Wednesday, December 11, 2013

New York, NY -- It’s official! On December 11, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution explicitly highlighting the valuable contributions of WFUNA and UNAs in mobilizing public support for the UN. It is a rare privilege for a civil society organization to be mentioned in a General Assembly resolution in this way. The last time WFUNA was included in a resolution was nearly three decades ago, in 1986.

WFUNA Secretary-General Bonian Golmohammadi was present at the General Assembly when the decision was taken by member states. We hope that you share in our excitement to have received this important recognition, and that all UNAs will be able to use this resolution to help strengthen their platforms.

Resolution A/68/428, Article VI.85 reads:

"Recalls its resolution 41/68 D of 3 December 1986, commends the World Federation of United Nations Associations and its more than 100 national United Nations associations for the valuable contributions they have made during the past 67 years through their global activities in the mobilization of popular support for the United Nations, and calls for continued collaboration between the World Federation and the Department of Public Information in support of their complementary objectives;"
Dear members and friends of UNA-GP,

This is the season of looking forward to the brighter lights in the New Year. We celebrated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on Dec. 9th, the eve of International Human Rights Day (the 10th). We gave a toast to the spirit of Eleanor Roosevelt, one of the key creators of the UDHR in 1948 and also a founding member of the United Nations Association. We honored the UDHR as well in our program with speakers Ed Nakawatase and Arturo Requesens telling of the global effort to gain UN recognition and assistance to indigenous peoples, now embodied in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. There will be an international conference on Indigenous rights at the UN this coming September, held just before the annual opening of the General Assembly. Both speakers called for us to find ways to offer support to this conference, which has received remarkably little attention or resources to date. See www.un.org/indigenous for more information.

Also ahead in 2014 we will have our Model UN on the vital human resource of water, a delegation to the UN for members day in February, an impressive program for International Women’s Day, our annual General Meeting of members, our participation in the national UNA meeting and congressional advocacy in Washington, DC, and -- most likely -- our rapidly becoming traditional Global Garden Party in July. This is only the barest outline of the work that is being planned and dreamed and all reading this are encouraged to join in the planning.

Today there was a message to the United Nations Association of the USA that the UN General Assembly on Dec. 11 passed a resolution of thanks to all the UN Associations of the world for the work they do to support the UN, commending the World Federation of UNAs for their valuable contributions in mobilizing popular support for the UN.

Despite the sometimes bureaucratic or formulaic nature of UN resolutions, it is a joyous feeling to see that the hard work we do, along with the work of our cohorts around the world, is noticed and valued. Let us do more in the year ahead!

With all best wishes for the year ahead and looking forward to working together for justice and peace,

Mary Day

Mary Day Kent, President, UNA-GP

The Disability Treaty

I know that many of you are still recovering from a full set of UN Day activities. However, one of the other big days on the UNA calendar has traditionally been December 10th, Human Rights Day. In 2012, 40 chapters hosted Human Rights Day events covering topics as broad and diverse as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Women’s Rights as Human Rights, Indigenous Peoples, and a host of other issues. The scale and scope of UNA’s commitment to human rights is one of our greatest strengths.

However, there is one particularly time sensitive human rights issue that I would encourage all UNA chapters who are holding Human Rights Day events to include. The US Senate will hold a vote to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the “Disabilities Treaty”) as early as this month. The vote fell short by just five votes last year and it is absolutely essential that we show our support. As a result, if you are holding a Human Rights Day event or even just a regularly scheduled board meeting or other chapter activity over the next two weeks I would urge you to include a segment or at least a discussion of the treaty. This could be as simple as airing the four minute video from Secretary Kerry included below and asking participants to go to the UNA advocacy link (also included below) to send an electronic letter to their Senators. If you are able to include a Disabilities Treaty element in an event please email Chante Lantos at (clantos-swett@unausa.org) so that we can highlight your efforts.

Secretary Kerry Video on the Disability Treaty:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rx5UPeD-UVc

UNA-USA Disability Treaty Response Link:

https://secure.globalproblems-globalsolutions.org/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=482

I will be attending a coalition meeting of all the organizations supporting the treaty tomorrow. It would be great to report out that UNA chapters across the United States that are working together to highlight the importance of ratifying the treaty as part of their broader commemorations of the vital role of the UN in safeguarding human rights.

Thank you as always for your leadership.

Chris Whatley, Executive Director, UNA-USA
From Christiaan’s Desk

December again; another year coming to a close. We witnessed change, as the minorities of LGBTQ reaped several legal victories at the state level, and the efforts to use diplomacy over military might were greeted with appreciation the world over. We witnessed some constants, like the absolute stranglehold of the NRA and Monsanto over their servants in DC, or the disregard for scientific environmental findings by short-sighted, short-minded and simplistic thinking governments. We witnessed the absolute horror of chemical weapons in warfare and we saw shame, when our state administration released funds to our school system, only AFTER a child had to die. Another level of shame we endure when we stand by idle in the extremely sad civil war of Syria.

