



newsletter

of the Maine Chapter of the United Nations Association

Summer 2008, Vol. XVII, No. 3
 Editor: Thesil Morlan
 Assistant: Al Niese

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

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Anne Brautigam, Brunswick
Secretary
Wendy Hazard, Belgrade
Suzanne Hedrick, Nobleboro
Thesil Morlan, Waldoboro
Moderator
Al Niese, Woolwich
Membership Chair
Mary Lee Rushmore, New Harbor
Jelena Sarenac, Portland

ADVISORS

Thomas Deford, Spruce Head
Lynn Kuzma, Portland
Ernestine King, Topsham
Victoria Mares-Hershey, Portland
Bruce Stedman, Westport Island
Sarah Walton, Augusta

LIAISONS

- Global Energy Security Coalition
Wendy Hazard, Belgrade
- Maine Alliance for the International Criminal Court (MAICC)
Patrick Downey, Bangor
- Maine Model UN (MeMUNC)
Suzanne Hedrick, Nobleboro
Mary Lee Rushmore, New Harbor
Trudi Schneider, Georgetown

TREASURER

Robert Howe, Harpswell

ARCHIVIST

Anne Morlan, Waldoboro



MeMUNC 2008

Maine Model UN Conference 10th Year by Al Niese

Nearly 500 students from 27 high schools in Maine and neighboring states gathered from May 13–15 on the Gorham campus of the University of Southern Maine (USM) for Maine's 10th Model United Nations Conference (MeMUNC), where they simulated United Nations deliberations in New York City.

Over the past decade MeMUNC has become steadily more popular. UNA-Maine member Trudi Schneider, working with a generous grant from John Wasileski, has helped to expand MeMUNC participation by 35% in the past three years. The program is now at capacity, so options for further expansion are under consideration.

Lynn Kuzma, USM Associate Professor of Political Science, introduced the program and still coordinates it. Her college students ("global educators") provide preparatory support for high school students (the Model UN "delegates") and their teachers regarding assigned countries, substantive issues, and UN procedures & protocol. USM students also chair working UN bodies such as the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the Security Council, and the UN Environment Program (UNEP) as well as regional organizations.

The opening session was conducted by this year's Secretary General, USM student Benjamin Holder, who, as a high school student represented Ecuador at MeMUNC. He said he hoped the students would emerge from the experience more "globally

aware and locally engaged". Throughout conference, Holder would administer the complex proceedings with calm efficiency and command of detail.

This year's riveting keynoter was Alexander Petroff, youthful founder of Working Villages International, who works in African communities to implement the self-sufficiency ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, enhancing prospects for peace.

The Security Council, led by Jelena Sarenac and James Bjorkman, held discussions on violence in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian statehood, and related complexities. The Human Rights Council discussed child labor, child soldiers, education for children, and alternatives to execution for juvenile crimes.

Other deliberating groups were the 6th Committee of the General Assembly, the Security Council Sanctions group, UNEP, and the General Affairs & External Relations Committee of the European Union (considering the future of Kosovo).

Student diplomats came prepared with position papers on each represented government's perspective on international issues. Throughout the conference, they had the opportunity to exercise skills they had practiced with their global educators and teachers: negotiating while staying "in character" and faithful to a government's position, resolution-writing, parliamentary procedure, conflict resolution, and public speaking. Awards (named for Bruce Stedman) were given to students who appeared to have used these skills most effectively.

MeMUNC was mostly, but not entirely, intense work. But there was time for 3-on-3 basketball in the evenings, games, and a dance on the last night, which included a tournament.

Students at Model UN events soon tend to be identified with their roles. One 2008 participant recalled that, at a recent MeMUNC, there was a dance at the end of a day when there had been intense debate over Middle East policy. Looking out at the dance floor that evening, someone exclaimed, "Look! There's Israel dancing with Palestine." It seems hard to imagine a better image of hope for the UN — and the world.

"Education is peacekeeping by another name," said Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General. A Model United Nations Conference educates, and, if Kofi Annan is correct, represents an investment in world peace.

Political Developments

Arrears ~ In mid-July, both the Senate Appropriations Committee and a House Appropriations Subcommittee approved FY 2009 spending bills that fund US contributions to the UN system. The Senate bill recommends funding US membership at the President's request level and increases funding for UN peacekeeping and UN voluntary contributions. The Senate Committee criticized the budget request for under-funding UN peacekeeping, noting that it assumes a funding cut for every mission even as the Administration votes in the Security Council to increase peacekeeping mandates. The Committee warned that additional funding would still be needed in FY 2009 to allow the US to pay its dues in full.

