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President's Letter

Dear Members and Friends of UNA-GP,

"Last night I had the strangest dream, I never dreamed before, I dreamed the world had all agreed, To put an end to war..."

As I read about the conclusion of the Paris Climate Accords I am reminded of this song, a peace-dreamers song since the 40s (you can find Pete Seeger singing it on YouTube. See sidebar). As former Vice-President Al Gore said of the agreement, it is "universal and ambitious", a true end-of-year holiday gift from humankind to the world. The "universal" dimension is particularly significant, I believe, and is a major achievement all by itself. The League of Nations at its peak extent in the late 1920s had 58 members. The 1945 founding members of the United Nations were 51 countries (only 3 of which were from the continent of Africa which now has 51 countries). The Paris Accord represents 196 countries from the smallest to the largest, richest to poorest, all forms of government from monarchies to communism, all united by the realities of sharing a planetary ecosystem and a hope for the future. The community of voluntary organizations and NGOs such as our own UNA have played a key role in creating this global consciousness and will to set ambitious and urgent goals: let us all turn off the electric lights and have a candlelight toast to celebrate!

American folk signer and activist Pete Seeger was a fixture on nationwide radio in the 1940s. He sang "Give Peace a Chance" at the Amnesty International Benefit for John Lennon's 70th birthday tribute concert in 2010. Watch a clip here.
The UNA-GP finished up its program year on Dec. 10th, the international day to recognize and cherish the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with an overflow crowd attending our event focused on international refugees and the Philadelphia response. Although we had chosen the topic a few months before, we had no idea that it would not only be important but would also have reached the front political and media burner in the US exactly the week of the event. Philadelphia’s human rights and interfaith organizations all rose to the occasion and our event combined with an outdoor vigil in Rittenhouse square attended by several hundred witnessing for a welcome to refugees and mutual respect for all faiths in our city. Many of the vigilers joined our event and heard from Jana Mason of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and staff of two of the area’s main agencies assisting refugees and immigrants, HIAS and Nationalities Service Center. Kudos to the Ethical Society for being the location in the right place at the right time to handle the crush and provide a platform to this urgent discussion.

We have another year ahead of active and urgent programming which I hope all of us will be working on together, keeping our eyes on the prize amid the upcoming political storms of election year 2016.

All best hopes and wishes to all for the holidays still to come and the New Year.

Mary Day

Mary Day Kent, UNA-GP
President
The agreements on tackling global warming reached in Paris on the 12th are historic in scope; while purists and cynics lament the shortcomings and the lack of law, for politicians this must be breathtaking. I want to applaud the many NGOs that have for years worked on reaching this agreement, overcoming a long history of political myopic nationalism; I also want to applaud the many business leaders from around the world who use rational long term planning (beyond the election cycle) and have decided that externalities like the environment should fit in their overall cost-calculation. And I do pity the many millions in the filthy cities of the world who had to die or become sick in order for their political leaders to finally take notice.

Now comes the hard work, fighting and dismantling the negative forces of the established interests, outshouting the deniers and being creative and innovative in pursuing structural changes in the way we live, work, learn globally. Sustainability and Planetary Health will have to become the lenses through which we measure our actions.
Meanwhile, kudos to Bob Groves, Prachi Potdar, and Miranda and Ron of Amnesty International; they put together a great Human Rights Day event. Bob and Prachi built a coalition of interested parties and the involvement of our local interfaith and peace activists led to a great vigil preceding our forum. We also were lucky that much right wing political noise in Europe and the US became so shrill and fear-based, that many of our well-thinking citizens took the moment of our Human Rights Day to formulate a protest. Indeed, fear is a primitive emotion, collective fear a primitive political weapon. And collective fear is always contractive, blocks out rationality, long term vision and de-humanizes our full potential for life. The politics of empathy, of real embrace of the universality of our human rights, and the willingness (as my friend Collins describes it) to learn to become comfortable with being uncomfortable, those things are not primitive; they require adult, well thinking citizens, who understand that diversity makes the mosaic of life’s experiences more colorful, more dynamic, more innovative, more intense.

Hence I smiled when I read that the new president of the Dutch parliament is a Muslima of Moroccan descent, an immigrant. No one fears Shira law, or her Jihad. She will be measured, as Martin Luther King demanded, by the content of her character. I intend to measure the content of the character of our US politicians. And several of our politicians fail miserably.

I wish you all a Happy Winter Solstice, and/or Merry Christmas, Merry Kwanzaa, as well as a Happy New Gregorian Year.
A Few Words From Our Volunteer Coordinator

UNA-GP's newly formed Membership Committee has been meeting regularly in preparation for this Spring's Model UN conferences and could use your help! Membership support helps in bringing programming for the local community, its schools and university students. Members are more connected to world issues through their participation in Chapter events and their involvement in UNA-USA/UN program. They grow local support for United Nations ideals and its work in Philadelphia's community.