And we saw great things, as when Malala Yousafzai addressed the UN General Assembly; or the Palestinians and Israelis agreed to talk again. Also, there was a sense this year that the UN system is being appreciated more as a relevant platform for political and policy discourse on the global scale.

Locally, we did some new things. We were instrumental with bringing the ICC to the Philadelphia scene. We held our first alternative Model UN on the Rule of Law, we organized a first Red Cross/Red Crescent Day event on Syria, and we organized our first Philadelphia Plays for Peace (P3) soccer tournament. In 2014 we are going to build on these initiatives. On January 11th, our board is going to spend some quality time to discuss how we can improve our education, awareness and advocacy activities and scale up our chapter.

Personally, 2013 looks to end up as a good year as well. My 7 year old grandson is learning the intricacies (if there are any) of playing football, under the high expectation eyes of his father; my stepson earned his PhD this year and started his career in academia in South Carolina; and my wife, of whom I am very proud, has been taking the fight to prevent obesity to a global level and is making inroads. Shiriki may not come to many of our UNA-GP events, but she herself is making every day a global action day. Here is a short clip to get you hooked on what she is doing: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3ZTBphUDvA.

Happy Holidays, y’all!!

Philadelphia Plays for Peace

By Jesse Ferrante

For a long time now, different countries have been trying to find common grounds for peace. UNAGP feels the "ground" for peace is more of a field, a soccer field to be exact. Philadelphia Plays for Peace (P3) is a soccer tournament hosted by UNAGP in which different countries were represented by teams. Like anything in this world, you learn from your mistakes and last year we learned quite a bit. One thing we want to do is increase the size of the event. Hopefully we will have two fields instead of one to play on. Another problem last year was the number of rounds in the tournament. Having to wait to play is exhausting physically and mentally. Something else discussed was cutting the time in half. After hours of play most were too tired to continue or injured from the day.

Even though P3 is far off into 2014, we are hoping to do better this year. We will keep you informed as we get closer to Philadelphia plays for Peace.

We hope to see you there!!!

http://www.pelhamweb.com/recreation/soccer_page.htm
Human Rights Day

By Jesse Ferrante

On December 9th 2013, UNAGP celebrated Human Rights Day at the Ethical Society in Philadelphia. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed on the 10th of December 1948 with Eleanor Roosevelt as the Chairwoman of the Declaration of Human Rights Committee. The topic of our meeting was the rights of indigenous people worldwide. Speakers included Ed Nakawatase and Arturo Requensens.

Ed Nakawatase discussed the work to get to the UN Resolution on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted. Work on the “Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” began in the early 1980’s; the process culminated in the passage of the Declaration by the UN General Assembly in 2007. The Declaration established standards for the treatment of indigenous peoples, and, in groundbreaking fashion, affirmed the distinctive identities of indigenous peoples and their rights as collective entities.”

Arturo Requesens talked about his work in helping Indigenous Peoples including a Know Your Rights! which he helped lead with Ravi Karkara. Know Your Rights! is a document which teaches indigenous adolescents their rights as stated by the United Nations.

However you celebrated Human Rights Day we hope you had as good a time as we did. One thing is for sure though; we would have had a better time with you there. Hope to see you next year.

See pictures of the event on the next page.

Rule of Law Model UN

By Jesse Ferrante

On December 5th I had the opportunity of observing the first lesson taught for the Rule of Law lesson at Boys Latin High School. From what I saw the students were engaged. Experienced UNAGP member Minsoo Kim delivered the lesson, and if there is one thing I learned it is that you are simply there to direct. The majority of work is discussions led by the kids. Your job as the teacher is to make sure they are adequately informed and jump in when needed.

This year we plan on having teachers meeting to help those like me who might be nervous to speak in front of a crowd. Luckily, people like Minsoo and Daniel Bu have done this before and are able to coach those of us who are new to the UNAGP family.

Two things UNAGP wanted to change for this time around. The first was the lesson plan. Charlotte Benham, along with the help of Minsoo and Daniel did a beautiful job sanding out the rough edges from last year, like making sure the students know how to debate properly. Another change made this year is the increase in schools involved this year. The way we saw it, the more schools, the more engaged the discussions.
Pics from Human Rights Day

Ed Nakawatase

Nick Chooses Wine

Mary Day Kent

Listening with attentiveness

Liquor + Politics = Happy Christiaan

Ahh... Interesting

Arturo Requesens
UN chief pays tribute to life and legacy of South Africa’s Nelson Mandela

On December 10th Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon paid tribute to the late Nelson Mandela, telling the tens of thousands gathered at the memorial service held in Johannesburg that the life and legacy of the former South African president was an inspiration not only for his country but for the world.


