



News Flash!!

The International Year of Natural Fibres will be officially launched on 22 January 2009, at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome. This year is also the International Year of Astronomy and the International Year of Reconciliation.

President's Message

I wish all the members a very Happy New Year. It seems 2009 will be a year of challenges with the economic downturn, global climate change issues and increasing fighting in some war torn areas of the world. The importance of the United Nations Associations increases. We all have a responsibility to ensure that the young people of Australia understand their responsibilities regarding human rights and the work of UNA-AWA.

The committee will meet on Sunday February 22nd to make a plan for the work of the WA Association this year. This plan will include celebrating important UN days, the HueLin Lecture, lunch time forums, celebration of Harmony Week, priorities for the human rights committee and the environment committee and the model UN. It will be a busy year and the Association needs your input, with ideas, as a volunteer and in attendance at events.

There is a need to build up the membership of the Association. Please discuss with your friends the benefits of becoming a member. Membership forms are available on-line or from the office. Fundraising is required this year, as the Association has been informed that the concurrent funding which covered the cost of office rental up to 2007 is no longer available. It will be necessary to gain sponsors and fundraise. A donation was received last week after a member invited some friends to lunch and they each contributed \$10. All had a pleasant lunch and \$100 was raised for the work of the Association. The human rights committee is planning another lunch. I recommend this type of fundraising as it also assists the members to get to know each other and socialise.

The Association has applied to hold a stall at the Burswood Village, Burswood Park on Sunday 15th March between 2 - 7pm. This event is planned to celebrate Harmony Week.

A subcommittee has been working hard to put together an application to Lotterywest Grants Section for a grant to upgrade the computer system and purchase a data projector for use at meetings, lunchtime forums and seminars. I thank Vice President Carolyne Gatward and Treasurer Harvey Davies for their work on this application.

I look forward with optimism to working with you all towards a successful year for United Nations Australia Association WA Division.

Judith A. Parker AM, President

2009 Diary Dates

30 January 2009 – Human Rights Committee meeting at Claisebrook Lotteries House from 12 to 2pm. Please bring your own lunch; hot or cold drink will be provided.

4 February 2009 – Executive Committee meeting at Claisebrook Lotteries House at 5.30pm

9 February 2009 – Environment Committee meeting at Claisebrook Lotteries House at 5.30pm

22 February 2009 – UNA-AWA Planning Day at Claisebrook Lotteries House Conference Room from 11am to 3pm. Please bring your own lunch; hot or cold drink will be provided.

National News

UN Doha Conference

National President of UNA-AWA, Professor John Langmore has circulated to all Division Offices a copy of his paper on the recent UN Doha Conference on Financing for Development. In just 4 pages he gives an excellent summary of preparations for the conference, the main themes on the agenda, some insightful opinions on the progress made and, finally, concludes with the optimistic view that *"The intellectual and political momentum for concerted improvements in financing for development and in multilateral economic and financial governance seemed to pick up during the conference. Just meeting is an encouragement for renewed commitment and action."* The report is available from the office in word document format.

Response to Gaza

President of the General Assembly (GA) calls Emergency Special Session of GA on Gaza crisis, Thursday 8 January 2009.

National President, John Langmore has forwarded the following advice:

Please note that at the request of Member States, the President of the General Assembly, Miguel D'Escoto, has called an Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly to consider the ongoing humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian Territory. The Session will take place at 5.30pm on Thursday 8 January 2009. President D'Escoto will hold a Press Conference on Thursday at 1.00 PM to answer questions from the media.

The President has informed Permanent Representatives and is referring to Resolution A/RES/ES-10/17 adopted by the 10th Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly at its 31st meeting of 15 December 2006 on the Illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian Territory, which authorizes the President of the General Assembly to resume the meeting of the Special Session upon request from Member States.

Enrique Yebes, Spokesperson for the President of the General Assembly.

Other News

Helen Suzman: Died 1 January 2009 aged 91

For decades Helen was the sole Parliamentary voice to dissent from South Africa's racial laws. For 36 years, she consistently denounced the iniquities of racial segregation. Her campaign against the notorious pass laws, which restricted the movement of blacks and prevented them from selling their labour in the open market was a long struggle, however the laws were eventually repealed. In the 1960's when the Vorster Government introduced the first legislation providing for detention without trial, hers was frequently the only dissenting voice on the opposition benches. She had a special interest in conditions in South African Prisons and often visited Nelson Mandela while he was imprisoned. Her autobiography, *In No Uncertain Terms* was published in 1993.

Helen Suzman was a true woman of courage and a defender of human rights. For further information read the obituary in *The Australian*, January 3-4, 2009.

The Secretary-General Video Message on Human Rights Day

This video was shown at our Human Rights Day Open House on 10 December 2008; it can be viewed at the office by appointment.

Further Resources

Subscribe to UNity for 2009, as well as earlier issues are available at: www.unaa.org.au

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