



United Nations Association of Australia
WA Division

APRIL 2012

UNA AWA Newsletter



Our Association is undertaking several exciting activities and some highlights include:

- Our UNAA/UN Youth Australia Q&A event about "Australia's bid for a UN Security Council seat" was a very successful and informative evening. We will find out in October 2012 whether Australia has secured a seat - we certainly have a reasonable chance.
- On 2 May, our Environment Committee and the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Populations and Communities are hosting a briefing about the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio (Rio +20) (see flyer inside).
- In June, we will be having a function for World Environment Day (5 June) and we will also be holding an exhibition "Lessons from Rwanda" at the State Library during Refugee Week from 18 – 22 June.
- UNA AWA was represented at the 2012 Anzac Day services at Perth and Fremantle.

Thank you for your support and I hope you can join us at one of our next events.

Congratulations to our Executive Member Jessica Watts, who has just been accepted for an internship with the World Food Program in Zambia. Best wishes and thank you, Jess, for your work with UNA AWA. Keep in touch!

(Carolyn Gatward, President)

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UN Secretary General condemns violence in Syria

Gravely alarmed by reports of continued violence and killing in Syria, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has called the situation "unacceptable" and he condemns in the strongest terms the continued repression against the Syrian civilian population. He says "this situation is unacceptable and must stop immediately."

The violence in Syria, which began in March 2011 as a protest movement similar to those across the Middle East and North Africa, has claimed over 9,000 lives, mostly civilians, and displaced tens of thousands. The latest violence takes place less than a week after the Security Council authorized the establishment of the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria ([UNSMIS](#)) – made up of up to 300 unarmed military observers and deployed for an initial period of 90 days – to monitor the cessation of violence.

The observers are also tasked with monitoring and supporting the full implementation of a six-point peace plan, put forward by the Joint Special Envoy of the UN and the League of Arab States for Syria, Kofi Annan.

The Secretary-General remains "deeply troubled" by the continued presence of heavy weapons, military equipment and army personnel in population centres, as reported by UN military observers, which is in contravention of the Syrian Government's commitments to withdraw its troops and heavy weapons from these areas. Mr Ban is demanding that the Government of Syria comply with its commitments without delay.

He also reminded all concerned parties, particularly the Government, of the need to ensure that conditions for the effective operation of the UN observers are put in place immediately, including a sustained cessation of armed violence.

- UN News (website), 25 April 2012.

4 April — International Day for Mine Awareness & Assistance in Mine Action



You may recall my visit and fact-finding mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2010, to familiarise myself with regards to the UN agencies' capacity post-war social and economic work in the pursuit of land mine clearance, and rehabilitation in this country. I had the privilege of interaction with several UN agencies humanitarian and mine action working teams, and in fact, inspecting terrain with live land mines. The experience was very much thought provoking that in our society, we revert to such warfare that is prohibited by international treaties.

I further had the touching experience of visiting the Miracles Prosthetic and Artificial Limbs clinics, where young children and adults are provided with new limbs. By the way of background, International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action advocates:

"....for the universalization of existing legal frameworks and encourages Member States to expand those regimes and develop new international instruments to protect civilians from the scourges of landmines and explosive remnants of war. It undertakes this work in collaboration with interested states, civil society, mine action and international organizations.

Since the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, commonly known as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention opened for signature in 1997, 156 countries have ratified or acceded to it. More than 41 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines have been destroyed, and their production, sale and transfer have in essence stopped. The first of March 2009 marked the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention and the Second Review Conference was held later in 2009 in Cartagena, Colombia.

In addition to anti-personnel mines, challenges remain with respect to all other explosive remnants of war. On 12 November 2006, the Secretary-General welcomed the entry into force of Protocol V on explosive remnants of war from the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons² and reiterated his call for its universalization and implementation. In December 2008, the Secretary-General welcomed the opening for signature of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which currently has 98 signatories and 14 ratifications and acceptances, and encourages its rapid entry into force.

Guided by its inter-agency policy, the United Nations Mine Action Team, consisting of 14 departments, agencies, funds and programmes,³ and with observer entities, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Office of Legal Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, continued to ensure system-wide coherence in all mine action pillars and activities and a "One United Nations" approach with full respect for the individual roles and responsibilities and comparative advantage of each of the Team members, through regular meetings of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Mine Action at the principal and working levels.

The United Nations strategic goal is to work in cooperation with national authorities, territories, non-State actors, affected communities, and in partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donors, the private sector, international and regional organizations and others to reduce the humanitarian and socio-economic threats posed by mines and explosive remnants of war, at which point United Nations mine action assistance will no longer be necessary."

As organisational members, and I quote: "UNAAWA takes a global perspective to help create a better and sustainable world by promoting the United Nations and its values", we are all given the responsibility to support the UN and its specialised agencies, as standing for guardians of human rights, conciliation of world differences, and a principle instrument for promoting and safeguarding the peace of the world.

