



newsletter

of the Maine Chapter of the United Nations Association

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& Al Niese

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Remodeled Chapter

The Maine Chapter has reorganized its board into an Executive Committee, a group of advisors, and a set of liaisons to coalitions and to the Maine Model UN Steering Committee. For this transitional year, Thesil Morlan is serving as principal contact person, “coherency monitor”, and moderator of the quarterly meetings in Topsham. We thank former board member Herschel Sternlieb for his time with us, welcome back retiring board member Thurston Holt & a previously retired board member, Bruce Stedman, and welcome as our new MAICC Liaison Patrick Downey, a Bangor attorney. We have a new workplan and undiminished United Nations Association commitment.

The chapter now has a
SPEAKERS BUREAU
that includes:

- **Julia Edwards**, recent USM graduate and MEMUNC veteran
- **Wendy Hazard**, UMA History Professor
- **Al Niese**, retired Episcopal Priest
- **Bruce Stedman**, former UN Assistant Secretary General
- **Sarah Walton**, UMA Professor of Justice Studies

Speakers may be booked for civic or social clubs, classrooms, political meetings, or religious gatherings by contacting **UNA-ME at PO Box 397, Waldoboro, ME 04572** or <thesil@midcoast.com> or 832-6863. Flyers are available from the same source, for community distribution.

Resplendent Model UN

Please respond generously to this year’s appeal (being mailed separately) for financial support for the burgeoning Maine Model United Nations conference, to be held May 15–16–17 at the University of Southern Maine. It provides unparalleled opportunities for hundreds of high school students and their college mentors.



Pictured: several MEMUNC 2006 participants in action

Why the UN is Indispensable

UN Day Speaker Stephen Schlesinger Recalls UN Beginnings, Calls Annan a “Moral Giant”, Laments Bolton’s “Crippling” Effect on UN Reform

by Al Niese

Noting that outgoing UN General Secretary General Kofi Annan is, with good reason, perceived as “a world star ... and a moral giant”, author and director of a major foreign policy think tank, Stephen Schlesinger, addressed students, faculty, and UNA members on October 24, United Nations Day, at the University of Southern Maine. Introduced by UNA president and UMA professor Wendy Hazard, Schlesinger recalled the unique historical context of the founding of the United Nations and praised President Roosevelt as an “extraordinary visionary”, a theme of his book, *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations*.

He enumerated remarkable global successes in which the UN has participated since its founding (nuclear war avoided; elections monitored; world health fostered; treaties accomplished; democracies world-wide doubled; human rights defined; goals for the new millennium established; and many more). At the same time, he pointed out that the UN is not a world government and not a perfect body. Its influence is moral, political and diplomatic.

The Security Council, he stated, needs to be “shaken up”. At the same time, its “unison” agreement to support intervention

in Kuwait in 1991 provides a useful model for multilateralism, a marked contrast to the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

In a talk that ranged widely over UN history and contemporary world crises, Dr Schlesinger said that the 750 amendments submitted by the outgoing US Ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton, tended only to help “cripple” an already difficult and complex process of UN reform. He spoke of Bolton’s propensity to “belittle” the UN, suggesting that the ambassador’s attitude was “contemptuous”.

The UN Day speaker, who serves as Director of the New School’s World Policy Institute that publishes the quarterly *World Policy Journal*, went on to say he anticipates that the reforms eventually adopted will give the Secretary General more managerial authority over the various parts of the UN. He hopes a reformed Security Council will gain more authority to control certain unilateral actions of nations.

In the course of his remarks and in responding to questions, Schlesinger also noted: the Clinton administration’s multilateral spirit; Kofi Annan’s inviting of corporations’ participation in working toward UN goals; the hopeful support of Senator Richard Lugar and others; the growth of the UN Democracy Fund; the much-needed changes in the Human Rights Council. With a certain edge, the speaker also noted the “bolt of illumination” that sadly and only occasionally seemed to motivate the Bush administration to cooperate with the UN.

