



newsletter

of the Maine Chapter
of the United Nations Association

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PROGRAM ACTIVITY

Maine Model UN Conference 2006

**8th Annual MEMUNC — May 16–18 — at USM:
largest ever**

Hundreds of high school students, having diligently prepared to be delegates representing their assigned countries, will gather for the mid-May Maine Model United Nations Conference (MEMUNC) on the University of Southern Maine Gorham campus. There they will negotiate on behalf of their “home” governments, simulating what many feel is still the world’s brightest hope — the United Nations.

Our Maine chapter of UNA-USA, with the World Affairs Council, once again will co-sponsor and help support MEMUNC, being held from Tuesday to Thursday, May 16–18.

This is the eighth such Maine Model UN, which began in 1999 with only 27 students. This year 350 students will come from about 22 schools. High schools in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont have been attracted as participants to MEMUNC, though Maine schools predominate.

Keynoter: Maine business leader & philanthropist

Recognized as the preeminent developer of retirement communities — including Ocean View (Falmouth), Highland Green and The Highlands (Topsham) — in the state, John Wasileski will deliver keynote remarks at the opening ceremony of MEMUNC 2006. He speaks not only as one of Maine’s foremost business leaders but as an adult who in teenage years was an enthusiastic participant in Model UN. He has given generous support to the expansion of the MEMUNC program. John Wasileski says:

The Model UN experience helped me in my college career and in my professional career in giving me a less central perspective about the US and the world and more of a global perspective. We’ve all come to understand that a global perspective is extremely important to the peaceful coexistence of nations on our planet.

Professor Lynn Kuzma of the University of Southern Maine, with support from our UNA chapter, developed the model UN program in Maine. A cadre of her university students provide the basic structure for the conferences, taking roles as the UN Secretary General, the Under Secretary General, and other UN leadership positions. They also serve as “global educators” in participating high schools. Some USM students attend other university-level model UN events (at Harvard, for example). A few USM students leading this year’s MEMUNC recently returned from a UN training event in Beijing.

urgent, timely issues

This year’s conference, which features four simulated UN bodies and two non-UN bodies, will deal with topics both timely and urgent. The World Health Assembly will discuss controlling pandemics and dispensing vaccines. The Disarmament and Security Committee will debate strategies for ending the practice of conscripting child soldiers and promoting state disarmament. Other issues this year’s MUN members will grapple with include: human trafficking; gay, lesbian, transgender, and bi-sexual rights; preemptive attacks and the role of international law. In addition, the European Council will ponder immigration and further expansion of the European Union. The Organization of American States will consider the ongoing crisis in Haiti and indigenous rights. Such issues are negotiated and strenuously debated by student-delegates, seeking faithfully to represent the positions of their governments. Sometimes a surprise global or regional crisis is posed to the conference members for UN action.

Members of the UNA, some of whom had careers with the United Nations, serve regularly as coaches to the high school and university students as they thread their way through complex and difficult negotiations. One such coach, retired UN assistant secretary general Bruce Stedman, formerly of the UNA board, commented after the 2003 Maine Model UN:

In these troubled times, one ordinarily starts the day depressed by the morning news and the awful state our world seems to be in. But after three days attending the Model UN Conference ... one’s faith is restored. There is hope, after all! Reassurance was found in the lively and passionate participation of high school students in the mock-councils of international organizations.

format & festivities

USM Gorham campus having emptied, with spring semester complete, Model UN students will move in on Tuesday, May 16. At 6:30 PM, keynoter John Wasileski and special guest speaker Gillian Sorensen will address the high school students, their university student mentors, some teachers, and any UNA members who wish to attend. At 7:45 PM, UNA and World Affairs Council members are invited to a reception with Gillian Sorensen, Senior Advisor at the UN Foundation, who will talk about US-UN relations. MEMUNC will end late Thursday morning, May 18, with award ceremonies and a closing lunch. The Maine winner of this year’s UNA essay contest and the winner of the new Bruce Stedman Prize will be recognized.