One of the largest and most serious threats in our society, are the number of sovereign and neighbouring conflicts that continue unabated. I trust that we will spare a thought to consider our national homeland security, allowing all Australians to enjoy the freedom, peace, free choice, irrespective of colour, creed and religion, which sometimes is not the common denominator in other countries. We are all important ambassadors in the true pursuit of peace, it's a continuing agenda.

JOSEPH A. CARUSO
UNAAWA International Representative

UNAAWA Human Rights Committee

The Human Rights Committee has moved its regular monthly meeting to Saturday so that persons who cannot manage mid-day meetings during the week can attend. The next meeting will be held at our Subiaco office meeting room on Saturday 19 May from 10:00 to Noon.

The Committee will be seeking volunteers to staff the photo exhibition “Lessons from Rwanda” to be held at the State Library during Refugee Week from 18 – 22 June. Put these dates in your calendar and support this event marking 18 years since the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

Once again we are joining Meerilinga (an organisation that operates Children and Family Centres in Western Australia) to celebrate Children’s Week in October and International Children’s day which falls on 24 October. Have a look at the Meerilinga website www.meerilinga.org.au.

The Committee is seeking members who may wish to make submissions or attend delegations to meet members of Parliament on human rights issues in categories such as mental health, domestic violence, racism, homelessness and ageing. Call or email the office (6380 7304 or office@unaa-wa.org.au).

UNAAWA Environment Committee



RIO+20
United Nations
Conference on
Sustainable
Development

The Environment Committee and the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Populations and Communities will be hosting a briefing on Wednesday 2 May updating members, industry and environmental NGOs on Australia's position for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio (Rio +20) (see flyer inside this newsletter).

Young UN Women and the Environment Committee have been busily organising an event for World Environment Day on 5 June, with a potential partnership opportunity with the City of Perth.

The theme will focus on the Green Economy and will involve a panel of key industry speakers who will discuss our place in the 'green economy' on a local, regional, national and international platform.

The Environment Committee has established a Working Group to develop a proposal for the Clean Up the World Weekend (14-16 September 2012). Clean Up the World is an annual global campaign held in partnership with the United Nations Environment Program.

If you are interested in joining the Working Group please email Rees Barrett reesanne@bigpond.com by 4 May. The Working Group will report back to the Environment Committee in June.

If you are interested in becoming involved in the UNAAWA Environment Committee, please send an email to environment@unaa-wa.org.au or contact the UNAAWA office.

25 April—World Malaria Day

As members of a Western society, we are somewhat distanced from the deadly reality of Malaria. However, each year 200 million people are affected by the mosquito borne disease, 600 000 of whom die – mostly children under five. Malaria is a preventable and entirely treatable disease. Did you know:

- Forty percent of the world's population lives in malaria endemic countries.
- Malaria is particularly devastating in Africa, where it is a leading killer of children. Every 60 seconds a child in Africa dies from a malaria infection. □
- Malaria illness and death costs Africa approximately \$12 billion per year in lost productivity.

World Malaria Day aims to raise awareness of Malaria and how it can easily be prevented and treated. Ray Chambers, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Malaria, says that while immense progress had been made in the fight against malaria over the last five years, the goal of near-zero deaths from the highly preventable and treatable disease by 2015 still faced many hurdles.

The UN Foundation's Nothing But Nets campaign promotes a simple message: nets save lives. The campaign aims to tackle Malaria by providing insecticide treated bed nets to impoverished and highly affected communities. Nothing But Nets works with UN partners including UNICEF, WHO and UNHCR to deliver nets where they are most needed. For more information, please see <http://www.nothingbutnets.net/learn/what-is-malaria/>

(Jessica Watts, UNAAWA Executive member)

Sources: http://www.worldmaliaday.org/home_en.cfm; <http://www.nothingbutnets.net/learn/what-is-malaria/>; http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2011/110425_Malaria.doc.htm.

United Nations - Important Dates

April

- 2 April — World Autism Awareness Day**
- 4 April — International Day for Mine Awareness & Assistance in Mine Action**
- 7 April — Day of Remembrance of Victims of the Rwanda Genocide**
- 7 April — World Health Day [WHO]**
- 22 April — International Mother Earth Day**
- 25 April — World Malaria Day [WHO]**

May

- 3 May — World Press Freedom Day**
- 15 May — International Day of Families**
- 22 May — International Day for Biological Diversity**
- 29 May — International Day of UN Peacekeepers**
- 31 May — World NO-TOBACCO Day [WHO]**



For more information, visit <http://www.un.org/en/events/observances/days.shtml>



RIO + 20 BRIEFING

THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA AND THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S DEPARTMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY, ENVIRONMENT, WATER, POPULATION AND COMMUNITIES INVITE YOU TO ATTEND A SPECIAL BRIEFING IN PERTH ON THE UN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20) TO BE HELD IN RIO DE JANEIRO IN JUNE THIS YEAR.

