President Obama Addresses the United Nations General Assembly

We in the UNA community, and millions around the world, eagerly await President Obama’s address to the UN’s 64th General Assembly on September 23. The UNAUSA invites members to take a poll about this event at: http://www.facebook.com/1/10a88; www.unausa.org/obamaspeakstotheworld/poll

It is expected that the occasion will be used by the President to engage in several bilateral talks “on the side,” covering a range of issues and possibilities: from the Middle East, Iran, proliferation of weaponry, etc. This is President Obama’s first speech at the United Nations, and it will be interesting to hear him speak in the context of what he stated as a presidential hopeful a little over a year ago.

Please see the end of the newsletter for President Obama’s letter that he drafted in July 2008 for the UNAUSA.

UNA-USA is Proud to Launch Our NEW Student Alliance

Sept. 10, 2009

UNA-USA is proud to launch our NEW action-oriented, member-focused Student Alliance program to meet the needs of today’s globally minded middle school, high school, and undergraduate college students.

UNA-USA’s Student Alliance is dedicated to educating, inspiring and mobilizing American students to support the principles and vital work of the United Nations, strengthen the United Nations system as a whole, promote constructive United States leadership in the United Nations, and achieve the goals of the United Nations Charter.

President Obama and his top officials have pledged to strengthen America’s global leadership through a renewed emphasis on international cooperation, diplomacy, and active participation at the United Nations, and now is your time to get involved!

There are many ways to get active!!

- Learn more about UNA-USA’s Student Alliance program
- Start your group
- Join as an individual
- Check out the focus areas and toolkit
- Download the Guidebook
The Library Project Sweetens the Pot

The Library Project of the UNA-GP is going full steam ahead. Volunteers are being recruited and a training session is scheduled for September 26th. We are targeting young Philadelphians and based on our experiences of last year, we recognize the need to sweeten the pot: our sophisticated teenagers will hardly want to do all the work of studying about the United Nations water sanitation efforts without some compensation. After all, they are being financially compensated just for attending school in some cities.

The Library Project’s goal is to deepen the awareness of teenagers who attend the Free Library branches’ LEAP after-school programs about the United Nations. For four months beginning generally from October 5 to November 20, and again from March 1 to April 30, UNA-GP will be sending college student emissaries to provide interactive learning sessions for teens about Millennium Goal #7: Water Sustainability. The kids will make a book containing their approach to the topic: how they are affected by water sustainability, how water-borne diseases affect communities around the world, what they are doing about the problem, and how the United Nations is dealing with the problems. Their results are to be submitted to the UNA-GP Board.

We will offer top entries a monetary award, and will have those students present their findings at the Annual Meeting in June. Because of the staffing difficulties in the Free Library at this time, we are extending the offering to junior and senior high schools to increase our pool of students. Local college students, interested in becoming emissaries, should contact UNA-GP promptly. Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center’s Ellen Shultz and Wayne Jacoby of GEM will be among the experts helping us conduct workshops on September 26th to train those who would instruct the teens.

Marietta J. Tanner
Coordinator, Library Project

PROJECT FOR NUCLEAR AWARENESS

HAAS PEACE AWARD DINNER

Join the Project for Nuclear Awareness on October 26, 2009 in honoring Dr. Hans Blix (pictured) with the John C. and Chara C. Haas Award for International Peace and Social Justice. The event will take place at the DoubleTree Hotel, Philadelphia, beginning with a cocktail reception at 6PM, and dinner from 7-9PM. Live music and a silent art auction will be featured. RSVP online by October 1, 2009. Contact Kim at 215.546.3030 or kimthao.pna@gmail.com for group and table prices.

Dr. Blix served the international Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission and served as President of the World Federation of the United Nation Associations.
When September arrives, it seems that it’s time for action. I am eager to get things going, and time for musing over the UN and its lofty ideals is giving way to organizing and filling the agenda. So let’s focus on that.

