

AFICS BULLETIN

NEW YORK

ASSOCIATION OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS

Vol. 54 ♦ No. 1 ♦ Summer 2025



Building
Our Future
Together



Remember
Recognize
Reflect



AFICS/NY BULLETIN

Published periodically by the Association of Former International Civil Servants/NY

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Contents

- 5 MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF AFICS/NY**
- 6 MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS (FAFICS)**
- 8 FAFICS AT 50 TRIBUTE**
- 11 FEATURES: 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF WW II AND THE UN: A COMMEMORATION**
- 26 MEMBERS REFLECTIONS: 80 YEARS SINCE WW II AND THE BIRTH OF THE UN**
- 42 AFICS/NY COMMITTEE UPDATES AND ACTIVITIES**
- 53 IN MEMORIAM**

Cover photo captions (clockwise): Premier Joseph Stalin, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill meet at Teheran Conference in 1943. UN Photo.

Eleanor Roosevelt holding a Declaration of Human Rights poster. UN Photo.

Ralph Bunche holds Press Conference in Leopoldville, Congo in 1963. UN Photo.

Mia Amor Mottley (*right*), Prime Minister of Barbados and Co-chair of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Advocates group, speaks during a “fireside Chat” during the 2023 SDG Summit in 2023. UN Photo.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (*left*) and Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah attended the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in Beijing. UN Photo.

AFICS Fall Luncheon on Bateau New York in October 2024.

UNIFIL Peacekeepers provide medical assistance to internally displaced persons taking shelter at the Vocational Public School in Tyre, southern Lebanon. UN Photo/Pasqual Gorriz.

Secretary-General António Guterres (*left*) and Philémon Yang, President of the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, at the closing segment of the Summit of the Future. UN Photo/Loey Felipe.

Edward Reilly Stettinius Jr., Secretary of State, Chairman of the delegation from the United States, signing the UN Charter at a ceremony held at the Veterans’ War Memorial Building on 26 June 1945. UN Photo.

The New York City Building, at the old World’s Fair grounds, Flushing Meadows, headquarters of the United Nations General Assembly. 50-foot flagpoles flying the colours of the 59 Member States from a circle around the garden in front of the meeting hall (1946). UN Photo.

Message from the President of AFICS/NY

REMEMBER, RECOGNIZE, REFLECT

Honouring 80 Years Since WWII and the UN's Founding



This very special edition of the AFICS/NY Bulletin commemorates two extraordinary milestones: the eightieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the founding of the United Nations. These anniversaries invite us to reflect on the past, remember and recognize those who served in the global war

and those who have served the United Nations since its inception.

The Second World War was a global war in which many of our forebears around the world fought for the cause of freedom from tyranny. This anniversary year is an opportunity for us to remember the millions of people who served on the front lines and the home front, as well as the millions who lost their lives to secure our future. It is an opportunity for us to recognize the immense courage and sacrifice of those who went before us. It is also an opportunity to reflect on their legacy.

In 1945, as the Second World War neared its end, 50 countries came together to draft the United Nations Charter to establish an organization that would prevent another global war. The delegates, representing 80 per cent of the world's population at that time, signed the United Nations Charter on 25 June 1945. Four months later, on 24 October 1945, the United Nations was created. Today, there are 193 members of the United Nations, an organization dedicated to international peace and security, social and economic development and humanitarian support.

For eight decades, the United Nations has stood as a beacon of hope, promoting peace, fostering cooperation, and championing human rights across the globe. The values enshrined in its Charter, our Charter, continue to guide us, even as the world faces complex new challenges.

The year 2025 is one of change as we look to the future, but it is also a year to take a look back as we commemorate these two historic anniversaries. In celebrating the contributions of the United Nations and in reaffirming our commitment to its ideals, we can together honour the sacrifices of retirees and staff while working towards a brighter future for generations to come.

In the powerful words of Secretary-General Kofi Annan: *"More than ever before in human history, we share a common destiny. We can master it only if we face it together. And that, my friends, is why we have the United Nations."*

Those words ring true today more than ever.

The future of the United Nations is a deeply personal concern for all of us who have dedicated our lives to its mission. Let us renew our appreciation for the enduring mission of the United Nations and its remarkable legacy, continue our guardianship role and inspire those in active service with the Organization today.

Darshak Shah

President, AFICS/NY



FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS
FÉDÉRATION DES ASSOCIATIONS DES ANCIENS FONCTIONNAIRES INTERNATIONAUX
FEDERACION DE ASOCIACIONES DE EX-FUNCIONARIOS INTERNACIONALES
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Celebrating 50 Years of Representing Retirees and Families in 2025

Bureau du
Président

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Message from the President of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS)

COMMEMORATING 80 YEARS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

As we mark the 80th anniversary of the United Nations, I send my greetings to all United Nations system retirees in the United States. This is a significant milestone — not only for the Organization, but for the world it was created to serve.

Eighty years ago, in the aftermath of the devastation of World War II, the United Nations was born out of hope for peace, cooperation, and a future in which nations would choose dialogue over conflict. The world has changed profoundly since 1945. Colonial empires have ended, new nations have emerged, and technological and social transformations have reshaped our lives. Yet the founding ideals of the United Nations remain as vital today as they were then, despite and perhaps because of signs around the world of division, intolerance, inequality, and autocracies.

During my 30-year career, I supported teams that tried to make nuclear weapons unnecessary—just one of the many varied and important missions of the United Nations. These many enduring missions of the United Nations have been carried forward by people like us—by generations of dedicated international

civil servants whose expertise, commitment, compassion, and perseverance have helped advance peace, human rights, development, and humanitarian support around the globe. Your work helped give life to the Charter's promise, and that legacy lives on.

The year 2025 is also a milestone year for those who have served the United Nations and have retired. The ECOSOC-accredited Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS), established in 1975, with representation seats in the Pension Board, is celebrating its 50th year in 2025. The Federation represents the interests of more than 22,000 UN system retirees and beneficiaries around the world, particularly on issues related to pensions and after-service health insurance, including long-term care.

Over our 50 years in existence, FAFICS has gone from its original 4 country chapters to 65 country chapters as of 2025. This is testament, to me, of your strong commitment not just to remain in contact with long time colleagues and friends, but also to continue to express your deep belief in the values and principles to which you dedicated your careers. Our reach is wide, and deep, spanning countries in all regions of the world.

I particularly acknowledge the members of the Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS/NY) in the United States, now 55 years old, who over the years have provided outstanding leadership and expertise in support of our common goals. Your active engagement as part of our Federation has helped keep the values and priorities of the United Nations system vibrant within our community and beyond.

Even in retirement, we remain part of the United Nations family — a community still committed to the principles we served. As the world faces growing challenges — from climate change and conflict to inequality and threats to multilateralism — our voices, experience, and values are more important than ever. Let us continue to support one another, advocate for the Organization's mission, and help ensure the goals of the United Nations remain alive and relevant for future generations.

On this historic occasion, I thank you for your service and for continuing to carry the flame of international solidarity. Let us honour the past by staying engaged, united, and proud of the role we played in building a better world.

With deep appreciation and warm regards,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerry Barton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jerry Barton
FAFICS President

FAFICS AT 50 TRIBUTE

AFICS/New York extends heartfelt congratulations to the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) on reaching this incredible milestone—50 years of dedication, vision, advocacy and service! Half a century is no small feat, and it speaks volumes about the unwavering commitment of FAFICS to the community of retirees who once served on the global stage.

FAFICS has built more than just an organization—it has fostered a sense of belonging and solidarity, and cultivated a true community among worldwide retirees, uniting them under a common banner of respect and shared purpose. Through its dedication to pension protection, health-insurance advocacy and strategic engagement, FAFICS has ensured that retirees are not only heard but also supported in ways that matter most during life's most vulnerable stages.

Celebrating this golden anniversary is also a time to celebrate the visionaries who founded the Federation, the leaders who have carried the mission forward over the past five decades and the countless members who have contributed to its success. Their collective efforts have created a lasting legacy—one built on the principles of good governance, justice and care.

As we look ahead, this milestone is also a moment for reflection and renewal. The world is ever-changing, but one thing remains a constant: the importance of looking after those who have spent their lives serving others. As FAFICS marks 50 years of success, the road ahead is full of opportunities to grow, adapt, and continue championing the rights and welfare of retirees worldwide. The role of FAFICS is, therefore, as vital as ever, and its role will continue to grow in importance.

On behalf of AFICS/NY, we extend our warmest congratulations and deepest gratitude to FAFICS for its enduring partnership and dedication on this golden jubilee.

May this be a celebration of all that has been accomplished over the past 50 years, and a source of inspiration for the next 50!

Darshak Shah

President, AFICS/New York



On the occasion of the 42nd session of the FAFICS Council, hosted by AFICS/NY on 13 July 2013, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (*centre left*), with Roger Eggleston (*centre right*), former President of FAFICS, and former Presidents of AFICS/NY Linda Saputelli (*left*) and Andrés Castellanos del Corral (*right*).

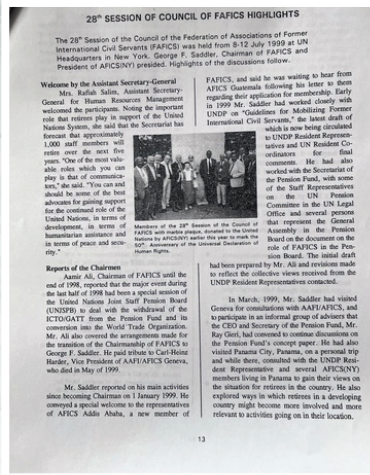
In Her Words: Celebrating the Federation through the Eyes of a Former AFICS/New York President

It was a very great privilege to represent AFICS/NY in FAFICS. It was also an honor to serve on the FAFICS Working Group on the FAFICS Rules of Procedure and currently as the Rapporteur of the FAFICS Bureau. FAFICS serves to protect and advance the interests of UN system retirees at the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF) and represents those retirees on the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board (UNJSPB, or Pension Board), as well as on its subsidiary bodies. These representatives bring enormous knowledge and experience to the many complex substantive issues discussed in these bodies which are vital for the well-being of retirees around the world. FAFICS also keeps after-service health insurance and long-term care (ASHIL) issues under continuous review, and advocates with UN system organizations for the best possible health insurance coverage for retirees at a reasonable cost. AFICS/NY has always been an extremely active Member Association of FAFICS and has, over many years, made enormous contributions to FAFICS in leadership and substantive positions to ensure the best possible outcomes for retirees with respect to pensions and health insurance coverage under ASHI.

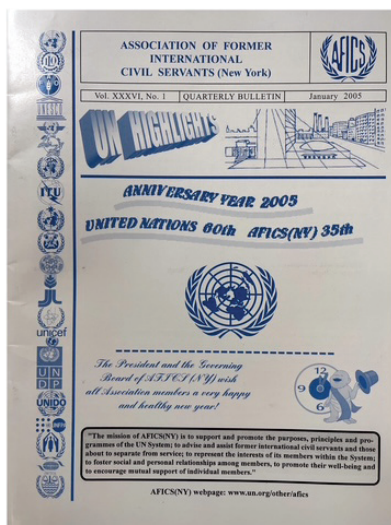
Deborah Landey
Former Vice-President and President of AFICS/New York



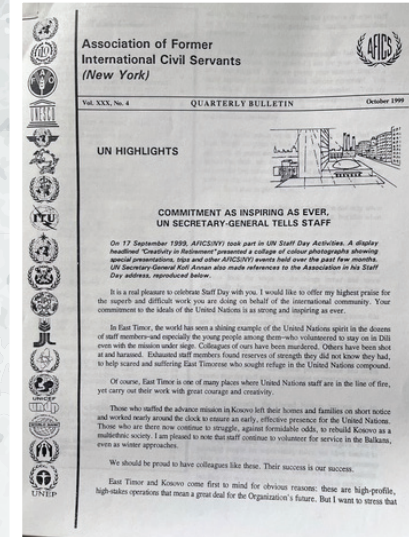
AAFI/AFICS (Geneva) group visiting FAFICS plaque in UNHQ gardens, 14 October 2004



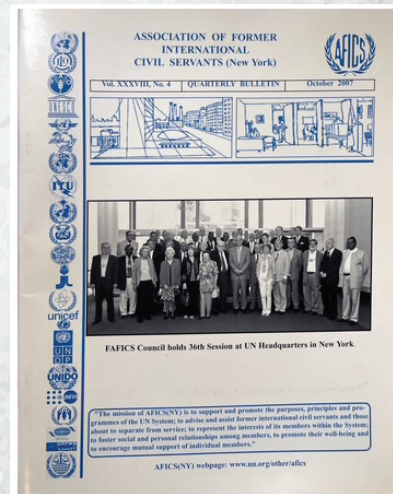
AFICS/NY Bulletin, October 1999, FAFICS Council hosted by AFICS/NY, July 1999



AFICS/NY Bulletin, January 2005, page 17, AFICS/NY welcomes AAFI/AFICS Geneva group visiting UNHQ NY



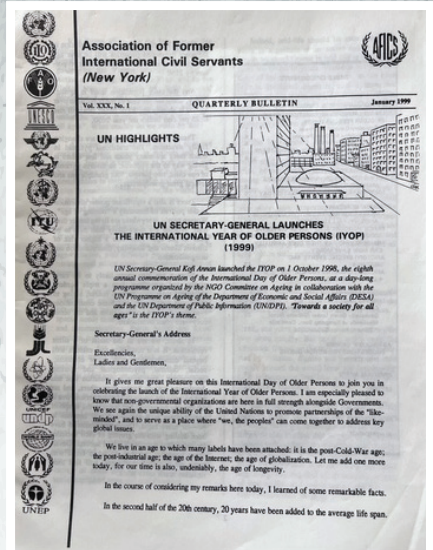
AFICS/NY Bulletin, October 1999, page 13, FAFICS Members visiting plaque in UNHQ gardens



AFICS/NY Bulletin October 2007, Secretary General received delegation of FAFICS on occasion of 42nd FAFICS Council, 13 July 2013, hosted by AFICS/NY



Eleanor Roosevelt, Lake Success, NY, November 1949



AFICS/NY Bulletin January 1999, page 15: AFICS honours adoption of Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



UNHQ NY Gardens, Plaque on Universal Declaration of Human Rights



Mary Tom, a member of the Human Rights office 50 years ago when the Declaration was passed, admires plaque.