Invitation from President Wendy Hazard:

This year, a generous grant from John Wasileski has allowed us to sponsor expanded outreach to students and a two-day training workshop for Maine high school teachers. UNA-Maine members soon will receive a letter asking for donations to help cover student costs and conference materials; we depend on this support.

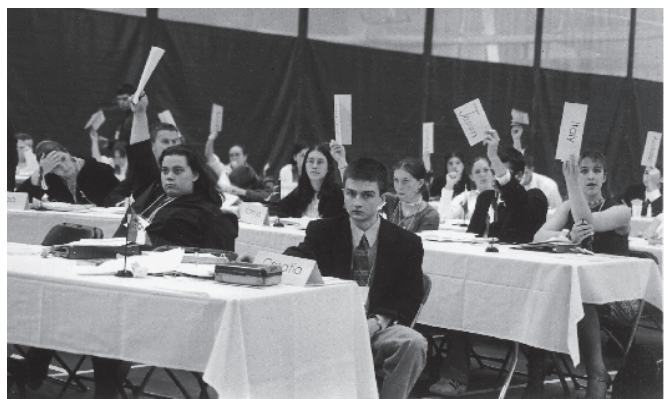
All members are invited to attend any of the Model UN sessions. It is a wonderful experience! Hope to see you there.

*** To attend the May 16 reception with Gillian Sorensen, RSVP to me <whazard@gwi.net>.**



Of his own high school Model UN experience, in Auburn, New York, MEMUNC 2006 keynoter John Wasileski says:

I viewed the monthly Model UN training sessions as an opportunity for a possible easier day or two out of class, but after the first session, I became hooked. This was a real opportunity for me to learn more about international relations and international economics, something that has fascinated me ever since.



Said one local MEMUNC participant:

***We developed highly valuable skills ...
It’s an amazing opportunity.***

News Bites from UN Wire

We continue the practice of publishing selected news items from UN Wire (www.smartbrief.com/un_wire/) chosen (by Bruce Stedman) because they are thought to be of general interest but not widely known ~

3/15/06 • Five months of negotiations within the UN have paid off with the establishment of the new Human Rights Council, one human rights group says. “The new council should be a great improvement over the old Commission on Human Rights, but today’s vote is only the beginning,” said Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch. (AlertNet.org/Human Rights Watch)

3/16 • United Nations arms embargoes aimed at preventing companies and individuals from trafficking weapons to countries engaged in conflict are being violated on a regular basis, according to a report by numerous human rights agencies. The report calls for an overhaul of the embargo system, including strengthening the UN teams responsible for policing violations. (*The Independent*, London)

3/18 • The United Nations soon will raise its profile in Iraq, according to the world organization’s special envoy to the struggling country. The UN is already active on many fronts in Iraq, including rebuilding infrastructure, but it agrees with the US that it is time to play a more visible role, Ashraf Qazi said. (*The Washington Times*)

3/18 • The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit has overturned a regulation issued by the Bush administration that would have let many power plants, factories and refineries avoid installing expensive equipment aimed at reducing polluting emissions. “This is an enormous victory over the concerted efforts by the Bush administration to dismantle the Clean Air Act,” said New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, whose office led the suit on behalf of the states involved. (*New York Times*)

Ed note: Maine Attorney General Rowe was a party to this suit.

3/20 • The presidency of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf represents “a moment of restored democracy and hope”, columnist Fred Hiatt writes in the *Washington Post*. It makes sense for the US to help Liberia partly because it will be less expensive in the long run to help get the struggling West African country back on its feet now, Hiatt argues.

Ed note: Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf worked for some years in UNDP and before that assisted UNA-Maine member Bob Skillings in the Brazil Department of the World Bank.