To our Maine chapter of the UNA, he suggested, among other steps, letters to the editor and op-ed pieces recounting the successes of the UN. He also suggested that we urge our two US senators to speak boldly in support of the UN.

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Chapter Annual Meeting 2006

Weather prevented the invited speaker, Jeffrey Laurenti — UNA national board member and senior fellow in international affairs at The Century Foundation — from reaching Maine on December 2, so Mac Deford and Ed Knox, local Middle East experts, ably led a vigorous discussion of US foreign policy in that region.

USM Model UN Organization President AJ Chalifour reported on student activities, including travels to Model UNs elsewhere in the US and abroad, and on preparations and eager expectations for the 2007 Model UN.

Members and guests assembled at The Highlands in Topsham expressed thanks to Wendy Hazard for her two years as chapter president. We also thank John Wasileski for the facilities.

Jeffrey Laurenti (in absentia):

*Beyond the current political jockeying,
Americans are groping their way toward
a profound decision.*

*The direction of America’s role in the world
after 2008 will turn fatefully on whether
Americans conclude that unilateral military
assertiveness is a successful strategy —
or so disastrous that America must re-embrace
the United Nations and international law
as the strategic bulwark of the global order.*

News Bites from UN Wire

Selected news items from UN Wire (www.smartbrief.com/un_wire/) are chosen (by **Bruce Stedman**) as being of general interest but perhaps not widely known.

9/13/06 • The United Nations opened its 61st session of the General Assembly with a woman at its helm for the first time. Haya Rashed Al Khalifa of Bahrain, who replaces Sweden's Jan Eliasson as president of the body, has promised to focus on women's issues and overall reform efforts during her tenure (*Washington Post*).

9/25 • Aiming to identify strategies for promoting the roles of women worldwide, US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice met with about 20 other women leaders on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly summit. "We have to promote and empower women," Rice urged the group, which included Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (*New York Times*, 9/23).

9/24 • US Ambassador to the UN John Bolton should be reappointed quickly, partly because he can stand up against "two-bit dictators" such as Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, US Senator John McCain, R-Ariz, said. McCain joined other US lawmakers in denouncing the UN speech in which the Venezuelan leader called US President George W. Bush "the devil", and the senator said Bolton can stand strong in the face of such anti-US rhetoric (*Washington Post*).

10/11 • The United Nations Foundation has delivered \$1 billion since its creation in 1998 to UN projects promoting such areas as the environment, health and human rights, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and UN Foundation founder Ted Turner said. Of the \$1 billion, \$600 million comes directly from Turner, while the UN Foundation has raised \$400 million more from corporations, governments and charities. In addition to focusing on women, children, peace and other issues around the world, the UN Foundation is promoting the UN in the US (*International Herald Tribune*, 10/10).

10/11 • Canadian Carolyn McAskie brings decades of international conflict experience to her new role in the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, the *Toronto Star* reports. The newly created UN commission is being launched with the goal of helping countries emerge from years of violent conflict and wars to find stability. Burundi and Sierra Leone are slated to be the first recipients of aid.

10/26 • A UN General Assembly committee Thursday voted 139 to 1 to create an international treaty to curb the illicit arms trade by strengthening arms embargoes and setting consistent standards for arms deals. The Disarmament and International Security Committee intends to close loopholes on arms trade deals that violate human rights, fuel ongoing war, undermine development or violate UN arms bans (*AlertNet/Reuters*).

10/31 • A three-day youth summit wrapped up at the UN headquarters with hundreds of young people representing most of the world body's member states pledging to work for the UN's Millennium Development Goals. The participants highlighted sport and culture as important tools to engage youths in development of the poor world (*United Press International*).

11/2 • As the practice of giving small business loans to poor people is gaining steam as a way to boost development, hundreds of experts gathered in Canada for a summit on how microcredits can be made even more effective as a tool against poverty. Activists hope that microcredits will help the poor world reach the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (*Inter Press Service News Agency*).

11/3 • The US is pushing for an American to head the United Nations' peacekeeping operations around the world, according to the *Times* of London. The post has been held by a Frenchman, but incoming Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, whom the US supported in his bid for the top UN spot, is expected to assemble his own team of top officials.