STUDENT COMMENTS, LUNCH LINE, FINAL DAY

Asked to comment on the value of MeMUNC for them, students in the lunch line said (a sampling):

- *I learned how not to be manipulated* [in UN deliberations].
- *I was inspired by ideas that other students* [as delegates] *brought to the table.*
- *MeMUNC prepares you for life, really.*
- *I learned about countries I never even heard of before.*
- *My sister did MeMUNC before me, so I came; now she's in international relations Islamic studies in college.*
- *I had to speak in an academic dialect, so I couldn't use words such as "like" the way I do when I'm talking.*
- *I was challenged to move out of my comfort zone.*

UNFPA funds denied for 7th consecutive year ~ The Administration decided again to withhold a congressionally-appropriated \$40 million for the UN Population Fund.

Arms Trade Treaty - Ask <thesil@midcoast.com> for actions ahead of UN General Assembly debate in October.

Cluster munitions ~ UNA-USA signed a letter to Congress urging support for legislation to restrict the use, sale & transfer of cluster munitions and calling on the President to sign the new Cluster Munitions Convention.

ICC & US ~ UNA-USA was one of more than two dozen organizations that sent a letter to members of Congress seeking to de-link the provision of bilateral economic assistance from US policy toward the International Criminal Court.

Anniversaries ~ A resolution commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in the House by voice vote on 10 June. Rep. Carolyn Maloney has introduced a resolution (H. Con. Res. 380) that calls on the President to encourage Americans to observe this 63rd anniversary year of UN founding and urges him to promote full implementation of substantive UN reforms that are underway and adoption of additional strengthening reforms.

Iran ~ In UNA-USA's view, H. Con. Res. 362, which appears to call for the US to bypass the UN Security Council with coercive measures against Iran by endorsing forcible action tantamount to a blockade, contains dangerous wording that could be interpreted as demanding the violation of fundamental UN Charter obligations. If the resolution has not passed by the time this newsletter arrives, please see talking points for messages to Congress and letters to the editor at <www.unausa.org>.

News Bites from UN Wire

(www.smartbrief.com/un_wire/) selected by **Bruce Stedman**

4/21 • **E-waste choking developing countries.** Despite international prohibitions against the export and import of toxic materials, tens of thousands of tons of e-waste are shipped to Africa, India and China every year, adding to health and environmental problems. Many impoverished people eke out a dangerous living digging through the waste for usable parts, and the piles of discarded materials continue to grow (*The Toronto Star*).

4/23 • **Darfur death toll higher than believed.** An estimated 300,000 people, about 100,000 more than previously thought, have died in the last five years of conflict in Sudan's Darfur region, said John Holmes, UN humanitarian affairs head. Sudanese officials dispute such high figures, saying only around 10,000 people have died (BBC).

4/30 • **Fueled by aid workers, Darfur town an oasis of prosperity.** In stark contrast to the rest of Darfur — where burned-out villages, constant danger and extreme poverty dominate the landscape — the city of El Fasher is booming, fueled by thousands of aid workers from the United Nations and other organizations, as well as an influx of refugees (*Los Angeles Times*).

5/7 • **South African court mandates right to water.** A Johannesburg court ruling that orders the city to provide 50 liters of free water per person every day to residents may set new international standards for people's right to water. The volume ordered by the court equals the bare minimum of people's daily water needs, according to World Health Organization guidelines (IRIN News).

5/12 • **Fears grow of a new nuclear arms race.** Nuclear proliferation experts say they are concerned that a new global arms race may be building as at least 40 developing countries in recent years have expressed interest to the International Atomic Energy Agency about starting a nuclear power program. IAEA chief Mohammed ElBaradei said recently that most of those countries are not pursuing nuclear weapons but desire to have an atomic capability as "insurance, a deterrence" (*The Washington Post*).

5/16 • **League of Democracies.** According to John McCain, Darfur's genocide will be over in five years, if only we replace the UN with a "League of Democracies", an international body shorn of pesky non-allies like China and Russia (UN Dispatch).

5/29 • **Countries agree to ban cluster bombs.** Representatives of 111 countries agreed to ban the use of cluster bombs, which have been criticized for often maiming civilians, including many children. The agreement in Dublin was reached after UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown intervened personally, but the primary makers or users of this weapon — the US, Russia, China, Israel, India and Pakistan — did not join the treaty (*The Washington Post*).

