



newsletter

of the Maine Chapter of the United Nations Association

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OUR MISSION

From the November 12 Newsletter of the UNA of the National Capital Area:

Here's a surprising fact: Pre-election polls by the Program on International and Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland revealed that, among people supporting George W. Bush for president, a majority (51%) believed that he favored UN participation in the Kyoto global warming treaty while an even larger majority (69%) believed that he supported the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

How do we explain this curious state of affairs?

The answer may be this: Although President Bush does not generally support multi-lateral actions, the majority of Americans generally do. Some of the Bush supporters may have transferred their own favorable attitude to their preferred candidate. Over many years, public opinion polls have consistently shown that a substantial majority of Americans (mostly in the 70%+ range) think well of the United Nations.

That's the good news. The bad news is that the intensity of public support for the UN is pretty weak. As a result, too many policy makers here in Washington seem to doubt that it exists at all. Other PIPA polls have revealed that our lawmakers tend to believe that the UN is not popular among their constituents.

Why? Is it because they are often more likely to hear from the minority who don't like the UN than from the majority who do?

Here's where the United Nations Association comes in. You and I and all of us who are members of the UNA have an important role to play because we are in effect the voice of the unvocal majority who do endorse the UN.

How can we do it?

One way is to maintain and strengthen our support for the Maine MODEL UNITED NATIONS, which annually brings secondary school students from around the State to participate in a Model UN Conference – three days of intensive meetings of several mock-UN bodies, where students play the role of delegates from member states, debating the foreign policy issues of the day. It is truly thrilling to witness these young people, who have been studying the countries they have been assigned to represent and the issues before the designated UN bodies, debate and decide on a course of action. The students become immersed in these questions and in the processes of advocacy, negotiation and compromise, and out of that experience they become true adherents to the principles on which the UN was founded. They never forget these experiences; they become advocates of international cooperation. **They are our contribution to the cause of the United Nations.**

SUPPORT MODEL UN

All available indications point to the 2005 Model UN Conference — May 17th to 19th on the Gorham campus of the University of Southern Maine — as the biggest and most ambitious yet. About 400 students from some 30 secondary schools in Maine (and one or two from nearby states) are expected to participate.

The Conference will be organized into the following organs and agendas:

- **General Assembly Disarmament Committee** - questions of weapons in space and nuclear disarmament;
- **UN Development Program** - Millennial development goals for elimination of severe poverty and child mortality;
- **Security Council** - Middle East road map for peace, and UN restructuring;
- **Special General Assembly Session** - Natural disaster prevention and rehabilitation of devastated areas;
- **Organization of American States (OAS)** - Drug trafficking and exploitation of women in the work-force.

★ All UNA-Maine members are urged to contribute generously to support this ambitious program, remembering that the principal financial burden is borne by the participating students and schools. Contributions should be made by check payable to UNA Maine, marked “for Model UN 2005”, and mailed to Bob Howe, Treasurer, 11 Columbia Street, Augusta ME 04330.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

While the Model UN program is our major activity of each year, the Board is planning a several additional activities for 2005, all aimed at extending our outreach, building a strong constituency in Maine to support the UN’s work. A brief description of some of them, as they stand as we go to press, follows.

- **Water For Life** - UNA-Maine plans to co-sponsor with the Chewonki Foundation of Wiscasset, a public discussion of the importance of this dwindling vital resource. The presentation will take place in Chewonki’s Conference Center, and is tentatively planned for April 14th. We expect the principal speaker to be Elizabeth Bursleson, an environmental lawyer, who will focus on international water law and dispute resolution. A graduate of Colby College, Ms Bursleson received her LL.M at the London School of Economics and her J.D. at the University of Connecticut School of Law. She is a member of the Water Committee of the International Bar Association and has written environmental reports for UNICEF, UNESCO and UNDP. The *Environmental Law Reporter* recently published Ms Bursleson’s article titled “Equitable and Reasonable Uses of Water within

the Euphrates-Tigris River Basin”. Other presenters will include a representative of Maine’s Penobscot Tribe, discussing the importance of rivers to all the people of Maine, and two Ethiopian women to tell us about what water means to rural villages in developing countries. The United Nations General Assembly has designated the period from 2005 to 2015 as the International Decade for “Water for Life”. We expect to distribute press notices about this event when the plans are complete. The Chewonki Foundation is located on Chewonki Road, east off highway 144 opposite the Copy Shop in Wiscasset.