Members of the 28th session of the FAFICS Council, 8-12 July 1999, with marble plaque, donated to the UN by AFICS/NY earlier in 1999 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



Group visits FAFICS plaque in UN gardens, 14 October 2004

FEATURES



We are delighted and impressed by the powerful contributions that you will read in the Member Remembrances pages, all submitted by our AFICS/New York members far and wide. You will see how strong the family ties remain from the end of WWII and the creation of the United Nations to the present. You will see how powerfully they speak to the history and values that drove so many of us in our work for the UN.

To anchor this history and to provide a glimpse of what is yet to come, we curated a list of Fascinating Facts about the birth of the UN, and invited three eminent former staff members to share their thoughts as they reflect on the 80th anniversaries of the end of WWII and the creation of the United Nations. We enjoyed quizzing ourselves on how many of these facts we knew after our long careers in the UN, and how many we didn't. The articles that bring us to this moment in history made us reflect, individually and together, on where we have been and where we go next as an international community. We invite and welcome your reflections at afics@un.org.

FASCINATING FACTS ON OUR EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY

By Alice Harrison with contributions by Viola Morgan and photographs sourced by Dawne Gautier

(Source documents: *Everyman's United Nations 1948*, Eighth (latest) Edition; *Everyone's United Nations 1986*).

COMMEMORATING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WORLD WAR II AND THE FOUNDING OF THE UNITED NATIONS



ORIGINS OF THE UN

Question 1: When the UN was founded in 1945, how many nations did it represent and which three of these were not independent States?

Answer 1: The UN was founded in 1945. It was originally formed by 51 countries. While 50 countries initially signed the Charter at the United Nations Conference in San Francisco on 26 June, 1945, Poland signed it later on 15 October 1945, making the total 51. India (1947), the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (1991) and the Ukrainian SSR (1991) were not yet independent states when they signed the Charter.

Question 2: How did India become a founding member of the UN when it was still a British colony?

Answer 2: India was a “self-governing state” since the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and a member of the League of Nations, which the conference founded in 1920, and thus also a member of its successor agencies the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Permanent Court of International Justice (the PCIJ), etc. India was also a signatory to the Declaration by United Nations [wartime coalition of Allied powers] of 1942, which states that “self-governing states, colonies that enjoy the full power of self-governance can be admitted”. Reportedly, while Britain gave India a voice at international consortia in return for stopping the freedom struggle, India used its voice to get international support for freedom instead.

India’s delegation announced its intention to represent itself rather than the British Empire, and started to refer to itself as a “self-governing State”. Citing inter alia its important role during World War II, India argued that the world could not function peacefully without its military and economic support. This helps explain how India was added as a founding member.

Question 3: When is UN Charter Day? Where was it first celebrated?

Answer 3: The Charter was signed on 24 June 1945 in San Francisco (UN Charter Day).

Here is a link to the [SG's statement on this year's Charter Day](#); and a link to a related [UN Chronicle article](#).

Question 4: When is UN Day and what does it signify?

Answer 4: UN Day is 24 October. The Charter came into force on 24 October 1945, and the anniversary of its entrance into force is celebrated as UN Day. (The General Assembly Resolution 168 declaring UN Day is dated 31 October 1947)." ([https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/168%20\(II\)](https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/168%20(II)))



Wilhelm Munthe Morgenstierne, Ambassador of Norway to the United States signing the Charter of the United Nations at the Veterans' War Memorial Building in San Francisco, United States on 26 June 1945.

UN Photo/McLain.

Question 5: Can you guess any of the seven Precursor Declarations and Conferences to the Charter?

Answer 5: The seven Precursor Declarations and Conferences to the Charter were: The Inter-Allied Declaration (London) in 1941; The Atlantic Charter (Churchill/Roosevelt at sea) in 1941 [*photos sourced by Dawne Gautier*]; The Declaration by United Nations;

The Moscow and Teheran Conferences in 1943 (in which the USSR, the UK, the US and China participated); The Dumbarton Oaks Conference in 1944 (in Georgetown, Washington DC) and The Yalta Conference in 1945 (on the South coast of the Crimean peninsula—then part of Ukraine—on the Black Sea).



Declaration by United Nations—fighting Axis powers 1942
UN Photo.



Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin at the Yalta Conference
UN Photo.

Question 6: How many female delegates attended the San Francisco Conference?

Answer 6: There were eight female delegates including: Ellen Wilkinson from the United Kingdom; Florence Gertrude Horsbrugh from the United Kingdom; Mary McLeod Bethune from the United States; Dr. Bertha Lutz from Brazil and women delegates from Australia and Uruguay. The four female signatories of the Charter came from Brazil, China, the Dominican Republic and the US.



During the first session of the General Assembly, Eleanor Roosevelt called a meeting of women delegates to address an Open Letter to the Women of the World. E. Wilkinson (United Kingdom), addressed the meeting. Seated on the podium are (from left to right): M. Verwey (Netherlands); E. Wilkinson (speaking); Eleanor Roosevelt (United States); Minerva Bernardino (Dominican Republic); M. Widwinter (United Kingdom); and Miss Rolfe (United Kingdom). UN Photo.



Mary McLeod Bethune, Director of Negro Affairs under Franklin D. Roosevelt. UN Photo.

Question 7: When were the first four African States admitted? Which were they?

Answer 7: Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia and South Africa joined in 1945. The next 20 years saw the majority of African states join upon achieving independence.

List of the original members:

<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.131255/page/n17/mode/1up> pp. 10-11

EARLY ADMINISTRATION

Question 8: Where did the first General Assembly meet?

Answer 8: In London's Westminster Hall in February 1946.

Question 9: Who were the Mohicans?

Answer 9: Staff who joined the UN before or at its inception, on or before 15 August 1946, prior to the move to Lake Success. Some served from then through to retirement, such as Sir Brian Urquhart and Jean Gazarian.



As a member of the British diplomatic staff, Brian Urquhart was involved in setting up the UN in 1945. He started off by assisting the Executive Committee of the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations in establishing the administrative framework of the organization created by the Charter and rose to the level of Under-Secretary General for Special Political Affairs, a post he held for 14 years. He was, with Ralph Bunche (Assistant Secretary-General under Dag Hammarskjöld), responsible for creating the blue berets—the UN peacekeepers. A military man with a very straight posture, after giving a speech, Sir Brian always ran up the stairs of the DHL Auditorium two at a time. UN Photo.





Jean Gazarian joined in 1946 as a translator and rose to Director of the Division of General Assembly Affairs; Gazarian devoted his life to international public service. Even after retirement in the late 1980s, he served a nearly 20-year stint teaching diplomats and staff as a full-time Senior Fellow at UNITAR. He was a most kind, devoted, cultured and knowledgeable man, and for a long time one of the backbones of the Association Culturelle Francophone which showed French films. UN Photo.

Question 10: Who laid the cornerstone of the United Nations Headquarters at Turtle Bay? When? And with what documents?

Answer 10: Trygve Lie, the Norwegian first Secretary-General, laid the cornerstone in October 1949, along with a copy of the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UN Chronicle 75th Anniversary of the Charter].

LANGUAGES

Question 11: Bearing in mind that English and French are considered working languages of the UN, when did the General Assembly adopt Modern Standard Arabic as its sixth official language?

Answer 11: On 18 December 1973, which is now UN Arabic Language Day.

Construction of UN Permanent Headquarters in New York,
1 August 1950.

UN Photo/ES



Question 12: When did the Department of Public Information institute the six language days and what is their significance?

Answer 12: Language days were designated in 2010 for symbolic (poets' birthdays) or historic reasons.

Question 13: What other languages have had days attributed to them since?

Answer 13: In 2019, UNESCO declared World Portuguese Day on 5 May and in 2022, Swahili Language Day on 7 July.

Question 14: In which of the six principal organs of the UN are the official languages only English and French?

Answer 14: The International Court of Justice (ICJ), which is in The Hague, Netherlands.



First Secretary-General,
Trygve Lie at the first General
Assembly in London.

UN Photo.

THE MEDIUM TERM

COMMITTEES AND CONFERENCES

Question 15: When did the General Assembly establish the Committee on the Status of Women?

Answer 15: 1946. In order to advance women's rights, the UN organized four world conferences on women: Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995).

Question 16: When did the GA establish the Scientific Committee on the Effects of Radiation?

Answer 16: On 3 December 1955, ten years after the bombings of Hiroshima (6 August 1945) and Nagasaki (9 August 1945). In 1987, one year after the Chernobyl incident (12 April 1986), the General Assembly concluded that "a considerable increase in the incidence of thyroid cancer due to radiation exposure should be expected, particularly among those exposed as children..."

Question 17: When was the first conference focused on solar energy held?

Answer 17: The United Nations Conference on New Sources of Energy (solar, geothermal and wind power) was held in Rome in 1961.

Question 18: When was the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination adopted by the GA?

Answer 18: In 1965, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) was established to review periodic reports on members' adherence to the Convention.

Question 19: Can you name the 4 major UN Conferences on the Environment?

Answer 19: The 1972 Stockholm Conference;
The 1982 Earth Summit in Nairobi;
The 1992 UNCED Rio Conference or Earth Summit;

The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, also known as the Earth Summit 2002 or Rio+10, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Question 20: When and where was the first UN Conference on the Law of the Sea held?

Answer 20: 1958 in Geneva which adopted the four Conventions on the Law of the Sea. The next one was also in Geneva in 1960. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) was ratified by 168 parties drawn up by the third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea between 1973 and 1982.

Question 21: When and at which conference were the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action adopted?

Answer 21: The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW), Beijing, which led to the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. One of the most comprehensive global agendas, it set strategic objectives promoting women's rights and gender equality.

Question 22: Which two women attended the Beijing Conference and went on to become elected Heads of State?



Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (left) and Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah attended the Beijing Conference and went on to become elected Heads of State. UN Photo.

Answer 22: H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf attended the conference in her capacity as Head of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, and became Africa’s first elected female President of Liberia (2006-2018). H.E. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah attended the conference as Rapporteur General of the FWCW and Chief Negotiator for the African Group, and became Africa’s second female elected President of Namibia (December 2024).

Question 23: How often was the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the United Nations?

Answer 23: The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the UN 12 times, including to the UN itself, various specialized agencies, funds, programmes, related organizations, and individual staff members. It was awarded twice to the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (1954 and 1981). In 1988, the Prize was awarded to the UN peacekeepers and in 2001 to both the United Nations and its Secretary-General Kofi Annan “for their work for a better organized and more peaceful world”.



Question 24: Which award is on display at UN Headquarters?

Answer 24: Kofi Annan’s. (It appears to be on loan as Nane Annan donated it to the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 19 February 2024.)

THE PRESENT

Question 25: Which is the only Council Chamber no longer used for its original function? When did this stop and why? Where is it?

Answer 25: The Trusteeship Council suspended its operations on 1 November 1994, a month after the independence of Palau, the last remaining UN trust territory. It is the closest of the three Council Chambers to the Delegates’ Lounge and is decorated by Denmark with a large angel



on the left side of the front of the room. It is currently being used to discuss a variety of subject matters, especially the environment (management of the global commons).

FACTS AND FIGURES

Question 26: What was the first budget of the UN?

Answer 26: The total 1946 UN budget was \$19,390,000 as compared with \$3.72 billion for 2025.

Question 27: How many Specialized Agencies are there?

Answer 27: There are 17 Specialized Agencies, including three that make up the World Bank Group: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the International Development Association (IDA). In addition to the Specialized Agencies, the UN comprises many funds and programmes, including The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), founded in 1946 to provide emergency relief for children victimized by World War II, a *Fund*; and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) a *Programme* supporting countries to end poverty and protect the planet.

List of the 17 Specialized agencies <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/specialized-agencies>

Question 28: Who suggested the IAEA?



