IT’S SEPTEMBER AGAIN AT THE UN

The General Assembly is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. Comprising all 193 Members of the United Nations -- recently South Sudan was admitted-- it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter. The Assembly meets in regular session intensively from September to December each year, and thereafter as required. This year’s main policy theme is the spread of the Non-Communicable Diseases throughout the world, including cancer, heart disease and obesity. In the political sphere there is the red hot issue of the status of Palestine. Stay tuned for some dramatic dialogue and not-so-pleasant rhetoric.

ADVOCACY ALERT!!!!! (From UNA-USA)

UN Funding Is Under Attack — Schedule A Meeting with Your Members of Congress

UNA-USA chapter members can play an active role in letting their Members of Congress know that there is a U.S. constituency for the UN. UN funding will be targeted once again this fall in the U.S. Congress. As a means of fixing the country’s fiscal woes, U.S. regular dues and U.S. peacekeeping dues to the UN will be seen as easy targets. Additionally, legislation introduced by Republican House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, would require the UN to adopt a voluntary budget model, in which countries selectively choose which UN agencies to fund. (For more information on the Ros-Lehtinen legislation, see the Bloomberg, Foreign Policy/The Cable, UN Dispatch stories or visit UNA-USA website)

I myself have scheduled a meeting Chakka Fattah, organized by our board member Mary Day Kent, for next week. I urge everyone to contact their representatives as well, and UNA-USA suggests that you do so during the Columbus Day recess, Oct.13 - 30. When you have scheduled your meeting please inform Roger Nokes at rnokes@unausa.org and UNA-USA will send you additional meeting materials and talking points to assist you.

Advocacy Leader Google Group

A UNA-USA Chapter Advocacy Google Group has been created to help facilitate chapter advocacy work. The purpose of this group will be to coordinate and encourage the advocacy work of UNA-USA chapters across the country. Advocacy leaders from UNA-USA chapters will be asked to carry out activities and to share experiences with the full group. At UNA-GP Mary Day Kent has stepped forward to take on a direct role and represent our chapter. In the coming academic year, we intend to have at least one workshop on advocacy and we intend to create advocacy team for planned and ad hoc advocacy activities. Furthermore, a new members-only email will be introduced by UNA-USA, called “Advocacy Update” that will educate you on the process and facts of what’s happening on Capitol Hill and how you can help. Your voice will be needed. UNA-USA will provide us with the information and resources to contact your members of Congress at the right moment.
“U.N. Study: Austerity Measures Pushing World Economy Toward Disaster”

GENEVA 9-6-11(Tom Miles) - The pursuit of austerity measures and deficit cuts is pushing the world economy toward disaster in a misguided attempt to please global financial markets, the annual report of the United Nations economic thinktank UNCTAD said on Tuesday.

The report, "Post-crisis policy challenges in the world economy," savaged U.S. and European economic policies and called for wage increases, stricter regulation of financial markets, including a return to a system of managed exchange rates, and a conscious break with market-led thinking.

"The message here is very pragmatic: we need to reverse our course quickly," said UNCTAD Secretary General Supachai Panitchpakdi.

Supachai, a former head of the World Trade Organization, said the policy response to the crisis, with an emphasis on fiscal tightening, was misconceived and inept.

The report’s lead author Heiner Flassbeck said the global economic situation was extremely dangerous and, without more stimulus, a decade of stagnation was the best-case scenario.

The current policies were a disaster, said Flassbeck, head of the globalization and development strategies division at the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development, and a former deputy finance minister in Germany.

"If interest rates everywhere are zero, and if governments stick to the policy of not only keeping fiscal deficits where they are but retrenching, cutting public expenditure, then we will end up in permanent recession," he said.

"Unemployment depends very much on demand. And if you have no demand then you need government to step in with a huge program for stimulating the economy. This was the U.S. scenario in the past. Now it's worse because wages are rising less than in the past so you're going to need a bigger stimulus program."

For full article go to: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/09/06/un-study-austerity-deficit-cuts-world-economy_n_950551.html

Current list of work study coop and volunteer students:

EdithMia Davies, edd34@drexel.edu 848-391-4922
Kelsey Heath keh58@drexel.edu
Jenny Chi younguen.chi@drexel.edu
Anthony Stec astec@villanova.edu 914-772-8643
Megan Erck megan.erck@gmail.com
Patrick Medeo Pjm87@drexel.edu
Evan Black evaleigh@gmail.com 405-612-6161
Marcia Garcia gmarcia@gmail.com

Cameron Browne brownc@sas.upenn.edu
Jocelyn Voorhees jocelynvrhs@aol.com
Kelly Franquemont frak@gse.upenn.edu
Elise Miedwig enm33@drexel.edu
Elias Gonzales eliasgo@sas.upenn.edu
Emily Benda tub86824@temple.edu
Talha Malik talhawmalik@gmail.com
A shout out!!!!