11/10 • Plans to create a powerful new UN entity devoted to women and gender equality moved one step closer to reality with the endorsement of a high-level UN reform panel. The proposed agency would streamline current disparate efforts to aid women and be headed by an under-secretary-general with the ability to lobby for funds and undertake large-scale programs for women. Outgoing Secretary-General Kofi Annan is expected to ask the General Assembly for an official endorsement before his term ends on December 31 (*Toronto Star*).

11/15 • The world suffers from a decided lack of leadership in fighting global warming and must do more, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan told delegates at the UN summit on climate change in Nairobi, Kenya. "It is increasingly clear that it will cost far less to cut emissions now than to deal with the consequences later," Annan said. He also announced plans to help Africa win investments to deal with the challenges of climate change (*Miami Herald*).

12/13 • The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution laying out the dues the 192 member-countries will pay the world body between 2007 and 2009. The US share of the UN's budget will remain unchanged at 22%, the most paid by any member, while Japan's share will be reduced from 19.5% to 16.6%. Contributions made by Britain, China, India and Russia will increase (*International Herald Tribune*).

1/6/07 • UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed Tanzanian Foreign Minister Asha-Rose Mtegeti-Migiro as his deputy secretary-general. Ban indicated he would look to the 50-year-old professor to oversee the day-to-day management of the world body, as well as to focus on socio-economic and development issues (*New York Times*).

1/4 • New UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reportedly asked more than 30 top UN officials to offer their resignations to enable him to quickly take control of the world body's top bureaucracy. Officials from the Assistant Secretary-General and up received letters requesting they offer to resign, even though many are working under contracts that expire at the end of February, a report says (*Reuters*).

1/12 • UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon clarified his position on the death penalty, saying he supports a global trend toward the abandonment of capital punishment. "I recognize the growing trend in international law and in national practice towards a phasing out of the death penalty," Ban told reporters. "I encourage that trend" (*New York Times*).

1/18 • Increased global immunization campaigns have led to a 60% drop in the number of deaths due to measles, according to the World Health Organization. The WHO said more than 7.5 million children would have died of measles between 1999 and 2005 if they had not been vaccinated (*International Herald Tribune*).

1/17 • With the aggressive John Bolton no longer the US ambassador to the United Nations, new UN chief Ban Ki-moon likely will have an easier time dealing with the world body's most powerful member than did his predecessor, Kofi Annan, writes Hans Blix, the UN's former chief weapons inspector in Iraq (*MaximsNews*). The US's instinct over the last couple of years "to push ahead alone and demonstratively ignore others ... will no doubt be more controlled," Blix predicts.

CALENDAR

APRIL 13 - Achieving Global Energy Security Conference - Abromson Community Education Center, University of Southern Maine; sponsored by Physicians for Social Responsibility/Maine, Peace Action Maine, USM Office of Environmental Sustainability, Maine Public Health Association, Sierra Club, Maine Council of Churches, and UNA-Maine - "to connect the work of organizations and individuals concerned about energy policy, nuclear issues, global warming, preemptive war strategy in general and the Iraq War in particular"; FMI: 207-772-6714

APRIL 19 - "Water Music", a program of photography and music "to increase awareness about water issues, worldwide"; with talk by Vermont photographer Margerie Ryerson, who has pledged net royalties to the UN Foundation: FMI: whazard@gwi.net>

APRIL 23 - "Globalization Ethics & Human Rights" - Mary Robinson, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights - 7:30-9:30, USM; co-sponsored by UNA-Maine; FMI: 207-780-5331

MAY 15-17 - Maine Model UN - USM

Sir Brian Urquhart:

*Struggle is the essence of life.
The problem is to draw a line
between struggle, which is stimulating,
and conflict, which is often lethal.
Of the United Nations, which embodies
the international effort to draw this line,
Dag Hammarskjold said that
"the constant struggle to close the gap
between aspiration and performance
now, as always, makes the difference
between civilization and chaos".
If we tire of this effort,
it will be at our extreme peril.*



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