Answer 28: The President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, in December 1953 suggested the establishment of a world organization devoted exclusively to the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

FASCINATING FACTS

Question 29: How many NGOs currently have consultative status with ECOSOC?

Answer 29: At the end of December 2024, there were 6,468 non-governmental organizations, while the number of quadrennial reports they produce has risen to 1,215.

Question 30: In 2020, how many Member States elections did the UN support?

Answer 30: The UN supported 50 elections that year.

THE SECRETARIES-GENERAL

Question 31: Can you name the nine Secretaries-General in the order in which they served?



Trygve Lie
February 1946–April 1953



Dag Hammarskjöld
April 1953–September 1961



U Thant
November 1961–December 1971



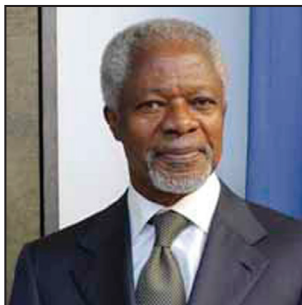
Kurt Waldheim
January 1972–December 1981



Javier Pérez de Cuéllar
January 1982–December 1991



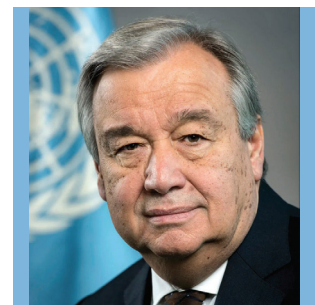
Boutros Boutros-Ghali
January 1992–December 1996



Kofi Annan
January 1997–December 2006



Ban Ki-moon
January 2007–December 2016



António Guterres
January 2017–to the present

THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE IDEA OF PEACE

**By Bertrand Ramcharan,
former Chief Speech-Writer to the UN Secretary-General
and First UN Fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government**



The great contribution of the United Nations over the 80 years of its existence has been to hold aloft the idea of peace across the globe and to strive for its implementation. It has interpreted the idea of world peace as resting on the foundations of development and human rights, and it has given content to the concepts of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. The going has not been easy, is not easy, and is currently very challenging, with conflicts raging in several parts of the world. But the great merit of the United Nations is that it keeps striving for peace.

The idea of peace is central to the great religions and philosophical systems of the world—even if world peace has been elusive. The quest for peace has pervaded the hearts of human beings for centuries. But organizing for world peace is an endeavour that is just over a century old, starting as it did with the League of Nations in 1919.

The League was a pioneering effort and, in the end, did not prevent the Second World War. But the world learned many lessons from it: the need for the participation and cooperation of the great powers; the importance of standing up for the rights of the victims of aggression; the value of patient and persistent diplomacy; and the need for the support of the peoples of the world.

The League also showed the way in the development of an international jurisprudence—through

its Permanent Court of International Justice; in the functioning of its system for the protection of minorities; in international administration through its Secretariat; in the deployment of fact-finding and observer missions; and in the exercise of the good offices of its Secretary-General.

A new start had to be made in 1945, however, mindful of the sufferings, the horrors and the atrocities of the Second World War, particularly the Holocaust, which took the lives of over six million Jews and others. It was in these circumstances that the San Francisco conference set about the drafting of a new Charter for the successor organization to the League, the United Nations. The future United Nations would have to address the challenges of self-determination for colonial and dependent peoples; the challenges of development for the masses of humanity world-wide; and the imperative need to act for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms world-wide—including the rights of women, children, minorities, and indigenous peoples in a ragingly unjust world.

But, as the San Francisco conference assembled, the Cold War had already begun. Imperial powers were still holding on to their colonies. Segregation was rampant in the USA. Apartheid was rapping on the door in South Africa. As a result, the competences assigned to the UN were heavily circumscribed. The Charter contained lofty purposes and principles but there was to be no interference in

the internal affairs of States. The operational principle of the UN was that of international cooperation—with the major powers divided along cold war lines.

When it came to the maintenance of international peace and security, the Charter established a Military Staff Committee that has never fully functioned as intended because of cold war divisions. The Charter urged the peaceful settlement of disputes but this depended on the cooperation of States. Chapter VII of the Charter established a peace-enforcement mechanism that could be used only on rare occasions owing to the lack of agreement among the Permanent Members of the Security Council. Nevertheless, over the years, especially after the end of the first Cold War, the UN made important contributions through preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding efforts.

Turning to development, the Charter urged the pursuit of international cooperation, and the United Nations followed up by unfolding strategies for successive development decades, by establishing UNDP and UNCTAD, by calling for a New International Economic Order (non-consensually), and by adopting a Declaration on the Right to Development (non-consensually). UNDP made a heroic contribution by providing technical assistance for development across the developing world.

On the central challenge of advancing human rights and fundamental freedoms, the major powers would not agree in San Francisco to giving the UN the competence to protect human rights, only to promote international cooperation for the universal realization of human rights. The UN made a remarkable contribution in developing an international code of human rights grounded in the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and it has established a system of investigative special procedures that strive to expose and root out gross violations of human rights. The UN also established the Office of High Commissioner for

Human Rights, which has valiantly promoted and protected human rights worldwide.

During the period of the first cold war (1945-1989) the UN, although hobbled by the divisiveness of that period, still managed to make important break-throughs: the development of preventive diplomacy; the establishment of peacekeeping and observer missions; the elaboration of development strategies and the provision of technical assistance for development; the development of an international code of human rights; and the establishment of incipient protection arrangements such as investigative working groups and rapporteurs. And the pursuit of educational and public information strategies to inform and sensitize “We the Peoples of the World” of the need to support the UN was an important complement to UN efforts.

With the end of the first Cold War, the Security Council, in 1992, met at the level of Heads of State and Government and asked the Secretary-General to come up with an Agenda for Peace, emphasizing preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. As Chief Speech-Writer of the Secretary-General, I wrote the first draft of the document that Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali submitted to the Security Council in the summer of 1992.

It was a heady period, and one thought that one would finally see the blossoming of the United Nations, as intended in the Charter. But it was not to be. The UN could not act to prevent genocide in Rwanda. And war raged in the former Yugoslavia. I saw this close-up for three and a half years as Director of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, working closely with the peacemakers and peacekeepers—the largest peacekeeping force in the history of the United Nations. I was simultaneously the Director in the Office of the SRSG in charge of this peacekeeping operation and helped to establish the first UN preventive deployment in today’s North Macedonia.

During the interregnum between the first and the second Cold Wars (1989-2014), the UN made some important strides forward: establishing conflict-prevention centres in some parts of the world; engaging in various efforts of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding—including the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission; promulgating the Millennium Declaration, the Millennium Development Goals and its successor, the Sustainable Development Goals; and further empowering the Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Closely allied to the promotion and protection of human rights, the United Nations has also addressed humanitarian challenges. The Organization has done its utmost to coordinate humanitarian assistance in emergencies worldwide and to provide protection and assistance to refugees and displaced persons.

During the period of the second Cold War, which began around 2014, the UN faced increasing obstacles, but it did perform one outstanding role: sensitizing the world to the dangers of climate change. Moreover, the incumbent Secretary-General has sought to spearhead

a series of reform efforts and launched well over a dozen agendas for action whose impact has not yet been fully felt.

This is a perilous time for the United Nations that will call for the wisest of UN leadership and for diplomacy and tact. As the UN navigates its way and to bolster confidence in its role even among naysayers, it should be ready to engage in fair-minded assessments of what it does well and what it does not do well. The idea of world peace is the UN's greatest asset, and we must all continue to stand for it. Regional centres for conflict prevention are good value for money. Technical assistance for development is also good value for money. And working with governments for the emplacement or enhancement of national human rights protection systems in every country is central to efforts for peace, development, and the universal realization of human rights. The coordination of humanitarian assistance and the provision of protection/assistance to refugees and disabled persons are noble tasks. These are four policies that could help to anchor the future endeavours of the United Nations as it navigates its way to its centenary over the next two decades.

REMEMBERING HAMMARSKJÖLD'S “HARDY PERENNIAL”

By Randy Rydell, Ph.D.
UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, 1998-2014 (retired)



Speaking at a press conference on 19 May 1955, Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld discussed the status of the issue of “disarmament” at the United Nations. He called it the UN’s “hardy perennial”. I wrote a *monograph* for the UN Association of the UK on this subject in 2013 and thought that seventy years after that press conference, and eight decades since the end of World War II and the establishment of the United Nations, the time had come to take another look at this subject.

His use of the adjective “hardy”, of course, refers to the extremely unfavourable political environment for the achievement of disarmament, a goal included in the *first resolution* adopted by the General Assembly in 1946, which called for the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons “adaptable to mass destruction.” Subsequent resolutions would extend this goal to include reductions in military forces and spending, and reaffirmations of the solemn norms of the Charter on the peaceful settlement of disputes and the prohibition of threats of use of force. Unlike the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Charter explicitly included “disarmament” as an official mandate for the new organization, including the General Assembly, the Security Council, and by implication, the Secretary-General and Secretariat.

In 1959, the General Assembly combined these goals under the rubric of “general and complete disarmament” (GCD) and placed it on its agenda, where it has remained ever since. Under GCD, the

elimination of nuclear weapons is to be pursued in parallel with the regulation of conventional arms, the limitation of military spending and the relevant dispute-settlement provisions of the Charter. In 1962, both the United States and the Soviet Union offered their own support for this goal, though they never agreed on how to achieve it.

As it was becoming apparent in the 1960s that a holistic GCD approach was not moving forward, the world shifted to what were called “partial measures”, or incremental step-by-step progress toward what were commonly called the “ultimate goal” of disarmament. The problem was that the nuclear powers (and their allies) would only agree to progress “towards” nuclear disarmament—as a distant aspirational goal—while the majority of Member States, especially in the developing world, demanded progress “in” actually achieving disarmament goals, e.g., through the reduction and destruction of nuclear weapons, their associated delivery systems, and the development of other instruments for the peaceful resolution of disputes.

This is largely the divide that remains today at the UN, as its work remains handicapped by what might be called a “two culture” problem in the relevant UN disarmament arenas: with one bloc of states heralding nuclear weapons as vital to peace and security, and another bloc of states regarding them as immoral and dangerous to the future of humanity and the planet. There is little constructive dialogue between these communities, as communication is

best described as either a “dialogue of the deaf” or “dialogue of the like-minded”.

This chronic, inhospitable growing environment for Hammarskjöld’s hardy perennial led former UN Under-Secretary-General Angela Kane to speak of a “disarmament taboo”—namely, the notion that disarmament is too controversial, too idealistic, too impractical, and too divisive as an issue for making constructive progress. This taboo has discouraged NGOs who work outside but on related issues (e.g., environment, human rights, children, development, et al.) from viewing disarmament as an issue deserving their support. Historically, the disarmament office in the Secretariat has even had trouble interesting other UN offices to recognize how disarmament would benefit their own priorities, despite valiant *efforts* by the current Secretary-General António Guterres to promote both greater support inside the UN for disarmament and for new progress in achieving comprehensive disarmament goals, consistent with the focus of GCD.

For disarmament to proceed, there is no substitute for sustained political action and support at three levels. First, the general public must understand both the dangers of the failure to achieve disarmament (soaring military budgets, sacrificed social and economic opportunity costs, arms races, risks of intentional or accidental nuclear war, etc.), and bountiful benefits for security and prosperity from the advancement of GCD. There is actually a longstanding *consensus* among the states parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that the elimination of nuclear weapons will provide “the only absolute guarantee” against their use. As Angela Kane once put it, “Disarmament will survive for two reasons: it works and it is the right thing to do. It fuses together into an integrated whole the two forces that make the world go round: self-interest and idealism. And it does so better than another approach for dealing with weapons”.

Second, the international diplomatic community must continue to weigh in with support for disarmament in multilateral arenas such as the General Assembly, the Security Council, conferences of states parties to relevant treaties, spearheaded by coalitions of like-minded states.

The third vital force to revitalize progress in disarmament must come from the leaders of the nuclear-weapon states themselves. It is not entirely unthinkable that this could occur, as the costs and risks of nuclear weapons continue to grow, amid widespread public support for their abolition and elimination.

Yet recent developments appear only to have worsened the growing environment for our hardy perennial. Weapons budgets are soaring, additional countries are hinting they too might soon be exploring and implementing their own nuclear options, nuclear-weapon states continue their almost talismanic reverence for nuclear weapons as both essential and indispensable as a guarantor of security, as reflected in their blind faith in the doctrine of nuclear deterrence. It is hard to imagine a more potent recipe for the proliferation of such weapons.

The UN cannot alone accomplish global nuclear disarmament or any other goals of GCD. It can, however, contribute significantly in sustaining all of the other political forces needed for future progress in this field, by providing a central forum for debate, by forging international expectations of behaviour, by developing and strengthening disarmament norms, by undertaking studies, by educating the young, and by reminding the world of the great security and economic benefits of disarmament and the dangers of failing to achieve it. This is why disarmament is likely to remain as both “hardy” and a “perennial” at the UN, even in the darkest of times.