Doha delivers

On December 6th the members of the World Trade Organization rose to applaud the successful conclusion of the first multilateral trade agreement negotiated at the WTO. The deal, reached at a ministerial conference on the island of Bali, in Indonesia, is the first fruit to be borne of the long-barren Doha round of international trade talks.


World must sustainably produce 70 per cent more food by mid-century – UN report

The world will need 70 per cent more food, as measured by calories, to feed a global population of 9.6 billion in 2050, and must achieve this through improvements in the way people produce and consume, according to a report released today by the United Nations and its partners.


Norway donates NOK 66,300,000 to programmes for developing countries

Norway will donate NOK 36,300,000 (CHF 5,320,000) to various WTO trust funds in 2013-2014. An additional NOK 30,000,000 (CHF 4,400,000) will be provided to support the implementation of a future agreement on trade facilitation, in particular for least-developed countries (LDCs), bringing its total contributions since 2001 to NOK 188,400,000 (CHF 27,600,000).

http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/pres13_e/pr713_e.htm

Pakistan’s Next Top General

General Raheel Sharif was appointed as Pakistan’s Army chief last week. In response to this a flurry of profiles described the new occupant of the country’s most powerful office as a “moderate” and “professional” soldier, with “no interest in politics.”

http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2013/12/pakistan_s-next-top-general.html

Public Sees U.S. Power Declining as Support for Global Engagement Slips

Pew Public Research for the People and the press recently published a piece on America’s place in the world in 2013. Growing numbers of Americans believe that U.S. global power and prestige are in decline. And support for U.S. global engagement, already near a historic low, has fallen further.

New Co-op and Interns

Rafiat Kasumu is a current Junior at the University of Pennsylvania majoring in International Relations and minoring in African Studies. Though she is new to the UNA-GP team this year, she has long had strong interests in spreading global ideas and learning about international issues. She is currently an Entrepreneurial and Development Law writer for Penn’s Society for International Development and a past Research Intern for the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program. For the past academic year, she has been the Marketing Director of the Black Wharton Undergraduate Association and she hopes to one day contribute to global development by helping multinational corporations through analyst research and strategic consulting.

!!Advertisement!!

Bringing Our Human Rights to Life  January 27 to April 14, 2014  For adults 55 and over.

Location: Temple University, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), 15th and Market Streets

Instructor: Bob Groves, MA, MPH  lfbg@comcast.net

Register as an OLLI student via website at http://www.temple.edu/tucc/persenrichment/OLLI/ or in person.

The cost $ 195.00. This entitles the member to a very wide range of 100 plus classes, including this one.

New Year’s Resolution!

Become a member of UNAGP!!

Our website offers information about our mission, upcoming events, and ways to get involved—including joining the UNA-GP and volunteering! In addition, we are on social media sites and send out our monthly newsletter. Check us out!

Volunteers with all types of skill sets are welcome to work with the UNA-GP! Contact:

Manisha Patel
Strategic Initiatives
Volunteer Coordinator
Board Member
mpatel@una-gp.org

http://una-gp.org/
As we say goodbye to 2013, we reflect on all the highlights of the United Nations.

Syria

“In its 27 September resolution, the Security Council stressed the importance of a speedy convening of an international conference to implement the Geneva Communiqué, and called upon all Syrian parties “to engage seriously and constructively” in the process. For his part, the Secretary-General described the Council’s action as a "key building block for peace" and said “we must move as quickly as possible to the talks.”

• The Joint Mission was established on 16 October 2013 to achieve timely elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

• The action was based on the recommendations by the UN Secretary-General, with the advice and support of the OPCW Director General.

• Secretary-General appoints Special Coordinator of Joint Mission”

Mali

“25 April 2013 – The Security Council approved a 12,600-strong United Nations peacekeeping operation to take over from the African-led mission in Mali on 1 July and authorized the blue helmets “to use all necessary means” to carry out security-related stabilization tasks, protect civilians, UN staff and cultural artefacts, and create the conditions for the provision of humanitarian aid.”

Philippines

“22 November 2013 – The United Nations increased its appeal for Philippines typhoon relief by nearly 16 per cent to $348 million with a further rise likely as aid organizations move into top gear in the face of a disaster that killed thousands of people and affected 13.25 million overall.”

Caribbean

“29 October 2013 – On the anniversary of Hurricane Sandy making landfall in the United States, United Nations officials are reminding the public not to forget the storm’s less documented Caribbean victims.

Commemoration ceremonies will take place around the northeast United States today, particularly in New York, where the devastating storm caused over $18 billion worth of damage to the city.”

Brazil

“5 December 2013 – Agroforestry, diversification of crops with legumes and other practical measures must be scaled up to end hunger while meeting the challenge of climate change, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told a global conference on the issue today.

The UN General Assembly is currently considering a proposal to name 5 December of each year as “World Soil Day,” as supported by the FAO Conference this past June, to raise awareness of the importance of this natural resource to agriculture, biodiversity and climate change.”

For more stories, go to www.un.org