6/2 • **Malaria battle gains mainstream popularity.** The "Nothing but Nets" program, where \$10 buys an insecticide-treated bed net, has united people and organizations from all walks of life to conquer malaria and helped make charitable action a wildly popular undertaking, the *New York Times* reports. Supporters include the UN Foundation, the National Basketball Association, the TV show "American Idol" and more than 70,000 individual donors.

6/20 • **At Security Council, Rice urges action on Zimbabwe.** The international community must help stop the widespread political violence in Zimbabwe, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told the UN Security Council. The US, holding the rotating Security Council presidency, is working to get Zimbabwe taken up as a formal Council issue before the southern African country's controversial run-off vote (*Seattle Post Intelligencer*).

6/26 • **Mandela has harsh words for Mugabe.** Though he has rarely spoken publicly about politics in recent times, former South African President Nelson Mandela criticized Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe in strong terms, blaming him for the outbreak of government supported violence in Zimbabwe. Another South African leader, Desmond Tutu, had even sterner words for Mugabe, calling him a monster (*Los Angeles Times*).

7/11 • **Hague court to indict Sudan leader on genocide charges.** The International Criminal Court will issue an arrest warrant for Sudan's president Omar Hassan al-Bashir, marking the first time it has pursued a sitting head of state on charges of genocide. UN Security Council representatives met to discuss how the indictment will complicate the ongoing peacekeeping mission. Aid workers in Sudan have made plans to evacuate non-essential personnel. Sudan's UN ambassador said that evidence suggesting that the government played some role in the recent attack on UN peacekeepers was false, but warned that an indictment would have a debilitating effect on the UN mission (*The Washington Post*).

7/14 • **French leader inaugurates Mediterranean Union.** French President Nicolas Sarkozy [began to] realize his vision of a Union for the Mediterranean when representatives of more than 40 nations gathered to inaugurate the organization. Sarkozy initially had envisioned a fraternity consisting solely of those nations bordering the Mediterranean, though it was eventually expanded to include the entire EU. During the session, Lebanon and Syria agreed to establish embassies in one another's capitals, and France even played host to a meeting between Israel's Ehud Olmert and Palestine's Mahmoud Abbas. MU co-presidents Sarkozy and Hosni Mubarak, president of Egypt, have not yet established where the headquarters will be (*The New York Times*).

7/18 • **Russia's veto worrisome for Security Council.** Russia's recent veto against sanctions for Zimbabwe at the UN Security Council has Western diplomats worried over working with the administration of new President Dmitry Medvedev in the future. Russia has no obvious interests in Zimbabwe, leaving many to believe the move was a show of force to prevent the Security Council from setting a precedent of addressing government perpetuation of human rights abuses (*The Economist*).

7/20 • **Karadzic arrest adds to tribunals' arsenal.** The arrest of one of the world's most infamous war crimes suspects, Radovan Karadzic, has bolstered the credibility of war crimes tribunals across the globe, legal professionals and human rights groups said. Tribunal advocates have long argued that patience and international diplomacy would yield results, even as critics assailed the processes as expensive and ineffective (*The New York Times*).

CALENDAR

16 September - Talk by Ambassador Thomas Pickering, UNA-USA Co-chairman, at Bowdoin College; co-sponsored by UNA-Maine; details TBA

24 October - UN Day - event to be announced

13, 14 November - Jerusalem Women Speak: three women, a Muslim, a Christian and a Jew, speak about shared hopes for peace & reconciliation; their US tour is organized by Partners for Peace <www.partnersforpeace.org> and co-sponsored locally by UNA-Maine at UMA (13 November) and USM (14 November); FMI: <whazard@gwi.net>

6 December - Annual Meeting

- We welcome the unprecedented number of new members who have responded to Al Niese's invitation.
- And we thank all contributors to our Education Fund (which includes MeMUNC support). Designated donations to the Fund may be sent at any time to the Augusta address below.
- To book a UNA speaker, e-mail <thesil@midcoast.com>.

2008 CHALLENGES

In welcoming remarks to the National Model United Nations Conference held in New York this spring, **Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon** gave a brief overview of his priorities for 2008, including the Millennium Development Goals, peacekeeping, and the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Noting the many daunting issues on which the UN is expected to deliver, the Secretary-General encouraged participants to serve as ambassadors for the United Nations, "charged with building a better understanding of the organization — what it is, what it does, and what it can do".

UNA-USA observes that Ban Ki-moon's appeal could have been directed as appropriately to all members and chapters:

"Your support is crucial. Your voice and your organization, activity and energy can help highlight the UN's successes, and explain the organization's constraints. You can be catalysts for change by creating social networks in support of our work."



Maine Chapter of the UNA-USA

11 Columbia Street
Augusta, ME 04330