WHAT'S IN A NAME? A LOOK BACK TO INSPIRE THE WAY FORWARD

By Mourad Wahba

How do we need to celebrate the eightieth anniversary of the United Nations? Past anniversaries were opportunities for Member States to recommit themselves to the values of the Charter and otherwise commemorate the occasion with a press declaration, a resolution, or in the case of the tenth anniversary of the Organization, a stamp set. Another stamp set was issued in 1965, the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations, to commemorate the International Year of Cooperation. The fiftieth anniversary led to a resolution on the importance of multilateralism that called for revitalizing the General Assembly and the expansion of the Security Council. The occasion was marked by a meeting of practically all Heads of State and Government, and a flurry of publications on the essential role of the Organization. More recently, the seventieth anniversary of the Organization led to the adoption by the General Assembly of the Sustainable Development Goals. Member States that had not done so were encouraged to sign treaties developed at the UN, and yet more discussions took place on the reform and expansion of the Security Council.

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the Organization, taking advantage of improved communications started with a global conversation, involving 1.5 million people sharing their thoughts, concerns and hopes for the future. The General Assembly resolution on the occasion, in addition to the recommitment to the values of the Charter and multilateralism, invited the Secretary-General to prepare a report, Our Common



Agenda, which, as its proposals were developed, eventually led to the Summit of the Future in 2024.

As we approach the eightieth anniversary of the Organization this year, we are doing so at a time when the United Nations has never been more important, and multilateral action more necessary. Yet this is also a time of soul-searching within the Organization amid funding cuts, a Security Council that has not been able to find its way towards the primary tasks of the Organization: the maintenance of international peace and security, thwarting attacks on multilateralism and on the organizations of the United Nations, and countering the challenge to international law.

As future challenges mount, perhaps a suitable response to how to celebrate the eightieth anniversary would be to look for inspiration in the past, further even than the San Francisco conference of 1945, which is embedded in our memories as our beginning. In fact, before the United Nations Organization that we all know, the name “United Nations” was adopted in January 1942 at Washington, DC, by 26 nations fighting the Axis forces. The next year, 1943, saw the debut of the feature film, *Thousands Cheer*, starring Gene Kelly, Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, among others. The film included a song by Paul Robeson, *United Nations on the March*, the first verse of which sounds the hopeful note:

“The hope of humanity singing
A hymn to a new world in birth”

(Watch and listen to a rousing version here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLo5zqFyOOg> and an updated version here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xK1QzS0tAA>)

The idea of the United Nations was not limited to a film and a song, however. Political conversations also took place in that same year, 1943, in London, Moscow, Quebec and Tehran on the need for a new international organization based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all nations. The new organization would focus on social and economic issues, and the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and China would be responsible for the maintenance of peace and security.

The basic building blocks of the United Nations that we have today had been agreed by 1943, when the Allies created institutions that would later evolve into the UN system: the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was created in 1943, as was an important precursor to current discussions on relief and development in areas liberated from Axis powers, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). Both organizations benefited from US leadership and finance. A year later, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the Bretton Woods institutions were created, and thus when delegates of the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and China met at Dumbarton Oaks in 1944, the shape of the UN that we have today was drawn up with a preliminary Charter that included an economic and social council, a general assembly and a security council. Both Roosevelt and Stalin agreed, at Yalta in 1945, before the San Francisco Conference, on the use of the veto in the security council.

While we date the birth of the United Nations today to the San Francisco Conference and the signature of the Charter, the idea of the United Nations, as opposed to its institutional expression, had been in the making at least since Stalingrad and the Allied landings in Sicily in 1943. This idea was an expression of the hopes of peoples, and the policies of their leaders that

the destruction of World War II would lead to a better world “in larger freedom”.

Notwithstanding the idealism of the Paul Robeson lyrics, the United Nations was born out of hard-nosed political discussions and military alliances in Europe and Asia. The discussions leading to the Charter, and the institutions that were created as early as 1943 were shaped by the leading powers of the day: the United States and the Soviet Union. As we celebrate the eightieth anniversary of our organization, it is, therefore, important to remind ourselves that the UN is not an expression of some kind of liberal idealism, as some critics have suggested, but rather a practical instrument of international relations, offering a forum for collective discussion and collective action by like-minded States, and a place for the necessary dialogue between States holding different positions.

So how, then, do we celebrate the eightieth anniversary of our Organization? General Assembly resolutions on the importance of multilateralism are important as they reaffirm the need for collective action; stamp issues also remind us that the civilization we take for granted in the modern world, including the international transfer of information and merchandise, cannot take place without such cooperation as international postal treaties. The eightieth anniversary must remind us that humanitarian relief and development cooperation are the best antidotes to fractured societies and despair that lead to violence, and that the Security Council allows for peace and security to remain a collective endeavour and not an imposition by one or another of its members.

The United Nations on its eightieth anniversary needs the recommitment of its members. As important, the United Nations today needs a strong, impartial and competent secretariat, in the best traditions of the international civil service to demonstrate that this instrument, so long in the making, has before it a future of relevance, not because Nations agree, but precisely because in their disagreements, which can threaten the future of earth, there always lies the possibility, the hope of “a new world in birth”.

**MEMBERS REFLECT ON
80 YEARS SINCE THE END OF
WORLD WAR II AND THE
BIRTH OF THE UN**

War and Peace

by Horst Max Cerni



Eighty years ago, in February 1945, when I “celebrated” my tenth birthday, it was in the middle of our escape from the Red Army in East Prussia, Germany. For a month, our city Allenstein (now Olstzyn in Poland) was being bombarded, and we had to rush to the cellar at each attack and endure the shaking of the house, worrying it might collapse any moment.

It was a scary time, especially for us children. My sisters were just over six and the youngest barely three, plus my 13-year-old cousin. We were supposed to be evacuated, but one train only brought soldiers and didn’t leave anymore. Around midnight on 21 January, we heard shooting and people started to leave the train station, and so did

we. We started walking in the middle of the night. It was an icy cold night, and we had to walk for miles, leaving our burning city behind us. How we survived is a miracle, but the horror and futility of fighting left a deep impression on all of us.

Having experienced the trauma of war and the senseless destruction and killing, I decided early on that I would never serve in an army and, hopefully, find a job that would help to create understanding and friendship among peoples.

I felt very uneasy about living in Germany, and couldn’t understand how so much hatred and destruction could come from a civilized population. A special refugee program allowed me to immigrate to the USA where I was able to work and study. While studying in Cleveland and Los Angeles, I was an active member of international student groups, and so did my share to spread good will and make friends.

After graduating from UCLA, I made documentary films in Colombia and Argentina, and worked on them afterwards at a studio across from the UN (where later UNICEF House was built). It was always my wish to work at the UN, but as a German I was not

eligible. But a miracle happened in 1964 when an acquaintance, who I met by sheer coincidence on the First Avenue bus, offered me an interview for a temporary job in the UN Film Section. I got hired on short-term contracts, but it was like my dream had come true. I worked with people from different countries at United Nations HQ. A year later, I got hired by UNICEF, where Germany was a member, and so started my UN career. As a matter of fact, I continued working at the UN until UNICEF moved to the Alcoa Building some months later.

UNICEF won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1965, and it was my first assignment to edit the news clip of the awards ceremony. It sure felt like the fulfilment of my dreams.

In 1967, the world became aware of a major drought in Bihar, India, where thousands of people died of hunger. Actor Marlon Brando wanted to see the disaster for himself and made an 8mm film which he showed at UNICEF fundraisers with tears in his eyes. He recorded a radio appeal in the UN studio and I directed him.

Other personalities followed, including US Vice President Hubert Humphrey, actors Dustin Hoffman, Victor Borge, etc. I was working as an Information Officer at the time, and in the 1980s with UNICEF's Goodwill Ambassadors and Special Events.

To raise money for African relief, a major concert entitled "Music for UNICEF—A Gift of Song" took place in the UN General Assembly Hall on 9 January 1979 as a start-up for the International Year of the Child. Famous artists, like ABBA, the Bee Gees, John Denver, Rod Stewart etc. donated their songs, and many continued supporting the goals of the IYC and UNICEF. In 1985, another benefit song for Africa was recorded. "We Are the World, We Are the Children" underlined the Preamble of the UN Charter, "We the peoples..." and expresses a feeling of togetherness: we are all responsible for each other.

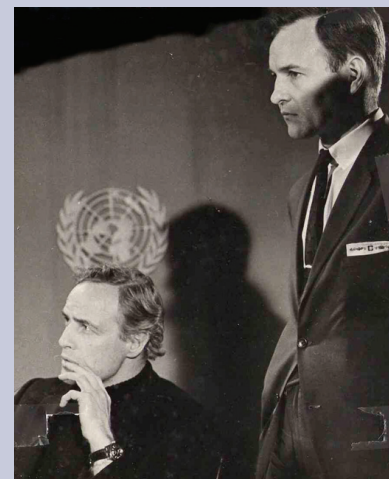
I retired in 1995 and moved to St. Croix, my wife's Caribbean island. But I stayed in touch with AFICS and became a correspondent, hoping that many retirees might visit our beautiful island. I reported on several international gatherings, including two I had organized for UNICEF retirees on St. Croix.

In 2008, we stopped in New York, on the way to Germany, and visited the UN, of course. But it was

a little complicated. My Grounds Pass had expired, and I was told there were no replacements presently available. Well, an "angel" of a clerk managed to get my pass renewed, and this first hurdle was overcome. It was 17 April, and the next day Pope Benedict was to address the GA, so one needed a special ticket to get admitted. I went to AFICS hoping they might be able to help. Andrés Castellanos del Corral was the President at that time. He said he would try his best, but that so many people wanted to see the Pope. I waited all afternoon in the office and read *The New York Times*. He didn't get any call saying a ticket would be available. So, finally, after 6 p.m., he went over to the UN Security Office and managed to get me a pass.

It wasn't just curiosity or devotion—because I'm not Catholic—but because Pope Benedict was German, I thought it would be nice to say hello. In addition, I had a message from the Pastor of my wife's parish, and also a book to give to the Pontiff. Well, I got a good spot, was able to greet His Holiness with both hands, gave him greetings from St. Croix, and told him, in German, that a bishop was needed for the US Virgin Islands. Mission accomplished. And AFICS published my photo of the Pontiff on the cover of its next Bulletin.

What an amazing 80 years!



Marlon Brandon in 1967



Meeting the Pope in 2008



Cerni Family in June 1944, vacationing at the Baltic Sea



Cerni family in Santiago, Chile, in 1976 when I served as Regional Information Officer for Latin America

John Harrison

by Alice Harrison



John Harrison
British ambulance driver and chef in
uniform during WWII

During the Second World War, my Dad, Arthur John Harrison, was a conscientious objector in England. (His mother was a Quaker). He began his university studies at Hertford College, Oxford, in the fall of 1938 (after missing an organ scholarship to Oriel College), and had three years of studying French and German there despite World War II, which broke out in 1939. He joined the Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) in 1941, where he served until the end of the war in 1945.

In his own words: “We began first with two-months training at a camp at a farm in the Midlands, near Birmingham. There was a mess hall and a kitchen in a converted barn, and bunk housing in converted farm buildings. The training covered basic first aid and medical care. Also, ambulance and vehicle driving and a good deal of physical exercise,

including night marches. We got individual army uniforms and personal equipment, and not military equipment. I was designated both as a cook and quartermaster. When we were ready to come out, with a colleague, we went down to London and I spent time at an army office to work with a secretary to indent (apply) for army uniforms and personal equipment for the 60 members of our six units of a dozen men each. Then we were ready to move to join the army in Europe. This was in late December 1944. We sailed on a tank landing ship with trucks and tents and other camp equipment.

Towards the end of December, we sailed from Dover or Folkstone to Antwerp with our vehicle in a tank landing ship, and were held offshore for a couple of days. Only a year or more later did we realize that we were kept offshore because of the Battle of the Bulge taking place in East Belgium.

In Antwerp, we were billeted in a deluxe apartment on Frankrijklei, a swanky part of town (which my friend Geoff Baldwin, retired UN Water Resources Engineer, and I visited while in Belgium some 80 years later). For day-by-day rations and supplies, we drove to an army depot. Our unit was attached to the Canadian First Corps as part of an army relief section working with refugee camps of displaced persons. When we got into Germany’s Eastern Front, my German was especially useful. Our function was to liaise with the various camp leaders.

We moved up, via Breda, to Arnhem and Nijmegen and across the Rhine into Holland, and we were at Ede, in Central Holland, when the war ended in May 1945.

Gradually, thereafter, we shipped back to London and were demobilized. Our last work in Holland was checking our camps for displaced workers from Eastern Europe, mainly Poland and Romania, who had been recruited by the German war machine to work in factories producing war materiel.”

In July/August 1949, my Dad came to New York on the United Nations summer internship program with Alan Day, also from the London School of Economics (LSE). He sailed on the Holland America Line Volendam from Rotterdam to Hoboken. They stayed in John Jay Hall at Columbia University and were bussed to the UN office in Queens every day. The special program for interns, run by Jerry Widdrington, attached them to various offices and arranged for them to accompany delegates on a week-long tour of the Tennessee Valley Authority, where they visited towns, sites, dams such as the Norris Dam, and other developments of the Roosevelt era.