Manisha Patel
mpatel@una-gp.org

WMUN Conference 2016

On Martin Luther King Day, high school students from five schools will gather at the University of Pennsylvania for the annual Water Model United Nations Conference. While last year, the students addressed water, sanitation, and hygiene as they relate to gender, this year they will explore stormwater management in Philadelphia and abroad. Global Water Alliance volunteers created and presented lesson plans about stormwater management in Philadelphia, Amman, Rotterdam, and Yaoundé. Participating high school students competing in the conference will utilize this information to draft a resolution about implementing stormwater management practices and technologies, as they relate to the 6th target of the Sustainable Development Goals. They will also represent cities across the world, such as those in Brazil, Egypt, Germany, and the Philippines, among others. The competing students will receive community service points, debate experience, and a special reward for their participation. Please email Program Manager, Kelly Bridges, if you are interested in volunteering at the conference. Her email is bridgesk@sas.upenn.edu.
In The Netherlands, as elsewhere in Europe and North America, the humanitarian response of absorbing refugees from Syria and beyond has become a political hot potato. Governments that try to implement the duties inherent in their signatures under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights find that many in the ‘Demos’ have objections. Objections that can be as reasonable as worrying about the carrying capacity of the community in terms of housing, health, infrastructure or labor competition. Other “reasonable” objections are stoked by fear for terrorism or increased crime, a fear that is of course now growing fast in reaction to the attacks in Paris and the situation in Belgium.

And then there is the myopic, ethnocentric objection towards “the other”. A rightwing nationalism that expresses itself through hate, violence, and denigration. That rightwing nationalism is on the rise in Europe, sadly so, and it uses the most vulgar ways of sowing fear and revulsions among the refugees from Syria and the Middle East. We know that vulgarity well, in Europe and many other places. Jews have learned to become deeply upset with the swastika, and African Americans understand all too well the fear associated with the burning cross.

Now rightwing ethno-centrists in Holland have found a way to deeply insult and alienate Muslims, whether they are refugees or second generation countrymen. These fascists, always as anonymous as the KKK, use pig-heads in front of refugee quarters, mosques and shops of Muslims. The picture above is from my place of birth Enschede. A most disgusting display of hate, for now expressed by only a tiny minority. The foulness of these acts is breathtaking, the acts are pure terrorism. We cannot stand for that, never. Hate if you must (I myself hate haters), but speak your mind as you are entitled in a democracy. Terrorizing is not acceptable. We need to protect our communities from the vulgarity and cowardness of this intolerance, protect our democratic ways of interaction freely and without fear. Our expressions of disgust must be broad, intense and enduring. Too much is at stake.
Suggested Actions to Support Refugees

By the United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia

There are many things that we here in Philadelphia can and must do to support and advocate for the rights of refugees. UNA-GP has created a list of actions we call all take to make a difference in this conflict. If you have other suggestions or ideas for how UNA-GP can get involved, please contact Manisha Patel at mpatel@una-gp.org.

1. PA residents: Contact PA Senators Bob Casey and Pat Toomey voicing support for accepting Syrian refugees and the needs of other refugees; Casey’s phone is 202/224-6324 or go to www.casey.senate.gov; Toomey is 202/224-4254 or go to www.toomey.senate.gov.

NJ residents: Contact NJ Senators Corey A. Booker and Robert Menendez voicing support for accepting Syrian refugees and the needs of other refugees; Booker’s phone number is 202-224-3224 or go to http://www.booker.senate.gov/; Menendez is at 202-224-4744 and his web site is http://www.menendez.senate.gov/.

2. PA residents, call Governor Tom Wolfe and express your thanks for his public stand to accept Syrian refugees in Pennsylvania: 717-787-2500 or go to governor.pa.gov/contact/.

3. Donate to UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency: www.unrefugees.org/donate

4. Volunteer/donate to help local refugee groups such as HIAS-PA hiaspa.org/get-involved/volunteer; Nationalities Services Center nscphila.org/become-mentor; Lutheran Children and Family Services hwww.lcfsinpa.org/how-to-get-involved

5. For further Information some global organizations assisting refugees:
   • United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR): www.unhcr.org
   • Migration Policy Institute: www.migrationpolicy.org
   • International Rescue Committee: www.rescue.org

6. Join the UNA-GP and help us make a better world! http://una-gp.org/membership/

List is not intended to be exhaustive; many other actions may also be possible.
On November 19th, UNA-GP members, students, professionals, and other interested individuals gathered to celebrate World Toilet Day through networking and discussions on global sanitation. One in 3 people still do not have access to a basic toilet; this year’s presentations addressed the various complications and efforts associated with this worldwide sanitation issue. Speakers included Dr. Christiaan Morssink, UNA-GP Executive Director and adjunct faculty at Penn School of Medicine, Mrs. Deborah Heuckeroth, Lafayette Environmental Consulting and member of Philadelphia’s Engineers Without Borders Chapter, and Mr. Jason Cardosi, Consultant for American
At this year's Human Rights Day event on December 10th, which attracted an unprecedented crowd of Philadelphians, attendees honored the 67th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by listening to a panel of experts discuss modern refugee and immigration challenges plaguing our world today, and the local efforts to provide services to refugees in Philadelphia. Many thanks to our keynote speakers Jana Mason, Senior Advisor for Government Relations and External Affairs at the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Juliane Ramic, Senior Director for Refugee and Community Integration at the Nationalities Services Center, and Carrie Fox-Kline, Director of Refugee Programming and Planning at HIAS-Pennsylvania.
Human Rights Day 2015
The Philadelphia we want,  
The city we need

We are preparing ourselves in Philadelphia for this conference, an opportunity offered only once every 20 years. Faculty and students on the different campuses are having workshops and seminars, and infusing the materials in class instructions. We have no idea what the professionals in the market are doing, or how the city government agencies are planning.