We have several good active members and our work would not be possible without their continuous involvement. This time however I want to mention two individuals. Many thanks and compliments need to go to Manisha Patel and Lisa Parker. Manisha’s energy and involvement has increased the capacity of UNA-GP to the point where we can seriously talk about taking on long term projects that fit with our mission. Manisha makes friends everywhere and is a walking advertisement for UNA-GP. It is a sheer pleasure working with her. The same can be said about Lisa. Philadelphia is going to experience an International Day of Peace on September 21 as never before. We have the police involved, schools, universities, action groups, neighborhoods, even the Mayor and City Council have joined the ranks of those who state that in Philadelphia we are going to take Peace Making seriously. Lisa Parker is the outstanding, no holds barred, trail blazing, take-no-prisoner (darn, English is full of violence underscoring rhetoric), peace activist who has an energy that even I cannot muster. Working with her, you learn to take the next seat, as she takes control and is in charge. Guess what we will do on September 21, 2012. Right!

Ladies, my compliments
Christiaan Morssink, President.

An Arab Spring Forgotten in the Summer: Why Nations are Ignoring Syrian Voices
by Talha Malik

Has anyone noticed that it has been approximately five months since the revolution began in Syria and President Al-Assad continues to rein terror and cause bloodshed? Of course, but on a level that is disturbing as, several nations of the world have more or less have begun to treat Syria as a television drama and tune in simply to watch Al-Assad execute civilians with his army. In the same vein, nobody but Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International calls attention to the fact that in Egypt more than 12000 people have been put on trial and in jail since the fall of Mubarak, by an army that uses the state of emergency rules that have been in place since the eighties. No, our eyes, if not on Wall Street and job ads, are directed to oil-rich Libya and the money games after Ghaddafis ouster. (continued on page 10)
Peace Day - Philly 2011
&
Drexel University's
Office of International Programs

Peace Talks: Opportunities for Building Peace

Wednesday, September 21, 2011
Creese Student Center, 3210 Chestnut St., Drexel University
FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

1:00-2:30pm
Creative Peacemaking: Rebuilding Communities, Healing Identities
Sharon Katz, M.A., S. African Musician & Humanitarian, founder of "The Peace Train"
Dean Ravizza, Ph.D., Prog. Dir., Dept. of Health & Sport Sciences, Salisbury University
Heidi West, M.A., Drexel University's Office of International Programs
From music in S. Africa to sport in Northern Uganda, speakers will discuss using creative, culturally responsive ways to rebuild communities & heal identities in post-conflict settings.

3:00-4:30pm
Peace Visions: A World Free of Nuclear Threats & Small-Arms Menace
William Hartung, Ph.D., Center for International Policy, New America Foundation
Jacqueline Reich, Ph.D., Chestnut Hill College
Edward A. Aguilar, J.D., The Project for Nuclear Awareness
Dr. Hartung, an international expert on the world arms trade, will discuss current arms policy/issues as well as the nuclear dilemma facing the world. Dr. Reich will present
"The Vision of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty-- How Can We Make It a Reality?"

Talk Sponsor: The Project for Nuclear Awareness

For more information about these and other Peace Day events, go to:
http://www.una-gp.org/peacedayphilly2011.htm

UN agencies dispatching aid as more Sudanese refugees flee to Ethiopia; a neglected story?

6 September 2011 – United Nations agencies are mobilizing to assist some 20,000 people who have fled the fighting in Sudan’s Blue Nile state and arrived in neighbouring Ethiopia.

An assessment team from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) found that the refugees arriving in the Assosa region of western Ethiopia appear in good physical condition but need food, water and shelter.

So far, some 2,500 refugees who were willing to be relocated have been moved into an existing refugee camp at Sherkole that was first opened in 1997 in response to the North-South Sudanese civil war.

“However, most are reluctant to go and prefer to stay near the border, hoping that fighting will die down soon and allow them to return home,” UNHCR spokesperson Adrian Edwards told reporters in Geneva.

On Friday Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon voiced his deep concern about the eruption of fighting in Blue Nile state, as well as the ongoing fighting in Southern Kordofan, and called for an immediate end to the fighting and for access for humanitarian agencies to the affected areas.

