



United Nations Association of Australia ACT Division

UNAA ACT Newsletter Issue #3

Dear Members,

I hope that you had a wonderful festive period and that you and your families have not been negatively impacted by the bushfires, storms or the Coronavirus.

The first issue of the newsletter in 2020 provides a diversity of articles – summary of our first presentation for the year, on UN Security by Peter Drennan, a viewpoint on the important role of the UN in these challenging times, a summary report on issues arising at the National Board level and the latest on UN Reform.

It is encouraging to report that the UN Alumni Network has been formally established with membership grew quickly to 600 members. The Network is open to staff who have worked in the UN and provides an opportunity for them to provide mentoring support, contribute their experiences to project opportunities, do presentations on the UN and enjoy social networking. The ACT Division is playing a key role in supporting the Network and facilitating the coordination of activities.

Lastly a very warm welcome to our new members.

As always, your feedback, contributions and suggestions are appreciated.

Till next time,

*Brian Gleeson
President ACT Division*

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- Upcoming Events
- UN Reform in Action
- The Global Water Security Crisis: the Role of the UN

We welcome your feedback on the newsletter and any suggestions for future activities. Email act@unaa.org.au

ROLE OF THE UN – AN EXAMPLE

The end of the year and the beginning of 2020 has started off with natural disasters caused by fire and storms and a near Coronavirus pandemic which have impacted significantly on Australians. It has been a challenging time which has raised debates on climate change, the Government's policies and actions or inactions domestically and on the global stage. The Coronavirus cases hover around 40,000 with over 1000 deaths (at the time of writing) and a large number of new countries with reported cases.

Like other countries, Australia has been struggling to balance the need for immediate response to support people affected with the virus and long term solutions for developing an antidote for the virus. The impact of these incidents all involve the United Nations (UN) in advocacy for climate change and in highlighting the important role the Organisation plays in mobilising global responses, sourcing emergency funding, ensuring coordination and developing lessons learned.

The Secretary-General of the UN recently said "Last year, ocean heat and mean sea level reached their highest on record. Scientists tell us that ocean temperatures are now rising at the equivalent of five Hiroshima bombs a second." No other body has the outreach, the support, the credibility, the independence nor trust to achieve the same results. Do you think that the average Australian shares the same opinion about the UN which is 75 years old this year?

UN SECURITY

Peter Drennan who was the Under-Secretary-General Department of Safety and Security and the highest ranked Australian ever to work in the UN gave a stimulating presentation to a captivated audience at the first ACT Division event in early February. Peter highlighted that the security environment across the world is not changing, some conflicts have been resolved but too many continue, the impact of crime, corruption and extremism is significant, food insecurity is growing and economic and social disparity drives insecurity, mass migration and nationalism. The presentation was very well received by those in attendance.



Photo: Peter Drennan speaking at the latest UNAA ACT public event.

UN REFORM

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is now one year into a reform process which he believes is both ambitious and achievable that in part outlines clear roles and responsibilities and introduces checks and balances. The objectives are to recalibrate the Organisation and strengthen it against critics, trying to make the UN function more effectively and to deal with some of the bureaucratic creep that has taken place over the past several decades.

Reforms are focused on streamlining the operations of the Secretariat (essentially the business arm of the UN which organises peacekeeping, disarmament, health programs and a suite of international partnerships and agencies). The reforms have seen the creation of a new Department of Political and Peace Building Affairs and a revised UN Development Strategy, which has involved a new Resident Coordinator system.

Pushing for reform of the Security Council is not on Mr Guterres's agenda but as the world continues to change, "it won't be sustainable that a country like Indonesia is not represented on the Security Council; it won't be sustainable that there is no African representation," he says. However, none of the Permanent Members have shown any inclination towards reform. It has been said that – "Is it a perfect system? No, it's a long way from perfect. Is it better than nothing? It is a whole lot better than nothing."

UNAA NATIONAL BOARD UPDATE

The main priority is the Partnership Forum (National Conference) with a major focus on the SDGs, to be conducted in Melbourne 15/16 April - the Forum website has all the details, including a link to register <https://unaspf2020.unaavictoria.org.au/>. The Board considered activities which would support the 75th anniversary of the UN this year, ongoing fundraising challenges, the proposed meeting with the Governor General (patron of the UN), ongoing support for the launch of the UN Alumni

Network, Business Plan implementation, increase opportunities to promote the role and activities of UNAA (one example is conducting Divisional public forums on the Partnership Forum) and continuing efforts to ensure there is a one UNAA approach to all activities.

Do you know if anyone who may want to join UNAA? Please share the following link to enable them to join – https://unaa-act.tidyhq.com/public/membership_levels