- On **World Law Day**, May 1st, we are planning to present a program on *Africa and International Justice* in Portland at the Maine School of Law, in collaboration with other members of the Maine Alliance for the International Criminal Court, the Association of Black Law Students, and the World Affairs Council. The keynote speaker and panel moderator will be Adotei Akwei, Amnesty International’s Advocacy Director for Africa, who will be joined by panels of other visiting experts and local community leaders. A reception will follow.

- On or near **United Nations Day**, our Chapter traditionally sponsors a public event to commemorate the coming into effect of the United Nations Charter, on October 24th 1945. This year will mark the 60th anniversary of the Charter. We have invited Sir Brian Urquhart, author of definitive biographies of Dag Hammarskjold and Ralph Bunche, frequent contributor to the *New York Review of Books*, and retired Under-Secretary General of the United Nations in charge of Peace-Keeping, to be our keynote speaker on this occasion, tentatively planned for Saturday, October 22nd, at a place and time to be announced.

SUGGESTIONS INVITED - Members are encouraged to suggest ideas for additional UNA-Maine programs.

ANNUAL MEETING

Our Chapter’s annual meeting took place in Augusta on December 11th 2004. The Chapter’s President, Wendy Hazard, Vice-President, Bruce Stedman, Treasurer, Bob Howe and Immediate Past President, Thurston Holt, were all re-elected to their present posts for the year 2005. Anne Brautigam was elected for a one-year term as Secretary, succeeding Lydia Sparrow, who had asked to be relieved. Directors Suzanne Hedrick and Trudy Schneider were re-elected and new member Victoria Mares-Hershey was elected — all for two-year terms.

Following President Hazard’s report on activities in 2004, the meeting heard an insightful talk by Victoria Holt, Senior Associate at the Henry L. Stimpson Center, who has worked on UN and peace-keeping issues over the past 15 years. “Tori’s” topic was “Whither the United Nations under a new administration in Washington?” She was graphic in her descriptions of the Bush administration’s behavior and motives and was conservative of her estimate of the importance of the UN in the administration’s plans for the future.

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.

❖11/8/04 • A *Wall Street Journal* editorial complains that the Secretary General's letter cautioning against an all-out assault on insurgent forces in Fallujah, Iraq amounts to a broadside against free Iraq.

❖11/9 • The *Washington Post* notes that the Arctic Council's report on climate change predicts polar sea ice is to decline by 50% in the next 100 years, bringing flooding to low-lying areas worldwide and threatening many polar animals with extinction. The editorial notes with some alarm that the US government is declining to support language that links climate change to carbon emissions, and seeks "a practical, commonsensical and depoliticized approach to what will certainly be one of the most pressing environmental issues of the next half-century".

❖11/12 • While the Bush administration has persistently ignored calls to heed the Kyoto protocols on climate change, nine American states have formed the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, to measure and cap greenhouse gases and possibly trade emissions allowances with Kyoto signatories. The move is being spear-headed by NY Governor George Pataki, a moderate Republican who has been mentioned as a possible 2008 presidential candidate (*The Independent of London*).

❖11/17 • The United Nations is announcing establishment of the Global Public Health Intelligence Network, an emergency preparedness organization designed to alert national health agencies to imminent health and terror emergencies. Canada's health agency developed the program, funded in part by a \$600,000 grant from Ted Turner's Nuclear Threat Initiative (*Toronto Globe and Mail*).

❖11/19 • A bill before the Republican-controlled New York Senate to provide for the planned UN headquarters expansion was precipitately withdrawn after a firestorm of protests from politicians took aim at the UN over allegations of corruption arising from the oil-for-food program. The bill has the support of Governor George Pataki as well as the Republican-controlled State Assembly and is expected to be reintroduced and passed in the next legislative session (*Newsday*).