There are many things happening, especially in collaboration with other sister organizations. We also have hired a fair number of part time work study students, as you will see in this newsletter. To highlight a few items that are not mentioned in the text:

Our website contractor, Donna Chan, is back from vacation and has picked up the project to update and modernize our website. We have a new volunteer, Ritwik Lodhiya, from Toronto and a student in engineering, who will work with Donna and Tiffany Wang to get the conversion started by the beginning of October. Our new work-study staffer, Rachel Scheer, a graduate student in education, who is going to handle our communication needs, will join in that effort. We hope that with the thoughtful input of Ed Gracely and the helping hand of our still current webmaster Damon Kletzien, we can have a great new website, worthwhile of throwing a party. Enid Adler is going full steam ahead with her work on the ICC and we have been very lucky to hire Chelsea Pedersen, a graduate student in Criminology, to work with her on ICC issues.

Shelley will also work with others, such as our member Hong Truong, on projects about trafficking, refugees, modern slavery, child labor and global migration issues.

The work on the project Philadelphia Global City is ongoing and we hope that on our new website this project will become a portal for a large number of local groups and organizations that do work on international issues. I hope that we can keep Lilla Finta-Peterffy working on this project, as well as membership administrative work in collaboration with the new membership outreach team.

Albert Momjian, our board member who provides a link with the Corps Consulaire of Philadelphia, has arranged a meeting for October the 21st to brainstorm about possible collaboration projects. Anastasia Shown, board member and Assistant Director of the African Studies Center, will join me. Her knack for creating feasible projects and synergy is amazing.

Ed Gracely and Jessica Lee are embarking on our need to structure our finances and (re) create budgetary systems for the projects we hope to execute, as well as for the UNA-GP itself.

With Nick Sanders as the energizer, UNA-GP has joined forces with the Ethical Society and the 350Philly movement to make UN Day 2009, 24th of October, into an awareness raising day about global warming. There are many events planned throughout the world by the 350 organization, and we have registered our event as an outdoor public engagement on Rittenhouse Square. You got an alert about preparatory events at The Ethical Society on the 20th and 27th of September. Stay posted for more news.

On October 10, there will be a large, artistic event to raise awareness about Darfur and other human dramas. Several years ago, we (that is YPIC)

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**Announcement:**

The next board meeting will be held on September 28, 5.30-7.00PM
Martin Luther King Room
Friends Center, 1501 Cherry Street
have organized events to help the Darfur refugees. The UNA-GP supports these artists and the organization behind it wholeheartedly. See the announcement in this newsletter. Try to go if you can.

At the risk of forgetting some folks and some events, I want to end with the events organized by the Project for Nuclear Awareness on October 26th and 27th. See the announcement. Our member, Sarah Davis, soprano and cultural globalist, will be singing in honor of Hans Blix, who will receive an award at a reception and dinner on October 26 (Monday). Hans Blix is the immediate past president of the World Federation of UNAs, and stepped down only last month in Seoul. I admire Hans Blix. Because of his role in the World Federation, I think it is worthwhile to organize a UNA-GP (or UNA-USA) table at the dinner. I have signed up three members for now. A table holds ten persons. It would be great if we can find many more members and have many tables. The price is $125 per person, $50 for students. If you cannot go yourself, consider sponsoring a student. We will be able to present the UNA-GP to a broad public and the media at this event.

This newsletter is put together by Nalat Phanit, with collaboration from Tiffany Wang and Rachel Scheer.

Thanks guys.
That’s it. Back to work.

Christiaan Morssink

From our education committee, with special thanks to Wayne Jacoby:

International Day for Eradication of Poverty Program

Premise:
GEM, UNA-Greater Philadelphia and the Council of Organizations co-sponsor a Stand Against Poverty event and an awareness of the work to fight poverty in the Murutunguru Village in Tanzania.

Part One:
StandAgainstPoverty
A 45 minute program structured with support resources from the StandAgainstPoverty campaign. It will clearly show the role of the UN in mobilizing the world to awareness and action on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It will unite the three sites together to be part of the global movement to send a loud and clear message from citizens to leaders of rich and poor countries to take urgent action to achieve the MDGs and once again break the Guinness World Record. We will register this event at www.standagainstpoverty.org before the start of the mobilization and then report their numbers after they have taken part. Numbers will be counted and verified by Guinness World.

