



newsletter

of the Maine Chapter of the United Nations Association

Winter 2005, Vol. XIV, No. 4
Editor: Bruce Stedman
 Assistant: Thesil Morlan

11 Columbia Street, Augusta, ME 04330
www.unamaine.org

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT
Wendy Hazard, Belgrade
 495-2675
VICE PRESIDENT
Bruce Stedman, Westport
 882-7387
SECRETARY
Anne Brautigam, Brunswick
 725-4483
TREASURER
Robert Howe, Harpswell
 622-4466
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Thurston Holt, Cape Elizabeth
 799-8290

DIRECTORS

Isabel Denham, Yarmouth
 846-5931
Tom Ewell, Portland
 772-1918
Suzanne Hedrick, Nobleboro
 563-7041
Lynn Kuzma, Portland
 773-7353
Victoria Mares-Hershey, Portland
 775-0105
Thesil Morlan, Waldoboro
 832-6863
Al Niese, Woolwich
 443-8613
David Pearson, Kents Hill
 685-3749
Mary Lee Rushmore, New Harbor
 677-3647
Vanesa Saric, South Portland
 409-2552
Trudi Schneider, Georgetown
 371-2152
Lydia Sparrow, Brunswick
 725-5477
Herschel Sternlieb, Brunswick
 725-2888
Philip Thompson, Portland
 871-7171
Sarah Walton, Augusta
 622-1993

The officers & directors of UNA-Maine send all members our good wishes and our fervent prayers for peace in the New Year.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

United Nations Day 2005

Our commemoration of the 60th birthday of the United Nations, featuring guest speaker Sir Brian Urquhart, retired UN Under-Secretary General, was adjudged a great success. About 150 members and friends were enthralled by Sir Brian's reminiscences about UN key characters, successes and failures, and his comments about possible reforms of the UN system. An added and refreshing attraction was the presentation by three USM students about the Model UN Conference held at the USM Gorham campus last May, made at the reception following Sir Brian's speech. Sir Brian was introduced to the assembly by his son, Thomas Urquhart. Bruce Stedman served as master of ceremonies.

Annual Meeting 2005

The annual meeting was held on 3 December 2005 in the main dining room of The Highlands at Topsham, with arrangements directed by board member Trudi Schneider. President Wendy Hazard's annual report comprised reflections on UNA-Maine's activities during the year and on the parlous situation of US/UN relations. Board member Vanesa Saric gave a brief account of the plans for an expanded Model UN Conference in 2006. On the recommendation of the Nominating Committee, the following officers and directors were elected unanimously for the year 2006:

Officers

President	Wendy Hazard
Vice President	Thesil Morlan
Secretary	Anne Brautigam
Treasurer	Herschel Sternlieb
Deputy Treasurer	Bob Howe
Immed. Past President	Thurston Holt

Vice President Bruce Stedman is leaving the Board at the end of 2005. He gave the Annual Meeting keynote speech, discussing what international service had meant to him in his 31 years in the United Nations Secretariat.

Directors

Thomas Deford*
 Isabel Denham
 Julia Edwards
 Tom Ewell
 Suzanne Hedrick**
 Ernestine King*
 Victoria Mares-Hershey**
 Al Niese
 Mary Lee Rushmore
 Trudi Schneider**
 Sarah Walton

(* denotes new member; ** denotes director completing two-year term in 2006)

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Future Programs

The Program Committee will firm up plans for program activities early in the New Year. Activities relating to the Law of the Sea, Torture, Peacekeeping and Climate Change are among those under consideration, in addition to our regular participation in the Maine Alliance for the International Criminal Court. Suggestions from members as to possible subjects for future programs would be most welcome. Suggestions should be passed to the Program Committee convenor, Thomas Ewell at <tewell@maine.rr.com>.

A steering committee has been established to assist Professor Lynn Kuzma in organizing and executing plans for an expanded Model UN Conference to be held at the USM Gorham Campus in May 2006, when as many as 500 secondary students from around the state are expected to participate. Additional information will be circulated to members as details become available.

Public Relations

The United Nations General Assembly and other UN bodies have designated various dates throughout the year as special days of commemoration or aspiration in relation to a vast array of topics. The UNA-Maine board is using these dates as hooks for letters to the editor and op-eds publicizing UN activities, many of which are unknown to — or taken for granted by — the public that depends on them. Here is a partial list, with selected quotations ~

WORLD TELECOMMUNICATIONS DAY (ITU, 17 May) - **Bruce Stedman** - *Mainers may not realize the extent to which activities of the United Nations impact their daily lives. . . . Mainers can write, telephone or fly internationally only because of the work [of three little-known Specialized Agencies] of the United Nations system* (Op-ed, Brunswick Times Record, 13 May 2004).