❖11/22 • A new initiative in Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa seeks to address one of the world's most widespread environmental issues, water scarcity. Known as the Challenge Program on Water and Food, it will examine how farmers can grow crops in dry, drought-stricken lands using a minimal amount of water (Inter Press Service Agency).

❖11/29 • *New York Times* columnist William Safire calls for Secretary-General Annan's resignation in light of revelations about the oil-for-food program. Separately, a piece in the *Wall Street Journal* by Tennessee law professor Clem Reynolds discusses talk of former Czech President Vaclav Havel as successor "if events were ever to go that far".

❖11/30 • In a move designed to signal Canada's independence on the eve of a visit by President Bush, Canada announced an increase of nearly 40% in its funding for the United Nations Population Fund. The US has ceased contributions to UNFPA on the grounds that it underwrites forced abortions and sterilizations in China, charges consistently denied (*Toronto Star*).

❖12/22 • International Food Aid is one of the first government expenditures to be cut in the President's plan to reduce the US federal budget deficit.... It is estimated that \$100 million in pledges from the US government to aid agencies is likely to be cut, even as African and other developing countries are expected to experience high food shortages in the coming year (*New York Times*).

❖12/22 • William Pfaff writes in the *International Herald Tribune* that the consequences of the emerging US attitude toward torture as a symbolic element of the global war on terror has "enormous" consequences for the US national image in the world and highlights "corruption of the morals and morality of the American military and intelligence services".

❖1/3/05 • British Prime Minister Tony Blair writes in *The Economist* (12/29) that the twin challenges of managing climate change and improving prospects throughout Africa will top the agenda of the G-8 nations under his presidency in 2008. "Those global crises are problems beyond the power of any single country, no matter how well-intentioned or powerful, to tackle on their own."

❖1/4 • Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed UN Development Program head, Mark Malloch Brown, as his new chief of staff. Many view the move as an attempt to implement UN reform, salvage US-UN relations, and boost morale at the world body following a year Annan labeled *annus horribilis* (*Washington Post*).

❖1/10 • Big contractors in Iraq over-billed by millions of dollars and the Nairobi-based Habitat agency mishandled funds for the oil-for-food program, according to internal UN reports. But these reports, released by investigator Paul Volcker, found no corruption or "irregular activities" by UN staffers (*New York Times*).

❖1/14 • The UN is essential to the world and to the US and is "even more important that I thought it was when I came here", John Danforth, the outgoing US ambassador, said in a farewell speech to the Security Council. He said that recent criticisms "should not detract, and do not detract, from the essential value of the United Nations" (*Chicago Tribune*).

❖1/18 • Secretary-General Annan has chosen Ann M. Veneman, the outgoing US Agriculture Secretary, as the next head of UNICEF. Veneman, reportedly the White House's first choice, will replace Carol Bellamy who in May will have served two five-year terms, the maximum time allowed (BBC).

❖1/28 • A group of 70 Nobel Prize winners signed a letter of support commending UN Secretary General Annan's leveraging of "moral authority, independence, and wisdom to elevate the United Nations to meet its highest principles". Signatories included Mikhail Gorbachev, Jimmy Carter and Desmond Tutu, who also praised Annan for taking a "critical look" at the UN and initiating reform (*Chicago Tribune*).

❖1/28 • According to a *Washington Post* editorial, British Prime Minister Tony Blair presented the issue of climate change clearly this week, when he said that if "America wants the rest of the world to be part of the agenda it has set, it must be part of their agenda too".

UNA SPRING CALENDAR:

APRIL 14 - *Water for Life*, Chewonki, Wiscasset (see page 2) - FMI: 207-882-7387 or check the UNA-Maine website calendar <www.unamaine.org> in March or April for details

MAY 1 (World Law Day) - *Africa & International Justice* - 2-5pm, followed by reception - University of Maine School of Law, 246 Deering Ave, Portland - (see page 2) - FMI: Maine Alliance for the ICC, PO Box 397, Waldoboro, ME 04572; 207-832-6863; thesil@midcoast.com

MAY 17-19 - Maine Model UN (see page 2) - FMI: follow the MeMUNC link at <www.unamaine.org>

★ 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.



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