”. UNA-Maine traditionally has commemorated the day with an appropriate event, but UN Day in 2005, marking the 60th anniversary of the Charter, deserves special recognition. We are fortunate that Sir Brian Urquhart, former UN Under-Secretary General in charge of Peace-Keeping, and author of definitive biographies of Dag Hammarskjold and Ralph Bunche, has agreed to be the principal speaker at this year’s event, which is scheduled for **Saturday, October 22nd**. A flyer will be sent to UNA members giving details in early autumn.

Common Ground Fair

UNA-Maine has reserved a space in the “Social and Political Action Area” of the Common Ground Country Fair in Unity Maine, scheduled for **September 23rd–25th**. We expect the table to be staffed throughout the fair, to answer questions, distribute literature, and solicit memberships. UNA members wishing to volunteer for this duty should contact Suzanne Hedrick at 563-7401 or <Suechas@midcoast.com>.

News Bites from UN Wire

Here is another installment of selected news items from UN Wire (www.UNwire@smartbrief.com) — chosen because they are thought to be of interest but not especially well known.

❖ 2/28/05 • A global treaty that imposes strong warnings on cigarette packages and an eventual ban on tobacco advertising & sponsorship has been launched. 170 countries have signed the treaty and “its entry into force is a demonstration of governments’ commitment to reduce death and illness from tobacco use,” said Lee Jong-wook, Director-General of the WHO. (*The Guardian*, London)

❖ 3/10 • The number of cases of the most serious type of malaria around the world has increased to an estimated 515 million, according to a study in the journal *Nature*, making the disease possibly more deadly than AIDS. ... The study said that most of the cases are located in sub-Saharan Africa and nearly a quarter of the total are in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific. (*The Guardian*, London)

❖ 4/1 • The UN Security Council voted to refer suspected war criminals in Sudan’s Darfur region to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. It marks the first time the Security Council has referred a case to the court. The US, which opposes the Court in general but agreed to a compromise in this case, abstained together with three other members. (*Boston Globe*/Associated Press)

❖ 4/7 • The United Nations must scrap its current, much-criticized human rights agency and start fresh with a new one in order to restore credibility and effectively promote rights worldwide, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, speaking to the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. He said that the Commission has failed to protect human rights, especially in Sudan’s war-torn Darfur region, and that it should be replaced with a new council that can meet human rights challenges as they arise. (Yahoo/Associated Press)

❖ 4/18 • In an interview with *Der Spiegel*, Mark Malloch Brown, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan’s Chief of Staff (and former head of UNDP), talks about how the oil-for-food controversy has been a “tremendous blow” to the world body, the need for reform, and hopes that Annan’s successor WILL BE A WOMAN (emphasis added).

❖ 4/18 • Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and former Senate majority leader George Mitchell, who co-chair the congressional task force examining UN reform plans, met with Kofi Annan and other officials. (*San Francisco Chronicle*/Associated Press)

❖ 4/19 • US foreign aid officials continue to question United Nations efforts to increase aid to developing countries by setting a fixed target of 0.7% of gross domestic product annually, noting that many poor countries have fallen into an “aid trap”

that only trade and private investment can overcome. Though only a few European countries currently meet such standards, the US Ambassador to the UN Economic and Social Council said “aid is not scarce” and made no indication that the US, unlike France and the UK, would agree to such levels. (alertNet.org/Reuters)

❖ 4/27 • Former Turkish finance minister Kemal Dervis was nominated by Secretary General Kofi Annan to head the UN Development Program. The top spot at the UNDP, one of the most powerful positions at the UN, was vacated when Mark Malloch Brown left earlier this year to become Annan’s Chief of Staff. (*KurdishMedia.com*/Agence France-Press)

❖ 4/27 • The best person for the job as US ambassador to the UN is none other than President George W. Bush’s father, former President George H. W. Bush, *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman argues.

❖ 5/4 • Various countries already have started jockeying over who should replace Kofi Annan as UN Secretary-General after his term ends at the end of next year, *Newsweek* reports. Asian countries want the next UN head to hail from their region, while the US likely will want someone from Eastern Europe, a region typically sympathetic to US interests, sources say. (*Newsweek* 5/9)

❖ 5/11 • Meeting at a summit on climate change co-sponsored by the UN Foundation and held at the UN, investors in charge of managing roughly \$3.2 trillion called for companies to disclose the financial risks of global warming. To manage the growing risks associated with climate change and achieve business breakthroughs, “creative, innovative uses of capital are critical”, said UN Foundation President Timothy Wirth. (*Forbes*/Associated Press)

❖ 5/23 • Secretary-General Kofi Annan and supporters of the world body spoke out against an emerging threat from Republicans that Congress may withhold US dues to the United Nations until significant reforms are made, particularly regarding human rights and ethics. (*The Washington Post*/Reuters)

❖ 5/25 • UN Secretary-General Annan has tapped former Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres to become the next High Commissioner for Refugees at the UN, replacing former Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers who resigned in February over allegations of sexual misconduct. (*International Herald Tribune*)

❖ 6/2 • Saying climate change is a serious danger that must be dealt with forcefully, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger unveiled an ambitious plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions and make the state “a leader in the fight against global warming”. The plan, unveiled at the UN World Environment Day Conference in San Francisco, would cut gas emissions to 2000 levels by 2010, 1990 levels by 2020 and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. (*San Francisco Chronicle*/Associated Press)

UNA CALENDAR:

JULY 17, noon-4pm - briefing on Torture Accountability & Prevention for UNA-Maine and AI-Maine members - Waldoboro - **RSVP:** 832-6863 <thesil@midcoast.com>

SEPTEMBER 23-25 - UNA table at Common Ground Fair

OCTOBER 22 - UN Day commemoration in Maine - featuring Sir Brian Urquhart - details TBA

OCTOBER 24 - UN Day (60th Anniversary)

★ Looking for a speaker on a UN-related topic for a school, civic club, political meeting, or religious gathering? Call Bruce Stedman at 207-882-7387.

It's hard to think of a world without the UN.

Senator Patrick Leahy
of Vermont, 6 June 2005

*Humanity will not enjoy security without development, it will not enjoy development without security, and it will enjoy neither without respect for human rights. . . .
The United Nations must be reshaped in ways not previously imagined and with a boldness and speed not previously shown.*

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan,
In Larger Freedom



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