3/21 • Poor countries around the world will see their development threatened by more droughts and floods brought on by climate change, experts said at the World Water Forum in Mexico City. Africa and South Asia are likely to be hardest hit by the changing weather patterns, officials said. (Environmental News Network)

3/22 • American companies are playing “catch-up” with Asian and European corporations when it comes to strategies for limiting greenhouse gases, according to a new report. The study by Ceres, a coalition of investors and environmentalists, looked at how 100 global corporations are tackling climate change and found, among other things, that chemical companies tend to be more focused on the issue that oil companies are. (*New York Times*)

(Maine Model UN photos, page 2, courtesy of USM, 2003)

3/22 • Seeking to repair what one Bush administration official called “ragged” relations, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is meeting with foreign ministers from 14 Caribbean countries. US relations in the Caribbean community – known as “Caricom” — have been strained by the war in Iraq and perceptions about US actions in Haiti. (*Miami Herald*)

3/22 • The time has come for the United Nations to break free of its tradition of regional rotation for choosing a secretary-general, argues commentary in the *Financial Times* (London). Also, all candidates for the job as the world’s top diplomat should be asked to circulate a platform outlining “the main challenges of the office and how they would set about dealing with them”, writes Lord David Hannay, who is a former British ambassador to the UN and currently chairman of the UN Association of the UK.

3/22 • Whether the Bush administration decides to seek a seat on the newly formed Human Rights Council may depend on how willing the White House is to place the US under the microscope of countries that may question America’s performance on human rights issues, the director of the Advocacy Project says.* (*International Herald Tribune*)

3/23 • Following a week-long meeting in Mexico City, representatives from 148 countries adopted a statement saying governments – not corporations – should assume “the primary role in promoting access to safe drinking water”. The United Nations also released a report suggesting smaller dams, or more environmentally friendly large dams, could play a role in the fight against climate change. (Environment News Network)

3/24 • Japan says the UN’s next secretary-general should hail from Asia, its ambassador to Korea said in an interview with OhmyNews (Korea). When asked whether Japan supports the ambition of Ban Ki-Moon, Korea’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, to become the world’s next top diplomat, Oshima Shotaro said Japan is not ready to endorse a specific candidate but added that Ki-Moon is “an excellent candidate” who has “great experience” with the UN.

3/24 • Average temperatures could increase 4 degrees and sea levels may rise dramatically over the next century due to humans’ influence on the world’s climate, scientists found in a new study. The rising sea levels will come as the polar ice sheets continue to melt, several teams of experts said. (*New York Times*)

3/21 • The US should join the United Nations’ new Human Rights Council or work closely with it, General Assembly President Jan Eliasson urged. The US has yet to decide whether it will seek to join the new council, the creation of which it voted against, but Eliasson said 60 countries have tried to address a key US concern by vowing not to support membership for countries under sanctions for human rights abuses.* (*The Jamaica Observer*)

* The US has decided not to seek election to the UN Human Rights Council.

CALENDAR:

MAY 10 - 2nd Maine Global Climate Change Conference (registration fee) - USM, Portland (FMI: Phppwp@aol.com)

MAY 16-18 - 8th Maine Model UN Conference - USM, Gorham (FMI: <www.memunc.org>)

RECENT PROGRAM:

The Peacekeepers, a documentary portrayal of United Nations peacekeepers struggling to minimize human tragedy — including exploitation of child soldiers — wrought by warring factions in the Congo, was aired at the Skidompha Library in Damariscotta on April 9, under joint sponsorship of the Maine UNA chapter and CONA (Citizens Offering New Alternatives). Wendy Hazard, UNA Maine president, spoke and helped lead discussion afterward. The war in Iraq and global terrorism distracted much of the world from the Congo hostilities, which have harmed civilian populations severely.

- UNA-Maine regularly seeks to share programs with other organizations having UN-related concerns. If interested, call Wendy Hazard at 207-495-2675.

Perhaps the most important lesson from our exploration of the solar system is that the most terrible place on Earth is a Garden of Eden compared to the best place anywhere else. We must find out how to keep it that way.

Robert L. Park, professor of physics at the University of Maryland; author of “Voodoo Science: The Road From Foolishness to Fraud”

Peacekeeping is an art. It's harder than fighting a war.

Maj. Gen. Patrick Cammaert, former military advisor to the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan

- Looking for a speaker on a UN-related topic for a school, civic club, political meeting, or religious gathering? E-mail <thesil@midcoast.com>.



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