"UNHCR today reiterated its call to both the Sudanese Government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North to end the fighting and allow access for humanitarian staff to address any urgent life-saving needs.

“We are also calling on both parties to ensure the protection of humanitarian workers and their assets, including warehouses where vital aid has been stored,” said Mr. Edwards. The agency has dispatched emergency relief items to Assosa and more supplies are on the way from the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, to assist those at Sherkole and other areas. It is also sending additional staff to the area to more effectively respond to the emergency. In addition, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is providing water bladders and medical supplies while the UN World Food Programme (WFP) is sending food urgently to the area."
WORLD FOOD DAY
PHILLY 2011

OCTOBER 16; 2.30-6PM
SYMPOSIUM AND RECEPTION

Keynote Speaker  Marlon Nestle:
“The Overt and Covert Costs of Food: Economic, Social, Ethical, and Health Dimensions”

Scott Poethig:  “Genetic Engineering, then and now”

Roxanne Christensen:  “On the Promise of SPIN Farming”

Reception to follow!!!

Where:
Hopkinson House, 32nd floor
604 S. Washington Square

Seating limited to 110. Admission is free; donations are much appreciated

To RSVP or for questions:
info@una-gp.org
The United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia

10.24.11

INVITES YOU TO CELEBRATE

UNITED NATIONS DAY 2011

@ Penn

Penn Hall of Flags

Human Rights, Globalization, and the Arab Spring

PANEL
Dr. Radwan Ziadeh, The Institute for Middle East Studies @GWU
Dr. Zakia Salime, Rutgers University
Abu Bakr Shawky, Filmmaker, NYU Tisch

Followed by a Performance by Syrian-American Hip-Hop Artist, Omar Offendum

PANEL BEGINS @ 2PM
dotson.renta@gmail.com or lara@una-gp.org

For more information, please contact:

INITIAL SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS
Ryan Patel: our away-from-home volunteer who makes our newsletter interesting and easy to read.

Ryan Patel, born in Washington, NJ, is a senior at Boston University majoring in Economics. After graduating next year, he hopes to enroll in Law School. While growing up with an American passport and calling the US home, Ryan has had actually quite a cosmopolitan life experience in his developmental years. Due to his father’s work with a multinational company, Ryan’s family moved frequently. When he was 8 years old, he lived for 2 years in London, after which he lived in Hong Kong for a year and a half, and finally finishing his High School education in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. While travelling the globe he met many different kinds of people and faced many multi-cultural experiences. From 4th grade onward Ryan studied at “International Schools”, which he recalls as places where “everyone moved from and to somewhere.”

Ryan has been volunteering with UNA-GP for 6 months now, and looks forward to working with the group in the future. Ryan has been a great asset for the UNA-GP, as he is solely responsible for composing the monthly newsletter. There is a lot of tedious work in creating a newsletter which will be not only appealing to the eye, but also formulated with sense and order. Ryan likes playing around with different fonts to make the newsletter easier and more enjoyable to read. Ryan enjoys putting together the newsletter and is an avid member of the UNA-GP. Ryan’s mother Manisha Patel, our volunteer coordinator, may have been originally twisted his arm to get him involved in our organization, but as he is internally driven, he has embraced our cause and is happy to help out in any way he can.

In his free time Ryan enjoys video games and reading. Ryan stresses that his international experience plays an affect in his involvement in UNA-GP as well as his future endeavors. Who knows maybe he will work for the UN one day?

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Donate a bit of money, donate a bit of time, give the gift of membership to your friends and neighbors, and why stop there? Ask your boss to join UNA-GP!
Profiteering from Hunger?

The UN is investigating the possible theft of food supplies meant for Somalia’s famine victims.

The UN World Food Programme is investigating the possible theft of food supplies meant for Somalia's famine victims. But it has denied reports that half of all its aid is being stolen and sold on the black market.

More than 3.2 million Somalis - almost half the population - need food aid, after a severe drought engulfed the country. This comes against the backdrop of the country's long running civil war. So what affect does food aid theft have on humanitarian work in Somalia and how can aid agencies tackle corruption? Watch Inside Story, with presenter Dareen Abughaida, on http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAHrv6_KuDo

World Food Day: October 16th
Theme 2011: Food Prices

World Food Day is observed each October 16th in recognition of the founding of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1945. The first World Food Day was in 1981. In the United States the endeavor is sponsored by more than 450 national, private, voluntary organizations. This year, the UNA-GP event, is labeled as the kick off the USA National Food Day events, culminating on October 24th.