The briefing, one of which will be held in each state, will provide an opportunity for the Department to update civil society organisations, academics, think tanks and other interested parties about Australia's preparations for the Rio+20 Conference, including the goals of Australia's participation and opportunities for civil society engagement on the ground in Rio de Janeiro.

The briefing also creates an opportunity for members of different delegations to meet prior to the Conference.

DATE Wednesday 2 May 2012
TIME 5.45pm for 6pm
LOCATION The Palms Community Centre Main Hall,
 Cr Nicholson and Rokeby Roads, Subiaco WA
RSVP (08) 6380 7304 or office@unaa-wa.org.au

RSVP ESSENTIAL

Q&A — Australia's bid for a UN Security Council seat

On Tuesday 16 April 2012, UNAABA & UN Youth partnered to present a Q & A Forum about Australia's UN Security Council Bid - at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery at the UWA.

Michael Sheldrick (pictured right), campaign manager to End Polio, was the moderator for the evening & supported 5 panel members: Michael Wood, from the Department of Foreign Affairs; Renata Sivacolundhu, who has worked for the United Nations for the past eight years; Tammy Solonec, human rights lawyer; Dr Alexey Muraviev, senior lecturer, Curtin University & Associate Professor Roderic Pitty, UWA.



The panel presented issues reflecting the challenges facing Australia in our bid for one of two seats that will become available on the council in 2013, highlighting both our strong points & areas that may not be so well received on the international stage.



The process for selection is fierce & lobbying is a significant part of the process to secure votes which will culminate in voting over several days in October this year. To win Australia will need to secure 2/3 of the UN membership of 128 countries. Commitment to UN philosophy, international peace & security, climate change, human rights, our stable democracy & our geographical position will all be used to build our case.

Australia is competing against Luxemburg & Finland. Luxemburg has never sat on the Security Council, Finland & Australia have both served although Australia has not been appointed for 27 years.

There was great audience participation & at the completion of questions, we continued our discussions over supper.

(Ailsa Allen, UNAABA member)



Learning from History to Shape a Brighter Future

From April to June 1994, over a period of just 100 days, more than 800,000 Rwandans were slaughtered in a brutal genocide carried out by Hutu militia and government forces against ethnic Tutsi and moderate Hutus. The failure of the international community to prevent the events that unfolded in Rwanda led to efforts by the UN to strengthen its conflict prevention and mediation work and to push for Member States to uphold the responsibility to protect.

The 18th anniversary of the start of the genocide was recently commemorated at UN Headquarters in New York and around the world under the theme of **“learning from history to shape a brighter future”**.

Letters from survivors and perpetrators of the genocide to those who died were read aloud by officials, students and actors, as part of the commemorations.

These letters, part of a project by Rwandan artist Odile Katese called “The Book of Life”, aim to assist in the healing process by being “a symbolic way of keeping in touch”.

According to Ms. Katese, the project aims to create a more serene and peaceful space from which Rwandans can revisit and process the genocide and strives to commemorate the victims’ lives, rather than their deaths.

In the years after the genocide, the UN General Assembly established an information and educational outreach programme to promote genocide victim remembrance and education in order to help prevent future genocides.



A reading by professional actors takes place during the memorial ceremony at UN Headquarters to mark the 18th anniversary of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

Source: UN Photo

See www.un.org/preventgenocide/rwanda for more information and educational resources.

(Renata Sivacolundhu, UNAAWA member)

****SAVE THE DATE****

UNAAWA will host the “Lessons of Rwanda” educational exhibit from the UN’s “Outreach Programme on the Rwanda Genocide and the UN” from June 18 to 24, as part of Refugee Week activities in Perth. The exhibit will be shown at the State Library of WA, in “The Nook” in the James Street front entrance to the library. A morning tea/launch event will be held on Monday 18 June. All members are welcome and volunteers are sought, more details to follow (see Human Rights Committee report).

UNAA National Conference 2012 - Brisbane

Day 1. Wednesday 22 August: Round table sessions (six – eight). Topics will be drawn from the following: Academic Network, Climate Change, Constitution/referendum, Disarmament, Global Compact, Governance, Human Rights, the Pacific, Parliamentary Group, Peace & Security, Responsibility to Protect, Status of Women, WHO, HIV/AIDS Women -Violence & Trafficking, Women - Empowerment.

Day 2 & 3 Thursday 23 – Friday 24 August

UNAA National Conference “The Future is in Your Hands”: Focusing on: Peace & Security, Sustainable Development, Human Rights and Life after Rio+20.

Further Resources

- **The United Nations Information Centre for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific:** <http://www.un.org.au>
- **The United Nations Youth Association Australia (UNYA) WA Division:** <http://wa.unya.org.au/>
- **For international updates, sign up for UN Wire:** http://www.smartbrief.com/un_wire/index.jsp
- **Read more about the Millennium project at:** www.unmillenniumproject.org