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF UN PEACEKEEPERS (29 May) - **Al Niese** - . . . *Established by the General Assembly, International Day of UN Peacekeepers in a real sense honors those Americans who died in the hope of a better world. The UN observance also lends substance to our yearnings for peace — peace in a world grown, quite simply, too dangerous for anything else* (Letter, Coastal Journal, 27 May and Times Record, 28 May 2005).

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY (UNEP, 5 June) - **Bruce Stedman** - . . . *The bottom line is that the most serious threat to our national security is not posed by terrorism; it is the threat of environmental degradation. We should all celebrate World Environment Day by cleaning up our act; supporting clean air; clean water and protection of our natural resources; and demanding that Washington shape up or ship out* (Letter, Times Record, 4 June 2004).

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE OZONE LAYER (16 September) - **Bruce Stedman** - After UN-sponsored assessment of scientific evidence followed by intergovernmental negotiations, the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer was adopted in 1987 on this date *and has been a remarkable success. . . . If depletion of the ozone layer had not been halted, ultimately life on earth as we know it could not continue. Maine's famous outdoor attractions, our marvelous coastal sailing, our beaches, ski slopes, snowmobile trails and our forests and fisheries would become uninhabitable. The actions by the world community to protect the ozone layer provide a fascinating example of how humanity can act as one to face a common danger* (Letter, Times Record, 15 September 2005).

UNIVERSAL CHILDREN'S DAY (UNICEF, 20 November) - **Wendy Hazard** - . . . *UNICEF and the UN High Commissioner for*

Refugees provide emergency shelter and healthcare for displaced children in time of war or when natural disasters hit. In addition, UNICEF's vaccination and water treatment programs, its programs that provide equipment to schools, hospitals, daycare and nutrition centers, and its persistent efforts to encourage governments to protect children's rights are all central to the UN's mission. UNICEF's record is solid and exemplary, but it needs the full commitment of all nations. In 1989, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention pledges children everywhere the right to life, liberty, education, health care, and protection from discrimination, torture and cruel or degrading treatment. It is the most widely ratified treaty in the world. Only the US and Somalia have not ratified this convention. Surely the leaders of this country can do better. . . . (Letter, 2004)

WORLD POPULATION DAY (11 July) - **Al Niese** - . . . *Specifically, Bush's weapon is his fist, clenched around UNFPA dollars that would provide for women in 140 countries what is here in the US a woman's legal right: access to family planning and reproductive health resources. . . . Let the president recognize the tragedy of human history. Let him, too, acknowledge the world's imperfection — and his own. Let him open his hand, release our UN Population Fund dollars, and lay aside for now what he seems insistent is absolutely right and pure. Let him do instead, for heaven's sake, what is compassionate!* (Featured letter, Portland Press Herald, 13 December 2005)

INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS DAY (18 December) - **Herschel Sternlieb** - *The United Nations, with the USA as a sponsor, has designated December 18th as International Migrants Day. Except for the Native Americans, all of us in the USA today are either immigrants or the descendents of immigrants who came here willingly or in chains. In the world today there are over 150 million migrants, refugees like the victims of natural disasters or people running away from wars, unemployment or pestilence, hoping ever hoping for something better, something safer. . . . The world needs a new economic and political paradigm that will mitigate the need for migrations, that every nation will be a free, safe, prosperous and joyful place that only a fool would want to leave* (Letter, Brunswick Times Record, 14 December 2005).

News Bites from UN Wire

We continue the practice of selecting news items from the UN Wire (www.unwire@smartbrief.com) which may be of general interest but not widely known ~

9/22/05 • The world's obesity problem is growing fast, with the number of overweight people estimated to soar from 1 billion today to 1.5 billion in 2015, the World Health Organization said. Much of the increase will come in developing countries, with diseases such as heart stroke and diabetes increasing as well, the WHO said as it released the estimate ahead of World Heart Day (*Financial Times*).

9/29/05 • US scientists from NASA and the National Snow & Ice Data Center have reported the lowest levels of Arctic ice in more than a century, attributing the decline to global warming thought to be caused by greenhouse gas emissions. Inuit hunters who depend on the region's game are expected to file suit against the US government for failing to protect the melting ice, calling it a violation of their human rights (*New York Times*).

10/13/05 • The United Nations is still struggling to find temporary housing for its staff for when its outdated New York headquarters is renovated. Officials also have discussed the possibility of moving some of the functions that are at the UN headquarters now to other countries during the renovation (*Financial Times*).

10/13/05 • This year is expected to be the hottest one on record, continuing a 25-year trend of rising temperatures worldwide, NASA climatologists found. This new climate data is just the most recent sign of global warming; other strong signals include the record shrinkage reported above (*The Washington Post*).