My centenarian Dad’s contribution to the United Nations, albeit small, inspired my own 40-year service, although I myself had no direct connection with the war.

Why the Eightieth anniversaries of the End of WWII and the Founding of the United Nations Are so Important to our Family

by Deborah, Peter and Kathryn Landey

The eightieth anniversaries of the end of World War II and the founding of the United Nations hold special significance for our family, as our parents served in both with great distinction.

Our father, Marcel Landey, was born in Zurich, Switzerland, to Maurice and Lucia Landau of Krakow, Poland. He spent his childhood in Krakow and studied at Warsaw University and Mulhouse, France. Following the outbreak of war, he returned to Poland and survived imprisonment in several concentration camps. After escaping to Lithuania, he obtained life-saving visas from Japanese Consul Chiune Sugihara in coordination with Dutch Consul Jan Zwartendijk.



Marcel Landey, second from left

He was then able to make a perilous journey across the Soviet Union to Japan; from there, to Canada, where he enlisted in a Polish Army Unit, was integrated in the first Polish Armored Division which, as part of the first Canadian Army Corps and the twenty-fourth British Army Corps, took part in the invasion of Normandy.

He fought bravely during the Normandy invasion and the advance across Europe, earning numerous honors, including the Polish Military Cross of Valor and the Belgian Fourragere. He spent a year, as part of the Allied

Occupation of Germany, with the British Army of the Rhine before returning to Canada.

In Canada, he met Joy Elizabeth Stallabrass, our extraordinary mother, who had worked in the War Office in London. Her father, Norman Stallabrass, had fought in World War I, and her grandfather had supported Belgian refugees during the same conflict.

Our mother worked tirelessly to support the family, enabling our father to restart his academic career. He went on to graduate with honors from Carleton University, was



awarded the Governor-General's Medal for Academic Achievement, and then obtained a Master's in Public Administration from Princeton University.

and the UNECA. She managed the complexities of frequent moves while supporting numerous causes, always giving selflessly to her community.

We honor our parents for their extraordinary resilience, courage and commitment to others. Their lifelong dedication to their families, friends, and the world is an inspiration to us.

Our father's work and dedication were recognized by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who said, at his memorial in 1997, that his dedication to the ideals of the United Nations was inspiring. William O'Neil, former Secretary-General of the IMO, also remembered him as "a completely dedicated international civil servant imbued with the great UN spirit."

As we reflect on the 80th anniversaries of the end of the Second World War and the founding of the United Nations, we are proud to pay tribute to their immense contributions during the War and, subsequently, the global development and peace-building work of the United Nations.



On the occasion of the awarding of the Governor-General's Medal

Our father's career then led him to the United Nations. Beginning in Ethiopia, he served as Chief of Trade for the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and later worked in Brazil, and then in England for the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Our mother, too, dedicated her life to humanitarian causes, working for institutions such as the Ministry of Health, Haile Selassie University,



Strong Desire and Commitment to Give Back

by Phyllis Lee



It would be no exaggeration to say that I owe my very existence to the United Nations. So when I started working for the Organization in 1980, it was with a strong desire and commitment to give back.

My parents, both born in eastern Poland in the mid-1920s, met in a displaced persons camp not far from Munich in the fall of 1945. They were stateless people, whose families had been killed and homes commandeered. Returning to their blood-soaked towns was not an option for either of them. So they began to put the pieces of their lives together in a camp run by the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA).

My mother, born Gisela Lachs in Stanisławów (present-day Ivano-Frankivsk), in 1926, witnessed the murder of her extended family of

34 people. She miraculously survived a shootout and was able to live out the remainder of the war under a false identity.

With liberation, relief came for many who were able to return home to their loved ones. But once her struggle to survive on a daily basis had ended, my mother faced a complete void. Only 19 years old, she fell into a deep depression and contemplated ending her life.

Helen Matousek, a UNRRA worker, then in her early 40s, took notice of the orphaned teenager. It wasn't long before my mother became Helen's assistant, working with her in Bad-Wiessee. Gisela was very proud of her UNRRA uniform. As she filled her days with office tasks, learning new skills, she began to work through her despair. Soon she met a dashing young man of 21 and, together, they began to imagine a new life in the United States.

Helen came to New York as well; after UNRRA, she joined UNICEF. In later years, she told me about her work on the greeting cards program, and about the dances the UN held outside Headquarters near the Visitor's Entrance. Helen was my godmother and substitute grandmother.

When I was born, in 1954, she wrote me a letter, welcoming me to the world and laying out the dimensions of a meaningful life, including the virtue of giving back. By helping others, we heal ourselves. My mother went on to get an advanced degree in social work and focused on troubled teenagers in the school system. Unfortunately, she died in 1988, before the Internet revealed to me that she did in fact have a relative who survived the war. Manfred Lachs had served as Judge and President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

I feel immensely privileged to have carried forward a very rich legacy. But while it is valuable to look back, we must inevitably take stock of where we are today. And we must ensure that multilateralism remains a strong and effective tool to forestall the horrors that could unfold, once again.

Helen with my mother at the far right



L'DOR V'DOR (From Generation to Generation)

by Chaim Litewski

My father, Markus Litewski, born in Zawiercie, Poland, met my mother, Musia Szmulowicz, born in Vilnius, Lithuania, during the summer of 1946 at the displaced camp in Rome's Cinecittà, the Italian Hollywood. In those days, the film studios were housing both Jewish and non-Jewish displaced war refugees. In late 1945, Cinecittà housed some 1,800 displaced and stateless persons. Prior to arriving at Cinecittà, my mother had spent time in various Nazi camps, and was liberated from Dachau in late April 1945. The only surviving person in my mother's family was her sister Hinda, who met a Greek national and immigrated to Israel. My father had been in Auschwitz. From his rather large family, only two sisters (Adela, who immigrated to Israel, and Genia, who immigrated to Scotland), survived.

Once my parents became a couple, they took the decision to get as far away from Europe as possible. They arrived in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in January 1948. There they had two children, Rachmiel and me. Markus and Musia lived productive and relatively happy lives in Brazil. They remained in close touch with their surviving family members. Markus and Musia lived for their children. And we, their children, understood early on that these two giant human beings had gone through unthinkable trauma.

And for that, and for their sheer humanity, we honor them. I joined the UN, the organization that helped my parents in the Displaced Persons camp, as a TV producer and documentary filmmaker.



Father's and mother's marriage certificate (issued by UNRRA). Note that their marriage was certified by the "Camp Director" and officiated by the Camp Rabbi.



Litewski family: Markus, Chaim, Musia, and Rachmiel. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, March 1960.



My mother, Musia Litewska (née Szmulowicz), in 1947.



My father, Markus Litewski, second from the left, in Cinecittà, Rome, June 1946.

About Private Ruby Shaw

by Andrew Nye



Growing up in England in the 1960s, our Auntie Ruby was a big presence in my life. I always associated Aunty Ruby with piggyback rides around English seaside towns when I got too tired or too lazy to walk on my own feet.

Our mother sometimes talked about “the war” usually to say that, as teenagers, she was 15 when war broke out, it was the excitement that helped them get through it all. They lived through the London Blitz, spending air raid nights in the shelter our grandfather had constructed in their back garden. Bombs fell nearby, but there were no hits on her house or the shelter.

Our identical twin uncles served in the Far East. Lewis was based in what was then Burma, as a

21-year-old engineer managing a team of technicians maintaining the British Army’s heavy artillery; his twin, Sydney, was based in India. Auntie Ruby manned anti-aircraft guns, first in the south-east of England, then after D-Day her team was moved to Antwerp to defend the docks. The youngest of the four was our mother. She said that her parents asked her to stay home, saying to her: “We’d like to keep one of you here.”

Sadly, Ruby was taken by cancer before my 9th birthday. She was in her early 40s and in my memories, it was as if she was frozen at that age.

Decades later, my mother was cleaning out, preparing herself to move into a nursing home. She decided to give me her collection of wartime letters, and what a collection it turned out to be. I received a box containing 285 letters, some photos, a few postcards and Christmas cards from July 1944 until September 1946, all from Ruby, that my grandma and mother had kept.

Every day she wrote at least one letter, either to her parents, her grandparents or to a close friend. As the designated family custodian, I was going to share these as best I could

with my family, but since each letter was often six to ten pages long, it would be a huge task to scan them all. I decided the best way would be for me to scan them one at a time and email them to my brother, sisters and cousins one or two days apart. It would take us a year and a half, and we would be reading them at about the same pace as our grandparents had received them 65 years before. It would be our way of living through the same



Private Ruby Shaw, 525-Battery, 155th (Mixed) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, British Royal Artillery. Woolwich, London, 1944

experience, albeit without the wartime privations and dangers.

As we read her letters, she became the young 20-year-old Private Ruby Shaw again. We read about her boat, train and truck ride across the channel to Ostend and then to Antwerp. How the Belgians had greeted them with cheers and given them apples. Her letters built up the atmosphere of camaraderie with fellow members of her 525-battery gunner crew and the competitive spirit with the other gunner crews. She talked about going on "bath parade" and, true to wartime British stereotypes, how they would have a sing-song to cheer themselves up when they were doing chores like scrubbing down the steps of their barracks. She also mentioned some of her official duties, such as "spotting shifts," as they called it, and searching the skies for doodlebugs, which was their term for the V1 unmanned flying bombs launched from behind German lines towards England.

As we read, we experienced her excitement at receiving rare foods, such as the occasional orange or specialty biscuits mailed to her by our grandparents. She started forming friendships with local children, and adopted two local cats as pets. Many of her letters bubbled with girlish enthusiasm about dances, other social events, and rest and recuperation visits to Brussels. Over time it was clear she was gaining confidence and growing up.



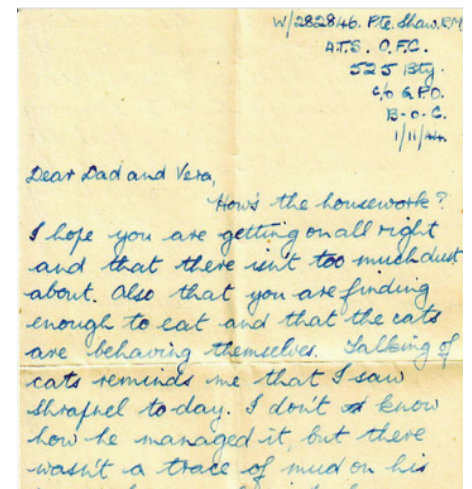
Andrew Nye with Auntie Ruby, Weston-super-Mare, England, ca 1963

A few months after hostilities were over and the guns had been dismantled, she was moved to the headquarters of the British Army of the Rhine in Bad Oeynhausen. Eventually, she was put in charge of a filing office. But most of her letters were about dances, going out with groups of girls, general fun, and all the intrigues that young people get into.

In one letter, she broke the news of how she had met, and fallen in love with, Gordon, a British soldier stationed there. I was amazed my mother had never told us about this. It was one of those family stories that was not talked about, and by the time we were reading about this, my mother had passed on so I couldn't ask her. The Auntie Ruby we had known was a spinster, the eldest daughter of four children who lived a single life in her parents' house.

Over the next dozen or so letters, we lived through her excitement that Gordon would be coming to meet Ruby's parents when they were next back in England on leave. Then we experienced her disappointment in a letter she had written a few weeks later. We don't know why, but Gordon had not met with our grandfather's approval. Gordon cropped up again in subsequent letters; Ruby wasn't giving up, but sadly our grandfather would not be moved.

Her last letter was from September 1946, after being demobilized and just before setting off on the journey back to England. Gordon was there to help fold her blankets. I am sure my brother, sisters and cousins also felt sad arriving at the end of Ruby's wartime journey. But reading her letters, we got to know Ruby in ways none of us could ever have imagined.



Extract from a letter from Ruby dated 1 November 1944

The United Nations at 80: Reflections on Its Enduring Raison d'être

by Ajmal Qureshi



The Charter of the United Nations was crafted in the backdrop of the world embroiled in war, unprecedented violence, sorrow, death and destruction. The Second World War was ending, and world leaders were determined never to let this happen again. The world's most visionary political document, the UN Charter, was produced. Representatives from 50 nations met in San Francisco to sign the UN Charter—the founding document of the United Nations.

The United Nations was created in 1945, after the devastation of World War II, to prevent future conflicts, maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, and promote international cooperation to solve economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems.

Since the Charter was signed and has been ratified by 193 countries, 80 years have passed and there has

To practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors...

-- Charter of the United Nations

been no world war in that time, although we have witnessed much violence, suffering and widespread injustice. Dangers lurk that could threaten civilization and the future of mankind.

I was born amid the Second World War. I was too young to understand why humans were killing humans, and the meaning of this ghastly savagery was beyond my comprehension. Because of the United Nations, today my dominant feeling is of hope and optimism, free of global conflict. The past 80 years have also seen emancipation and empowerment of people. People today have more power to shape their future than ever before. The interdependence of nations is also wider and deeper. The shift of focus from states to people has widely prompted the growth of international civil society.