At UNA-GP we have formed a working group: PHILLY PREPS FOR HABITAT III. The working group wants to bring the message of Habitat III to the classrooms, to the citizens, to the politicians. In order to that, UNA-GP has planned the following:

Make speakers and materials available for high schools, colleges, NGO’s.

Organize Seminars
Seminar 1: October 6: Annual Habitat Day. Theme: Flood Mitigation in the context of Global Warming: setting new parameters and methods
Seminar 2: November 19: World Toilet Day: Theme: Opportunities in Urban Waste Technology, the next generation.
Seminar 3: February 20: World Day for Social Justice: Theme: Affordable housing, Fair Housing practices, keeping it healthy for all.
Seminar 4: April 22: Earth Day: Theme: Urban Farming and Fair Food Practices. Greening our greens

- Develop a blog and Facebook page
- Build a database of links and websites
- Create a Philadelphia contingent for Quito

Contact: info@una-gp.org

THE THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HOUSING AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Quito, Ecuador, 17–20 October, 2016

The Future We Want, the City We Need

Habitat III will be one of the first global conferences after the Post 2015 Development Agenda. It is an opportunity to discuss and chart new pathways in response to the challenges of urbanization and the opportunities it offers for the implementation of the sustainable development goals.

The conference brings together diverse urban actors such as governments, local authorities, civil society, the private sector, academic institutions and all relevant interest groups to review urban and housing policies affecting the future of cities within an international governance architecture, with a view to generate a ‘New Urban Agenda’ for the 21st century which recognizes the ever-changing dynamics of human civilization. Habitat III offers Member States an opportunity to discuss a New Urban Agenda that will focus on policies and strategies that can result in effectively harnessing the power and forces behind urbanization. The Conference will result in a concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented outcome document: the New Urban Agenda.

Rethinking the Urban Agenda is embracing urbanization at all levels of human settlements. More appropriate policies can embrace urbanization across physical space, bridging urban, peri-urban and rural areas, and assist governments in addressing challenges through national and local development policy frameworks. And also it is integrating equity as an issue of social justice, ensuring access to the public sphere, extending opportunities and increasing the commons.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity/Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location/Info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNA-GP Board Meeting</strong></td>
<td>January 7th</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>5:30PM - 7:30PM</td>
<td>All interested are welcome to attend. 1501 Cherry Street Philadelphia, PA 19102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model UN Conference on Water Management</strong></td>
<td>January 18th (MLK Day)</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>All Day</td>
<td>Model UN conference for local high schools on water management. Location: University of Pennsylvania, Irvine Auditorium, Amado Recital Hall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observation of International Women’s Day</strong></td>
<td>March 15th</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Details TBD. Location: International House, University of Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNA-GP Board Meeting</strong></td>
<td>March 19th</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>10:00AM - 12:00PM</td>
<td>Location TBD. All interested are welcome to attend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>World Water Day: Trans-boundary Water Issues</strong></td>
<td>March 22nd</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Part of Global Water Alliance's World Water Day celebration. Event on trans-boundary water issues that explore conflict between nations. Location TBD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNA-GP Board Meeting</strong></td>
<td>May 12th</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Location TBD. All interested are welcome to attend.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You can help the United Nations Association!

Have any ideas for fundraising events? We're all ears! With the volume of projects the UNA-GP is constantly involved in, we are always in need of volunteers, no matter how much or how (seemingly!) little time you have to devote. Email Manisha Patel, Volunteer Coordinator and Board Member, with your suggestions or questions any time at mpatel@una-gp.org.

The UNA-GP is in need of funds for upcoming projects. In order to continue our beneficial and enriching events, such as our Model United Nations conferences, we need your help! Please donate whatever you can to the UNA-GP, and in turn, Philadelphians and beyond!

The UNA-GP December 2015 newsletter is a collaborative effort:

Layout and design editor: Carolyn Curry
Board Liaison: Ed Gracely
President: Mary Day Kent
Executive Director: Christiaan Morssink

The UNA-GP is a chapter of the United Nations Association of the United States of American (UNA-USA). Our website offers information about our mission and upcoming events, and ways to get involved, including volunteering and becoming a member. Please take a look at our social media accounts and monthly newsletters!

Volunteers with all types of skill sets are welcome to work with the UNA-GP, short or long term. If interested, please contact Manisha Patel, Volunteer Coordinator and Board Member, at mpatel@una-gp.org.

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