10/25/05 • The goals that were enshrined in the United Nations Charter 60 years ago, especially those aiming for international peace and security, "have never been more significant", according to a *China Daily* editorial. The UN is the only global forum that can effectively tackle widespread violence and poverty, but to do so more powerfully the world body must reform to "improve its accountability and efficiency, and become more responsive to the needs of the world", the editorial argues (*Xinhuanet.com*).

10/27/05 • Well-known companies were among the 2,392 firms from around the world that paid Saddam Hussein's regime a total of \$1.8 billion in improper kickbacks under the Oil-for-Food program, the fifth and final independent report concluded. The US's UN ambassador John Bolton said the report shows the world organization needs "urgent, immediate reform" (*The Economist*).

10/28/05 • Paul Volcker, who led the independent panel investigating the Oil-for-Food program, said in an interview that when he took on the assignment he did not know what a big blow to the United Nations the whole issue would become (*Los Angeles Times*).

11/08/05 • Nations that have not already done so should be drawing up plans for handling a global flu pandemic, now considered inevitable, experts said at a World Health Organization meeting. WHO is studying the possibility that a pair of antivirals that offer a cheaper and more readily available alternative to Tamiflu could be used against some bird flu strains (*The Wall Street Journal*).

12/02/05 • John Bolton has shown more muscle than diplomacy during his time so far as the US United Nations ambassador, and now he's threatening to block the world body's two-year budget "unless his demands for major reforms are met almost immediately", the *New York Times* editorializes. The US reform agenda does have many good points and is right in trying to improve how the UN is run, but Bolton's fiercely unilateral approach is "turning him into one of the biggest obstacles to achieving changes that had been within reach before he appeared on the scene", the paper argues.

12/05/05 • Johns Hopkins University professor Ruth Wedgwood believes the US can encourage UN reform by practicing "competitive multilateralism" – using regional coalitions like NATO, the Organization of American States and the African Union to provide humanitarian relief and security intervention. Wedgwood suggests this approach would reduce the power of traditional UN blocs like the Non-Aligned Movement and the G-77 (*The New York Times*).

12/06/05 • Secretary-General Kofi Annan delivered a plan on building an office to address concerns about the ethics climate of the United Nations. "Recent events have created the imperative to establish new mechanisms to improve ethics within the organization. The creation of an ethics office is central to this effort," Annan said (*Xinhuanet.com*).

12/08/05 • United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, said the use of severe interrogation techniques and the rendition of terror suspects, two counterterrorism tactics the US reportedly has adopted, tear away at the very fabric of international laws that prohibit torture. "The principle once believed to be unsailable – the inherent right to physical integrity and dignity of the person – is becoming a casualty of the so-called war on terrorism", Arbour said (*The Washington Post*).

12/08/05 • UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan defended the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, after she faced criticism by US Ambassador John Bolton for her comments on torture and detention. "The Secretary General has absolutely no disagreement with the statement she made yesterday, and he sees no reason to object to any of it", Annan's spokesman noted (*The New York Times*).

12/09/05 • Developing countries and companies promoting environmentally friendly solutions will gain billions of dollars over the next several years under reforms agreed to at the UN climate change conference in Montreal. Governments agreed to several changes to the Kyoto Treaty's so-called clean development mechanism, including boosting the budget for green projects in poor countries (*Financial Times*).

12/13/05 • UN Secretary General Annan and US envoy John Bolton have met to discuss reform of the world body, including transferring power from the much-criticized Human Rights Commission to a new human rights council and creating a Peacebuilding Commission. "They agreed that everyone needs to work constructively on all sides to find a solution and an outcome", a UN spokesman said (UPI).

UNA CALENDAR:

MARCH date TBA - Canadian film, ***The Peacekeepers*** - Damariscotta, in collaboration with CONA

MARCH 8 - International Women's Day

★ Looking for a speaker on a UN-related topic for a school, civic club, political meeting, or religious gathering?
Call Wendy Hazard at 207-495-2675.

The prize recognizes the role of multilateralism in resolving all of the challenges we are facing today.

- 2005 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency

Whether our task is fighting poverty, stemming the spread of disease, or saving innocent lives from mass murder, we have seen that we cannot succeed without the leadership of the strong, and the engagement of all.

- UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (September 2005)

To many poor people in the world's poorest countries today the risk of being attacked by terrorists or with weapons of mass destruction is far removed from the pervasive reality of the so-called soft threats that exact a deadly toll each year: hunger, lack of safe drinking water and sanitation, and endemic diseases. These soft threats kill millions a year — far more than so-called hard or 'real' threats to security. They cannot be ignored until the hard threats have been taken care of.

- UN Assistant Secretary General Ramesh Thakur



Maine Chapter of the UNA-USA

11 Columbia Street
Augusta, ME 04330