The world today is confronted with renewed challenges like racism, extremism, terrorism and, worst of all, is climate change, which poses

an existential threat to Planet Earth and its inhabitants. Because we are on the threshold of a new era, the international community needs to forge a consensus for better global governance, institutional reforms, the primacy of the rule of law and the security of people and the planet.

Eighty years ago, world leaders of that generation, conscious of the horrors of war, created the United Nations System for all the peoples of the world. Today the need is greater than before for better global governance, better management of survival, promoting development with inclusiveness, embracing diversity, empowering women and averting a catastrophe of the scale of the Second World War. Wise choices need to be made in earnest. Time is not on the side of indecision.

Congratulations to the United Nations, its dedicated diplomats, professionals and experts as we celebrate your 80th anniversary!

Eighty Years of Serving People and Planet: In Mystery, Love, and Gratitude

by Robertson Work



Robertson Work is a social/ecological activist and nonfiction author; former UNDP principal policy advisor on decentralized governance, NYU Wagner professor, and ICA country director.

My Scottish ancestors came to North America in the seventeenth century. In the year 1944, a tiny earthling, named Moorman Robertson Work, Jr., emerged in Houston, Texas. FDR was president of the USA. World War II was in its final year. My father, Moorman Robertson Work, Sr., was a lieutenant in the Army Air Corps training navigators at Ellington Field. My mother, Mary Elizabeth Work, was giving birth in St. Joseph's Catholic Hospital.

At that time, Social Security had been in effect for four years. FDR announced his Economic Bill of Rights but died the next year before it could be enacted. World War II ended in 1945 on September the 2nd. The United Nations was founded the next month on 24 October,

my dad's birthday. I was one year and three months. The GI Bill enabled my dad to get his master's degree.

In junior high school in the small town of Durant, Oklahoma, I read for the first time about the United Nations in our current events newsletter. I was struck that there were people who were caring for the whole world.

Now at eighty years and seven months, my entire life has been lived as a loyal citizen of the world's oldest democracy, with the national safety net of Social Security, and with the United Nations working for peace and development around the world and headquartered in New York City.

After two decades of working in poor communities in Asia and in the Caribbean as part of the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), a nonprofit organization with ECOSOC consultative status, in 1990 I became an international civil servant in UNDP headquarters creating programs

and projects and providing policy advice on decentralized democratic governance to countries around the world.

My favorite programs were LIFE—the Local Initiative Facility for the Urban Environment, and DMIL—Decentralizing the MDGs through Innovative Leadership. In UNDP, I utilized and shared group facilitation methods including the Technology of Participation (ToP), Appreciative Inquiry, Social Artistry, integral thinking, and mindfulness practices.

In 2006, I retired from UNDP and taught at New York University (NYU) Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, consulted for the UN, gave talks in several countries, published five books (*see photo*), contributed to thirteen other books, and am now a writer and a social/ecological activist.

I am a member of Third Act, a network of activists over sixty promoting democracy and climate change mitigation and adaptation.



I also write weekly essays on compassionate action and ecological, societal, and individual mindfulness published on [Substack](#) under “Compassionate Conversations”. Hope you will subscribe for free.

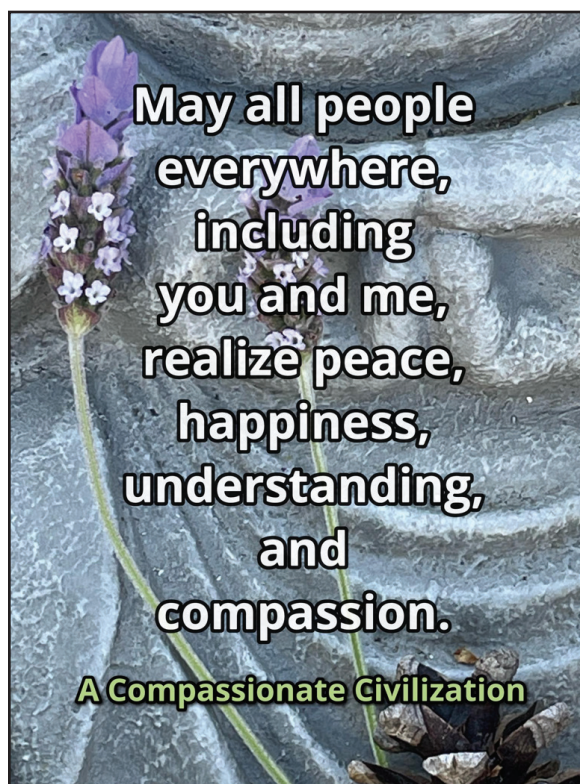
I have voted and helped get out the vote in every US election since I was eighteen. I have been a peace activist protesting the Vietnam war and the invasion of Iraq and Ukraine. I have also been an activist promoting civil rights, women’s rights, democracy, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. You can read about my first seventy-five years in my autobiography *Serving People & Planet: In Mystery, Love, and Gratitude*. This year, I hope to add the past five years of the story in a revised edition.

Today, some people in the federal government of my country are trying to weaken our national safety net, our federal programs supporting domestic and international development, peace, and justice, and our traditional commitments to our allies and to the UN. I continue

to write and speak out in support of participatory democracy, social justice, ecological regeneration, and peace and nonviolence. My focus is on creating islands of sanity that can help catalyze what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called “The Beloved Community”.

May the UN continue to evolve and flourish and care for all people and all of the planet!

May all beings everywhere realize peace, happiness, understanding, and compassionate action.



The Story of Why I Call Myself a UN Baby

by Felicity O. Yost



This is the story of why I call myself a UN baby. It starts when my father, Charles W. Yost, became Assistant Chief of the Division of Special Research in the U.S. State Department in 1942, and ended when he was assigned as U.S. Representative to the United Nations in 1969.

The Division was created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and charged with creating a “United Nations” in secret; Roosevelt wished to ensure that his dream would not be prematurely quashed. My father’s boss and head of the Division was Leo Pasvolsky—who has sadly been forgotten. Under-Secretary-General Brian Urquhart said that

while Roosevelt was the father of the United Nations, Pasvolsky was its architect. In July 1944, when Roosevelt signed off on the draft of the UN Charter written by Pasvolsky and his team, planning for the Washington Conversations on International Peace and Security Organization, commonly referred to as the Dumbarton Oaks Conference, could be started.

My father was assigned to the Committee on Security Arrangements. In addition to Pasvolsky, my father worked with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, who would chair the conference. The official opening of the Dumbarton Oaks Conference took place on Monday, 21 August 1944. Once my father and his colleague Benjamin Gerig had received their daily assignments, they repaired to a small room where they sweltered without air conditioning in the hot Washington summer. My father and Gerig were tasked with merging the assorted recommendations for the UN Charter in order to provide the plenary and steering committees with a detailed draft. Then, as the reworked drafts evolved out of the committee discussions, the two men gave form to the document until a final version was agreed upon.

My father also worked on drafting Chapter VI and Chapter VII—the two chapters that remain the most contentious of the UN Charter. The Dumbarton Oaks plan that was issued at noon on 9 October 1944 was a tentative proposal, but one that would transform the world’s attitudes on war. Two months later, Stettinius became the U.S. Secretary of State and nominated my father to serve as his Special Assistant to the United Nations Conference on International Organizations, to be held in San Francisco the following year.

The delegates who gathered in San Francisco for the 1945 United Nations Conference were launching the beginning of a new era. They arrived with a feeling of optimism and “sober hope,” recalled my father. But when President Roosevelt died in April, they would have to realize his dream without him.

One of my father’s duties at the conference was to follow the Charter deliberations and draft a daily report to be sent to the new president, Harry S. Truman. The Charter that had been drafted by the State Department planning group, finessed at Dumbarton Oaks, was now divided up between

four commissions and various committees who were to finalize the document. They would thrash out issues, such as the veto that had been contentious from the very beginning.

Finally, on 25 June 1945, the delegates of 50 nations gathered at the San Francisco Opera House. All the delegates, members of the media, and several thousand guests stood up as the chairman announced the unanimous passage of the Charter. My father, who admitted that though expectations might have been too high at San Francisco, the Charter was an exceptional document and that any failures should be assigned to its members. At its founding, the UN had 50 members; in 2025, there are 193 who must all agree to grant the UN the power and the resources to do what the Charter authorizes.



Above: President J.F. Kennedy with U.S. delegation to the UN. White House 1961. Yost *far left*. White House Photo.



Top Right: Bobby Kennedy and Yost leaving the U.S. Mission. Yost, who was closely involved in the selection of U Thant as Secretary-General, stayed on at the U.S. Mission following the death of President Kennedy, and then retired in 1967. UN Photo.



Left to right: Yost, Lady Bird Johnson, U Thant, President Lyndon B. Johnson, Adlai Stevenson, and Ralph Bunche on the White House Lawn, 1964. White House Photo.



1962 United Nations Association: Eleanor Roosevelt with Yost at her last public appearance.

This story next takes us to the fall of 1949, when my father was temporarily assigned to work on the U.S. Delegation to the UN General Assembly alongside Eleanor Roosevelt. They met daily at the temporary UN home across the East River in Lake Success and also worked together on US/UN Association matters.

We next jump to 1961, when Adlai Stevenson, the new U.S. Ambassador to the UN, asked my

father to serve as his deputy and assigned him as ambassador to the Security Council. The 1960s was a crisis-filled decade for the UN and for my father. The Congo proved to be one of the most intractable and was the first crisis which Yost worked on with his old

friend, Under-Secretary-General Ralph Bunche; he also worked alongside Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. Another major crisis of the 1960s was the Cuban Missile Crisis, when Yost was assigned by President John F. Kennedy to secret negotiations with the Soviets. My father also worked behind the scenes with Bobby Kennedy.

My father's story comes full circle in 1969 when President Richard Nixon called Yost out of retirement and assigned him as U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

Yost, who worked hard for the independence of Namibia and Angola, did not live to see their achievements, but both countries were part of my UN story. I went to work at the UN in 1973 and retired in 2009. In those years I served with UNTAG in Namibia and witnessed their first successful elections. I also participated in electoral missions in Angola, Haiti, El Salvador, and Mozambique.



In the General Assembly, 1970: President Richard Nixon, U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers and Yost. UN Photo.



Yost, President of the Security Council, in the permanent seat of the United States in 1971. UN Photo.



Ondangwa, Namibia 1989.
(Felicity Yost photo collection.)

AFICS/NEW YORK AT WORK



COMMITTEE UPDATES & ACTIVITIES

AFICS/New York is pleased to express a special thanks to our staff Velimir Kovačević and Veronique Whalen who provide all the office, website, and membership communications support we need to keep AFICS/New York running smoothly. Thank you to Velimir and Veronique for always going above and beyond!

AFICS/New York Turns 55: Reflecting, Reconnecting, Renewing

This year marks the 55th anniversary of the creation of the Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS/NY), founded in 1970, with the strong support of Secretary-General U Thant. Our Association remains steadfast in its mandate, advocating for transparency and accountability, especially in safeguarding the interests and welfare of our members.

Our voices and actions are vital in shaping the path forward. Our mission as members of AFICS/NY is to ensure that our collective voices continue to be heard. My colleagues and I serving on the Board and AFICS/NY members, many of whom serve on our Committees, look forward to and welcome your suggestions on how we can all be a force to cement our common commitment.

Through the dedicated work of our Committees, AFICS/NY advocates for retirees across a range of substantive issues with senior managers at the United Nations. We seek to grow the organization, communicate with our members and prospective members, and organize events that bring our members together—a vital way for us all to keep in touch and remain active in promoting the organization that we have all served and that will always be a part of us.

With regard to pension issues, the representatives of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund who spoke at our recent annual meeting inspired confidence as they explained how the Fund is actively ensuring the stability of our pensions amidst current global financial fluctuations. They emphasised the commitment and ability of the Fund to ensure uninterrupted pension payments and improvements in processing them.

Similarly, we heard from the representatives of the United Nations Health and Life Insurance Section, which manages our after-service health insurance (ASHI). A robust framework and careful management keep the ASHI plans resilient, safeguarding retirees' well-being. As always, we heard that we also all have our own essential part to play in ensuring sustainability.

It is my honour to invite you to read about our activities and achievements in the following pages. As you do so, I hope that you will feel moved to continue or to begin to support the Association by becoming involved—I promise you that you will not regret for a moment the decision to share in carrying the banner forward.

Darshak Shah

President, AFICS/NY

Health Insurance Committee

At AFICS/New York, the Health Insurance Committee focuses on Safeguarding Retiree Interests. Chaired by Jay Karia and Dr. Sudershan Narula, we are your voice and your advocate on all matters related to Health and Life Insurance. We are committed to keeping members informed, resolving individual concerns, and ensuring that retiree interests are well represented in policy decisions. Here are the highlights of the past six months of work:

1. Navigating Premium Pressures: Protecting Your Pocketbook

Over the past months, AFICS/NY's Health Insurance Committee actively participated in bi-monthly and weekly meetings of the UN Health and Life Insurance Committee (HLIC). These discussions focused on reviewing the cost performance of current health insurance plans and forecasting premiums for the 2025–2026 cycle.