Most WFD planning is done at the community level. Individual groups can hold a special event, but the most successful observances happen when organizers work together with affiliates of national sponsors. Local coalitions, representing the diversity of national sponsors, can share ideas that will involve schools, businesses, worship centers, government offices, service groups, the media, etc.

World Food Day serves to:
- Increase Awareness - provide a briefing on the issues for the media; promote WFD.
- Increase Understanding - work with schools and colleges; plan a community seminar.
- Increase Information - help in researching on local community food security.
- Increase Support - hold a fund raiser for local and/or international projects.
- Increase Advocacy - seek policy commitments from public officials (or candidates).
- Increase Networking - use WFD to bring together people, ideas and resources.
- Increase Year-Around Action- seek to involve people in on-going service/support.
- Increase Impact - devise a means to measure the year to year progress you are making; consider World Food Day the "annual meeting" for hunger activists.

Membership in the UNA-GP implies becoming a member of the UNA-USA. The membership fees are $10 for students. $25 for first time members and people on fixed income. $40 for regular members. Please register by going to www.una-gp.org. Please check the Philadelphia box under chapters. If you want to provide a donation at the same time, please say that the donation is for the chapter. AND please inform us of your membership application.

Please note that Cameron Browne will be the membership coordinator as of September 119th. He can be reached at info@una-gp.org.
Since the beginning of the Syrian uprising, more than 2,000 protestors have been killed and hundreds more have been injured. A recent major scale of killings occurred in the beginning of August of which many are calling the ‘Ramadan Massacre’. Syrian forces killed around 142 people and injured many more on a single day in the city of Hama (1). The crackdown on Hama came when Muslim cleric told a crowd of over 500,000 people that the Assad regime ‘must go’. In response, western nations have condemned the actions of Al-Assad, and President Obama particularly said he was “appalled by the Syrian government’s use of violence and brutality against its own people” (1). Syrian civilians are becoming displaced and seeking refugee status in the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. Turkey has been historically reluctant to coordinate aid for Syrians, however due to international pressure and the rise of refugee communities, Turkey has started setting up refugee camps for over 10,000 Syrians in conjunction with United Nations’ efforts (2). The United Nations has also coordinated with Lebanon to set up refugee camps and aid assistance. However, Al-Assad has sent military forces to block the border so that the flow of refugees would stay within the country and face persecution. With Al-Assad’s censorship of media organizations and international aid agencies, it is becoming increasingly difficult for anyone to provide support to Syrian civilians.

Although Western nations have provided their condemnation on Al-Assad’s regime, their practical efforts towards the conflict stand behind a statement by Secretary Ban Ki-moon. Secretary Ban Ki-Moon condemned Al-Assad’s actions and encouraged humanitarian assistance and diplomatic pressure from all nations, however still maintained the principle of a country’s sovereignty by stating: “...the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people must be addressed through an inclusive Syrian-led political process that guarantees fundamental freedoms and rights for all” (3). Of course, respecting a country’s sovereignty is a basic principle when it comes to international relations; however member nations have used this ideology as an excuse to not intervene, even in the most barbaric of circumstances. The irony of course is that neighboring states were quick to help in the crushing of mass protests in Bahrain. The most apparent action for member nations would be to increase international pressure on Al-Assad’s government, but support camps and humanitarian assistance is just as equally as important. The one key lesson that the United States and the world can learn from the Arab Spring is that providing support measures are key for a successful revolution, however dictating the trajectory of the political process can have severe repercussions. In this sense, Ban Ki-Moons statement attempts to respect the natural law of political processes rather than promoting an intervention which would disrupt the natural evolution of an uprising.

Nonetheless, not vouching or an intervention in Syria is also a serious gamble because of the events that occurred in 1982. In 1982, Assad’s father, Hafez, massacred an estimated 20,000 people in Hama to put down a revolt against the government (1). Are we really ready to take a gamble and just watch the death toll rise exponentially in Syria? Or should we start implementing more support measures and pressuring Syria to lessen their border control so that more refugees can get to camps in neighboring countries? Either way, the Arab Spring should give Political Scientists and International Theorists something to baffle at; theorists and scientists now have two cases that have exactly the same circumstances, but possess exactly opposite support from the international community, Libya and Syria. Libya is the case of intervention by UN and NATO forces, and Syria is not. I suppose after these revolutions end, political scientists and theorists will have their answer to whether or not intervention in the political process of the modern Middle East is effective. Yet, as Washington continues in debate and scholars continue theorizing, the world has to face the grim reality that Syrians will continue being massacred unless we do something.

Sources:
http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2060788,00.html: Picture (TIME)