Part Two:
Poverty Eradication in Murutunguru Village, Tanzania
With a woven connection to the MDGs, a 45 minute interactive videoconference on the work being done in Murutunguru Village to eliminate poverty in their community. An outcome is to continue the work with new partners in new ways and in the spring of 2010 to have a live interactive videoconference with participants from this program and members of the village to learn first hand from them what is happening. This is a real world experience on ending poverty.

Date: Friday, October 16, 2009
Time: 3:00-4:30PM (EST)
Format: Live, interactive videoconference
Audience: Community based, cross generational, cross cultural audience of business, non-profit and school based participants.
Co-sponsors: Council of Organizations, Global Education Motivators, UNA-Greater Philadelphia
Dancing to the Edge of Darfur: The Story Behind the Ballet

Saturday, October 10, 2009
8:00pm to 10:00pm

The Prince Music Theater,
1412 Chestnut Street,
Philadelphia, PA, 19102
Ticket Price: $45
www.rebeccadavisdance.com

A multi-media evening designed to recognize
the impact of social change projects by
highlighting the work of Global Grassroots in
Sudan and Rwanda.

Artistic works include: excerpts from the ballet
Darfur by The Rebecca Davis Dance Company,
video footage of a theater-based group in Rwanda,
photography taken by former US Marine Brian
Steidle, and excerpts from Brian and Gretchen
Steidle’s book and Emmy-nominated documentary
film The Devil Came on Horseback.

Learn more about Darfur, social change artists
and entrepreneurs. 100% of all proceeds are
donated to Global Grassroots
www.globalgrassroots.org
Membership Outreach

In July of this year, during the UNA-USA meetings in Washington DC, membership issues were discussed. It was noted that the number of members of the UNAUSA is declining steadily. There is also a real problem with respect to age distribution. Many members are in the ranks of retirees, and there is a certain uptick among young people, mostly students, but in the age group of 30 to 60, membership is severely lacking. Some chapters are flourishing, having some staff and a committed group of volunteers, while other chapters are small and based on sheer volunteer work.

We are not different. Our membership is slowly diminishing and our pool of younger members, while growing, is still small. I myself failed to make much headway when I tried to do membership recruiting. THUS, time for reflection, changing course and trying something new.

We have been very fortunate to be able to recruit four work-study students, who will work on developing plans to recruit new members, keep us alert for ways to make recruiting peers a part of our membership tasks and to help with projects that can become “hooks” for recruiting.

The team consists of Erich Bilal, Nathaniel Echeverria, Susan Liu and Zoe Freckleton. We have had a lunch meeting with these young workers and the executive board members. The first few weeks will be spent on orientation, to be followed with writing a work plan and engaging in projects throughout the year. All four are signed up as the first new members of our target of 200 new recruits before July 2010. The team will work within YPIC. Parts of our strategy will involve outreach to the local chapters of the UNAUSA Council of Organizations, collaboration with our partners such as PNA, Ethical Society, PGWI, and others.

I am very excited about the opportunity to work with these young talents. They are eager as well. Nate has already begun a Google group and we will soon add names to that group. Feel free to email info@una-gp.org if you want to join in. Nate, who is much involved in Habitat for Humanity, will surely get back to you.

Christiaan Morssink

2010 National High School Essay Contest on the UN

The UNA-USA has launched an interactive Web Portal (www.unausa.org/essay2010) for the 2010 National High School Essay Contest on the UN, so that students will be able to apply and submit their essays online. This year’s contest theme will be Millennium Development Goal #8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development.

Last year UNA-USA received a record 1400 essay submissions, and we hope that this year many will come from Philadelphia. UNA-GP has signed up and we have received 500 postcards about this contest. We are seeking venues to get them to the high school students. Our library project will be one venue, and we have asked our band of volunteers as well as our board members to reach out to churches, schools, community centers, to inform our young citizens about this event. We actually plan to train a few of our volunteers to be able to assist as tutors. A request has been sent to headquarters in NY for some posters to help with passive recruiting.