This year presented a serious challenge: costs for both the **Aetna** and **UN Worldwide plans** exceeded the premiums collected. Without intervention, premiums would have needed a sharp increase—the largest since 2015—posing a heavy burden on both retirees and staff.

Thanks to careful deliberation, HLIC recommended tapping into existing insurance reserves for Aetna and the UN Worldwide plan. This strategic move significantly mitigated the need for an abrupt hike in premiums. Importantly, enough reserves remain in place to handle any unforeseen future emergencies.

All decisions were reached through consensus—balancing input from UN staff, management, and retiree representatives, ensuring fair and inclusive outcomes.

2. Member Outreach: Listening, Responding, Solving

Communication is key, and our Committee has taken significant steps to stay connected with members. In addition to responding to individual inquiries, we have launched open online sessions to provide a forum where members can share their experiences, raise concerns, and get expert guidance on health insurance matters.

Here's how it works:

- Members receive an invitation and are encouraged to submit questions in advance.
- A secure link is shared just before the session.
- During the session, our team of subject matter experts addresses queries live, or commits to following up after consulting the UN's Health and Life Insurance Section (HLIS).

So far, **two open sessions** have been held—and they have been a resounding success. Members found the discussions informative, appreciated the responsiveness, and helped surface issues that have since been referred to HLIS for resolution.

Looking Ahead

The Health Insurance Committee will continue to advocate, inform, and support our community. Your concerns are our mission. We encourage all members to participate in future sessions and stay engaged.

Together, we can ensure health coverage that is both fair and sustainable.

Pension Committee

The AFICS/New York Pension Committee is your go-to group for all things related to the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF)—especially the parts that matter most to retirees and their families. Co-chaired by Suzanne Bishopric and Jay Pozenel, the committee meets monthly to stay on top of benefit issues and developments at the Fund, and to make sure retirees’ voices are heard at the global level.

While AFICS/New York does not have a formal vote in UNJSPF decision-making, our members play a key role by putting forward suggestions to the FAFICS Council, which helps shape the positions taken by the FAFICS delegation at the UNJSPF Board.

Lately, the committee has been discussing topics like the Digital Certificate of Entitlement (CoE), updates to

the Pension Adjustment System (PAS), and how Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) are decided. We are also closely following the Fund’s performance, valuation reports, and financial benchmarks.

From time to time, AFICS/New York members are invited by FAFICS to take part in important Pension Board committees—like the Plan Review Group, the Governance Review Working Group, and the Financial Solvency and Liability Management (FSALM) Committee—giving our retirees a real voice in shaping the future of the Fund.

[Please refer to the summary of the AFICS New York Assembly later in this section for more information on the Pension Fund’s performance and sustainability.]

Membership Committee

The AFICS/New York Membership Committee is dedicated to growing and strengthening our community by welcoming retirees and soon-to-be retirees into AFICS/New York. We do this through **dynamic outreach, membership drives, advocacy and information campaigns**. We strive to engage and ensure every new member feels valued, connected, and empowered in their retirement journey. We invite you to join this vibrant network of peers, and benefit from the support, advocacy, enriching activities and opportunities AFICS/New York offers.

Our key results and deliverables for the first quarter of 2025 include:

1. Membership drives: We made presentations along with the AFICS/New York leadership at a UN Staff Union-organized pre-retirement seminar held on 25 February 2025, to some 243 UN staff about to retire, on the benefits of joining the Association,

including the vital role AFICS/New York plays on pension and health insurance issues for retirees;

2. Welcoming new members: We welcomed twenty-one (21) new members to the Association in addition to the total of 84 who joined in 2024. Click here for a list of new members:

[AFICS/NY members who joined the association between 1 January 2024 and 30 April 2025](#)

3. Outreach events: We co-organized a very well attended and highly appreciated Members Mix and Mingle get-together on 8 January 2025, see below under Social Events;

4. Advocacy & information material: We updated the electronic Directory of Members dated 23 April 2025.

Communications Committee

Under Co-chairs Gail Bindley-Taylor and Andrew Nye, the first half of 2025 has been a period of exciting growth and transformation for the Communications Committee as we lay the foundation for a dynamic, member-centred future for AFICS/NY.

Bulletin—Honoring Our Past, Shaping Our Voice

A key priority has been securing an Editor for the AFICS/NY Bulletin as part of implementing our new Communications Strategy. While a decision is pending on the appointment of a permanent candidate for Editor, we are fortunate to have Board member Judith Karl stepping up as Interim Editor, supported by Associate Editor Alice Harrison and committee members Gail Bindley-Taylor and Shirley Brownell. This team is hard at work producing the Summer 2025 edition—an especially meaningful issue that marks 80 years since the end of WWII and the founding of the United Nations.

Would you like to write, edit, or suggest content for future Bulletins? Your voice matters—join us!

Website—Reimagining Our Digital Home

Our website is undergoing a complete revamp based on your feedback during the 2023 focus groups. Members asked for a more modern, user-friendly, and visually engaging site—and we listened.

A dedicated team—Andy Nye, Pilar Fuentes Conte, Anne Matthews, and Gail Bindley-Taylor—has been crafting specifications and assembling a project management team, including a web developer, designer, project manager, and two interns. We are moving swiftly, and by fall, we will reveal both our platform of choice and a sneak peek at the new design.

Do you want to help shape our online presence? This is your moment to get involved.

Social Media—Building Community, One Click at a Time

We have launched a pilot Facebook page at the Governing Board level to explore how social media might connect us more effectively. This initiative responds directly to your requests for better ways to interact with fellow members and stay informed.

If you are passionate about digital outreach or social storytelling—this is your space to shine.

Content Management—Defining the AFICS/NY Voice

Led by Carol Joy Braithwaite, with Viola Morgan, Shirley Brownell, and Dawne Gautier, our Content Management Group is working to sharpen the AFICS/New York brand and establish a more timely, consistent internal communication system.

Have skills in writing, branding, or communications planning? We would love to collaborate with you.

Looking Ahead—Events That Matter

We are exploring the revival of special member-focused events, both online and in-person, tackling issues that matter most to you. These gatherings will foster learning, connection, and community spirit.

What topics are you passionate about? Let us know—your interests will shape our programming.

Get Involved—Your Voice, Your AFICS/New York

Each of these projects is designed with our members in mind, and your participation can make a real difference. Whether you are a writer, a tech enthusiast, an event planner, or simply someone with ideas—we invite you to lend your energy and talents.

Together, let's create a stronger, more connected AFICS/New York.

Ageing Smart Committee

The Ageing Smart Committee is Co-chaired by Nicholas Alipui, M.A. Chiulli, and Pilar Fuentes Conte who also actively participate in the NGO Committee on Ageing, contributing to global conversations on ageing and longevity.

The Ageing Smart Committee works to keep members informed and connected around issues of ageing—focusing on how we can age in the healthiest, most fulfilling way possible. We share timely resources, highlight meaningful opportunities, and raise awareness about programmes that support wellbeing across later life.

Some of OUR recent highlights include promoting and attending Senator Liz Krueger’s Senior Resource Fair in December 2024, a valuable opportunity for older adults to learn how to access local services, health information, and support resources. And in May-June 2025, the Committee launched the Road Scholar Online Series on Wellness in Ageing. This exciting six-part virtual programme explores strategies for maintaining wellness—physically, emotionally, and socially—as we age.

The Committee looks forward to continuing to bring you meaningful updates and opportunities.



Recent Additions to the AFICS/NY Library

by Dawne Gautier, Librarian

We would like to thank James Nolan for donating a copy of his work on “Essays on Conference Interpreting” and Joan Seymour for her memoir entitled “My Journey Unplanned”.

If you would like to donate copies of your work, please contact me at dawnegtr@yahoo.com.

Essays on Conference Interpreting

By: James Nolan

Published by Multilingual Matters

This book condenses important lessons learned at key points during a 30-year career as an intergovernmental conference interpreter and trainer, seeking to define what constitutes good interpreting and how to develop the skills and abilities that are conducive to it, as well as fostering practices and technologies that help to maintain high professional standards. It highlights the importance of English as a global lingua franca and as a relay language used in multilingual events and institutions. The book places interpreting in its historical context as a time-honored discipline and discusses the effect of modern technology on translating and interpreting, identifying areas where it is most useful (electronic communications media, broadcasting) while stressing that professional education and training of linguists are more important than reliance on technological shortcuts. It is a valuable resource to all those working or training in interpreting and related forms of cross-cultural communication.

James Nolan has served as Deputy Director of the Interpretation, Meetings and Publishing Division of the United Nations, Head of Linguistic and Conference Services of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Chief of the UN Verbatim Reporting Service, UN Senior Interpreter, and Linguist/Legal Writer with The Garden City Group.

Nolan’s book is now available in the AFICS Library.

Social Committee Events



What better way to kick off the New Year than with familiar faces and new friends? On 8 January, the AFICS/NY community gathered for a joyful Mix and Mingle in our offices at the UNITAR Building. The atmosphere buzzed with laughter and warm conversations as more than 100 colleagues came together to celebrate the arrival of 2025. Committee Chair Barbara Linardo orchestrated a truly memorable evening, filled with cheer and connection. President Darshak Shah welcomed everyone with heartfelt wishes for a happy and healthy New Year—setting the perfect tone for the year ahead.

8 January 2025—Mix and Mingle



3 April 2025—AFICS/NY's Traditional Spring Luncheon



Spring arrived in style on 3 April, as over seventy members of the AFICS/NY community reunited for our much-loved Traditional Spring Luncheon at Tony's Di Napoli in Manhattan. With its vibrant atmosphere and delectable Italian fare, the luncheon offered the perfect setting to catch up and share stories. As always, the event was impeccably organized by Barbara Linardo, whose thoughtful menu selections and warm hospitality made for a delightful afternoon. This annual gathering continues to be a cherished highlight on our calendar, bringing us all a little closer—one bite, and one conversation, at a time.

Highlights from the 55th Annual AFICS/New York Assembly

by Jay Pozenel



President Darshak Shah welcomed members of AFICS/NY to its 55th Annual Assembly, held on Thursday, 22 May, at 3:00 p.m. in Conference Room 2 of UN Headquarters. The 55th Assembly coincides with the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII and the creation of the UN as well with the 50th anniversary of FAFICS. Noting that these days resembled that time when, in the words of Dag Hammarskjöld, “the UN was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell,” Darshak reminded members that the UN now needs our support. Darshak also recalled the role on the Pension Board newly played by FAFICS, led by Jerry Barton, and paid tribute to the late Governing Board member Sandra Haji-Ahmed and also to member Jenny Karia.

The Assembly heard from several UN officials: the Chef de Cabinet of the President of the General Assembly, Ivor Richard Fung; Martha Helena Lopez, Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for Human Resources, who represented the Secretary-General; Atul Khare, Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Operational Support; and Linda McGuire, Assistant Secretary-General and Director of UNDP’s Bureau for Management Services. The officials all noted the stresses faced by the UN system and the international community these days, while also reminding the gathered members of the many ways the UN operates to keep the peace, to promote the rule of law and human rights, and to provide humanitarian assistance, while fostering mutual respect and social and economic progress for humanity. They all noted the important contributions made by staff in these endeavours, in addition to their continuing contributions to the Organization and the international community after retirement. With respect to fears about funding cuts, downsizing and their effects on the future of the Organization, all gave assurances that the Organization would weather the current storm and would look for ways to be even more relevant and stronger in the coming years.

Jerry Barton, President of FAFICS, spoke and thanked AFICS/NY, one of the 65 affiliated associations of FAFICS and a founding member, for its support. Like the UN officials who spoke before him, Jerry emphasized that the work of the UN system has been carried out by people like us who have helped advance peace, human rights, development and humanitarian support around the world and that, even in retirement, we remain part of the UN family and should stay committed to volunteerism. He said we should all make sure future retirees have access to social and advocacy environments. Jerry noted that our pension benefits are secure for all current participants and beneficiaries,



but worried what current funding cuts would mean for the UN and how long it would take for the international community to recover from such losses.

President Emeritus of FAFICS and former President of AFICS/NY, Andrés Castellanos del Corral, provided perspectives on the fiftieth anniversary of FAFICS and fifty-fifth anniversary of AFICS/NY. He also paid tribute to George Saddler, a founder and giant in the history of AFICS/NY, as George was turning 100 years old. Andrés lauded the many contributions made by FAFICS to improving pension benefits and partnering with the Pension Fund Administration in providing outreach to retirees.



Chief Executive of Pension Fund Administration, Rosemarie McClean, delivered three key messages: pension benefits are secure; the Fund continues to modernize and deliver excellent service; and her office is continuing to extend outreach to beneficiaries. She noted that the definition of pension fund solvency is the ability to pay benefits over the long term. In this connection, she reported that the current financial situation of the Fund is very strong according to the Fund's actuaries, such that benefit payments are secure long into the future. She noted that the call wait-time for inquiries to the Fund had been decreased to 22 seconds and that more than 38,000 retirees were using the digital certificate of entitlement. For outreach to both participants and beneficiaries, many town hall sessions had been held, and the website (in six languages) and social media presences, were also being widely used. For non-receipt of monthly payments, a dedicated email address was monitored so that such matters could receive top priority.