As members of UNA-GP, please spread the word about this contest to your sons and daughter, nephews and nieces, neighbors and friends. The contest is a great way to get young people engaged and stimulate their interest. As a special addition to this essay contest, the UNA-GP itself is inviting students to express themselves about the topic of the Millennium Development Goal #8 in alternative ways, from hip-hop song writing, to poetry, photo-voice and cartoons. We look forward to your reactions.
Barack Obama
June 24, 2008

Josh Weston
c/o United Nations Association of the USA
801 Second Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Dear Josh:

I am writing to commend your efforts at UNA-USA. I am reminded of the great potential of American leadership to enhance global security and prosperity and, tragically, of how much ground we have lost in recent years in fulfilling that potential. That is ground that can only be regained with new, bold and visionary American leadership that can acknowledge past mistakes, that embodies and embraces change, and that can unify our country to meet the challenges.

America has surmounted far greater hurdles before, renewing itself and leading the world towards shared security and common progress. That is the story of the founding of the United Nations. Its original architect, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, died weeks before the UN’s inaugural meeting in San Francisco. Roosevelt never had the opportunity to address the UN General Assembly, but his legacy speaks volumes. As American power reached new heights and Allied forces swept across Europe and the Pacific islands to free the world from tyranny, Roosevelt laid the foundations for a new era of collective security by creating a new institution that aimed to guarantee the peace and protect the basic rights of all human beings.

Stalin’s obstruction created stalemate in the United Nations, but the United States was not deterred. American presidents created new institutions, like NATO, and encouraged others, including the European Economic Community, to advance the principles and mandate of the UN Charter. In the decades that followed, the United States led and listened, gained by being generous, and ultimately prevailed in the struggle with totalitarianism.

Today, it is fashionable in some circles to bash the United Nations. This is all too easy to do, but it is also short-sighted and self-defeating. No country has a greater stake in a strong United Nations than the United States. That is why it is particularly painful when the UN falls short not only of its potential but also of the principles expressed in the UN Charter. All too often, member states use UN processes as a means to avoid action instead of a means to solve problems. In recent years, UN member states have failed to act swiftly or decisively to end the genocide in Darfur. Additionally, the Human Rights Council has passed nineteen resolutions criticizing Israel, yet has seen fit to condemn just one other country, Burma.

Yet, the United Nations is, we should recall, an American creation. It also is a common sense vehicle to share global burdens and costs. Despite its evident flaws and failings, the UN remains essential to advancing U.S. interests, to enhancing global security, spurring
development, and providing food, medicine and life-saving assistance to the world’s most needy everyday.

The UN’s work in development addresses the dire needs of one billion people living in extreme poverty. It is the UN, funded in part by the generosity of America’s taxpayers, that prepares and monitors elections in more than 30 countries and assists fragile new democracies. It is the UN that feeds the famished and shelters 20 million refugees fleeing conflict and natural disaster. It is the UN that has convened the world’s leaders on the urgent issue of climate change. It is the UN that strengthens global health and has helped reduce child mortality to its lowest level in history.

Progress and renewal at the UN will come from reform, not neglect. In the 1940s, the international community with American leadership created the United Nations to meet the needs of their times. Today, we face a world that is dramatically different than that of 1945. Decision-making procedures designed for a world of some fifty nations must now accommodate almost two hundred. We must all ensure the UN is capable of directing multi-faceted peace operations that depend on nimbleness and efficiency for success.

Many of the gravest threats faced by the United States are transnational threats: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, climate change, and global pandemics like HIV/AIDS. These threats are bred in places marked by other transnational challenges: mass atrocities and genocide, weak and failed states, and persistent poverty. By definition, these are challenges that no single country can manage. A strong and competent United Nations is more vital than ever.

The United States must champion reform so the United Nations can help us meet the challenges of the 21st century. Let us provide bold and effective leadership to reinvigorate the UN so it finally achieves the potential that Roosevelt envisioned and upon which our common security and common humanity depend. The UNA will continue to play its critical role in this important effort.

Keep up the good work.

All the best,

Barack Obama