In response to several questions, Rosemarie emphasized that the Pension Fund was financially secure and made clear that the Fund's assets could not be used or borrowed by the Organization or by Member States, for anything other than benefit payments. Rosemarie noted that, on the advice of the Fund's actuaries, the Fund is not concerned about reductions in the number of participants, but rather emphasized that the Fund's long-term solvency depended more on returns on the investment of its assets. FAFICS President, Jerry Barton, supported the focused Town Halls. Darshak thanked Rosemarie for the improvements to operations made by her team.



Chief Investment Officer, Toru Shindo, spoke on behalf of Pedro Guazo, the Representative of the Secretary-General (RSG) for the Investment of the Assets of the Fund, and emphasized that transparency was one of the Fund's top priorities. He noted that all information he was presenting was made available and regularly updated on the Fund's website. Toru noted that, as of 16 May, the Fund's asset value of \$98.5 billion was a record high. He

emphasized that the Fund's in-house investment management was working well to maintain the balance of the assets of the Fund's portfolio against the stated strategic asset allocation among stocks, bonds, cash, alternatives and other forms of investments. On investment performance, Toru noted that the Fund was fully funded, solvent and outperforming its assumed actuarial targets, including on returns on investments. He indicated that the Fund's strategic asset allocation was robust, and that it was prudent to reduce risks rather than enhance the return through speculative investments.

In response to questions, Toru said that, notwithstanding the Board's reduction of the actuarial assumption of a real rate of return on investments of 3.4% over the long-term, the RSG was continuing to maintain the investment target of a real rate of return of 3.5% over the long-term. On comparisons to other pension funds, Toru noted that each pension fund has a different risk appetite so that while the Fund's asset allocation was sometimes different when compared to other pension funds, our Fund was certainly not an outlier in terms of basic investment strategy. Toru noted that small changes in percentages of the Fund's assets under external management were merely the result of changes to the Fund's strategic asset allocations from time to time and the outstanding performance of some of the outsourced investments, which raises the relative value compared to other assets. He emphasized that the bulk of investment management remained in-house, as favorably shown in the CEM Benchmarking Inc. reports to the General Assembly.

Vera Rajic, Officer-in-Charge of the UN Health Insurance Section, and Julie Borré, the Section's Communications Officer, indicated that the UN's Health and Life Insurance Committee was reporting similar information to the Assembly as it had in prior years on the UN's health plans, including ASHI. They noted, however, that there were increasing costs of medical care as reflected in this year's reported information. They indicated what we, as beneficiaries, could collectively and individually do to mitigate the higher premium costs that, unfortunately, we would be seeing this year. They noted that medical costs have reached their highest global level in 2025 (driven by medical inflation, maturing plan participants which led to increased use of the plan, and rising drug costs, plus a post-covid rebound in health care

use). Plan participants could act by seeking in-network care and using an urgent care center or medical practitioners rather than visiting the ER for non-emergency care. And they urged the use of preventive care such as immunizations, avoiding the ER, making use of Teladoc which has effective outcomes, using generic drugs and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

In response to a question as to whether Medicare users have limited access to providers of care, both Vera and Julie emphasized that the coverage under ASHI was exactly the same whether you have Medicare or not. If your doctor has opted out of Medicare, you need to submit a letter that states this to your health plan administrator (e.g. AETNA, ANTHEM BC/BS). They noted that Medicare Part B pays 80% of the costs of services, which is a benefit to everybody because the costs are distributed across plans and members. The Organization requires that of everyone who is eligible to have Medicare B, and the Organization reimburses the premium.

Executive Vice-President of the United Nations Federal Credit Union (UNFCU), Pamela Agnone, said it was a privilege to serve alongside staff in their retirement to continue to provide peace of mind for their financial requirements and savings. She noted that the UNFCU had been founded by 13 staff members in 1947 and that the UNFCU remains financially strong because it is managed conservatively with \$9.7 billion in assets and 250,000 members, including 19,000 retirees globally.

Further information from UNFCU and from AFICS/New York Committees and the Governing Board will be placed on the AFICS/New York Website for members to review.

A Toast to 50 Years of FAFICS and 55th Anniversary of AFICS/NY



On the Lookout for New AFICS/NY members



IN MEMORIAM

We remember and honour the lives of our colleagues who are no longer with us. Their presence enriched our workplace, and their memory will forever be a part of our story.

As we bring this edition of the Bulletin to a close, we pause to remember those members of our community who have passed away since our last issue. In the past, we printed all their names along with the parts of the UN system where they served. Now, in keeping with our transition to a digital format, we are providing a link to the full list on [our website](#), where you can search for the names of colleagues and friends.

We honour their memory, their service to the Organization, and the lasting bonds we shared with them.



Over the past six months, AFICS/NY has bid farewell to several of its most active and cherished members. In this edition, friends and colleagues offer heartfelt tributes, remembering their contributions and the lasting bonds they forged within our community.

Remembering Neylan Ayse Bali: A Trailblazer with a Legacy that Will Endure

*by Jan Beagle, retired Under-Secretary-General of Management,
now Director-General, International Development Law Organization (IDLO)*



It was with sadness, but also deep respect and gratitude, that members of her family, and many friends and colleagues gathered at the Church Center in New York on 13 May 2025 to celebrate the wonderful life of Neylan Ayse Bali, a lifetime member of AFICS.

Neylan passed away on 3 April 2025 and is survived by her husband, her two daughters, her stepson and four grandchildren.

Neylan will be remembered for her brilliant professional accomplishments during her 33-year career with the Organization, as well as for her devotion to family and Turkish culture.

After an exceptional academic career culminating in a PhD from the University of Pittsburgh, with a dissertation on the Security Council, Neylan joined the UN Secretariat in 1966 and worked in a wide range of functions in the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, covering all the major political issues of the time. In 1994, she was appointed Director of the Security Council Affairs Division, the first woman to hold this key position. She was known for her intellectual rigour, analytical skills, diplomatic acumen, and balanced judgement.

I first met Neylan in 1979 when I joined the Security Council Affairs Division on a one-year secondment from my government. Little did I know that this would be the beginning of a 40-year career with the organization and a 45-year friendship that would span our personal and professional lives.

In the middle of the Cold War, in the extremely politicised environment in which we worked, Neylan was the quintessential international civil servant. She was deeply principled and dedicated to multilateralism, bringing to all her positions the highest standards of professionalism, integrity and independence. A major characteristic

was her ability to remain calm in all types of crisis situations—of which there were many! I learned so much from her, as did a generation of colleagues as well as countless delegates.

As one of the few women in senior positions at the time, Neylan was a strong advocate for gender equality. She was a mentor to many young women, including me, and was a diligent member of the Standing Committee on the Advancement of Women and Board of the UN International School.

Despite her strong work ethic, Neylan was a model in achieving work-life balance. She was extremely proud of her daughters and deeply involved in their lives. Many of us tried to emulate her meticulous colour-coded schedules, which included all the meetings and consultations of the Security Council, and deadlines for documents due, as well as all the activities and appointments of her children.

She maintained the traditional values from her upbringing, but was always open to new ideas and exploring new places and ways of thinking. She loved art and music, being a gifted pianist trained at the Istanbul Conservatory of Music. We shared many experiences raising our daughters, the lights of our lives, and enjoying social occasions with our husbands and friends, often with Neylan's exquisite Turkish cooking. In later life she was dedicated to her beloved grandchildren.

Neylan's legacy lives on in her cherished children and grandchildren, and in those of us who were privileged to know her. Her commitment to multilateralism, democracy, human rights and justice—needed today more than ever—continues to inspire me and many others.

Rest in peace, dear Neylan.

Sandra Haji-Ahmed: An Amazing Friend and Colleague A Reflection by One Who Knew Her Well

by Nancy Raphael, former AFICS/NY Governing Board member



What can one say about such a remarkable person? She was everything everybody said about her and so much more. To me, she was my Sanj.

Sandra began what would be her professional life's work in 1972 in Nairobi, Kenya, with UNICEF, followed by stints in Zimbabwe and Somalia. When personal tragedy led to the family moving to NY in the late 1980s, Sandra and I began what would become a deep and lasting friendship.

She was quiet, reserved, subdued, elegant and dignified, in short, nothing like me, and as they say, opposites attract. We had lunch together a few times, but not much more. And then the magic began. Unbeknownst to each other, we had both applied to graduate school at the New School for a master's in human resources, while continuing to work full-time and take care of our children. Ever resourceful, Sandra and I hatched a plan to enrol together, to take all our courses together and to help each other so we could manage without having to take time off. In the words of Louie in *Casablanca*, "that was the start of a beautiful friendship."

For two and a half years, we were joined together at the hip. We attended classes together in person twice a week at night and spent the weekend at each other's houses studying. That Sandra was a brilliant student is no surprise to any of you, but together we

brought out the best in each other, and her creativity and passion stood out. She also had a wicked sense of humour and would get a twinkle in her eye when talking about us as schoolgirls. We wound up sharing the outstanding student award at graduation.

Then life happened, and Sandra, who had progressed from training officer to head of training, went off to continue her brilliant career at the UN Secretariat, first as Deputy Director and then as Director in the Office of Human Resources, where she remained until her retirement in 2011. I, on the other hand, headed off to Geneva to work with UNICEF and then UNAIDS. We kept in touch regularly, and when Sandra retired in 2011, we were already hatching our plan for what we could do next after I returned to NY in early 2013. So off to Columbia University we went together to become Executive Coaches. Again, Sandra brought her energy, passion and caring to all her clients and she remained working as a coach until one month before her passing. We also worked together as a team, designing and facilitating workshops, and Sandra was like a magician, constantly pulling out new ideas like rabbits out of a hat. Sandra also joined me on the AFICS/NY Governing Board, where she worked diligently on both membership and communication issues and was a beloved member of the Board.

Not only were Sandra and I work partners, but I also had the privilege to be her chemo buddy, both throughout her initial two-year treatment and upon its recurrence 8 years later. We would sit quietly together watching the chemo drugs pour into her system, and Sandra exhibited a bravery, grace and dignity that I had never seen before, always with a



kind word for the nurses and a perpetual smile on her face. We talked about life, death, our hopes and fears, and I cherish the time we had together.

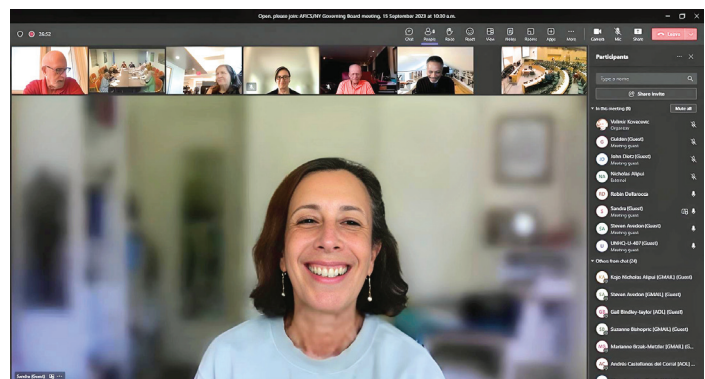
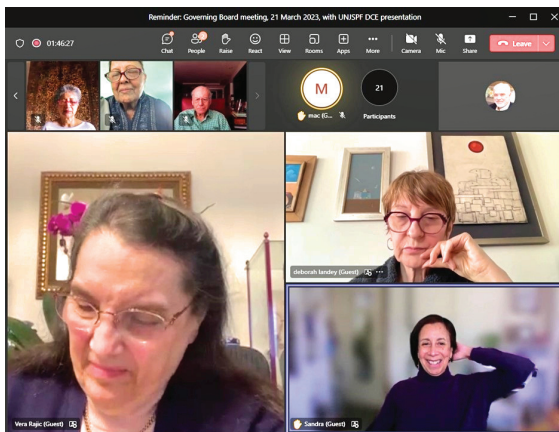
For those of you who know her well, Sandra did not have an easy life, facing horrific tragedies with unparalleled strength and resilience. Both of us strived to live by the philosophy to be grateful for what you have, not what you don't. After Sandra's initial diagnosis, we thought she would not live for more than one or two years, and she wound up having 8 wonderful years.

For the rest of my days, I will be eternally grateful that I have been blessed with Sandra for the last thirty-five years as my very special friend, learning partner, buddy and "sister". That two people with such different backgrounds found each other is a gift I will always cherish.

The UN system lost a remarkable person, but her legacy remains in the wonderful work she did and the lives she touched.

Forever, Nancy

Sandra Haji-Ahmed during the Governing Board meetings of 21 March and 15 September 2023.



Jamna Israni: A Remarkable Woman Honouring a Legacy of Service to the Association and Family

by Gail Bindley-Taylor, Andrés Castellanos del Corral and Richard Nottidge

Jamna Israni, who dedicated many years of service as an administrative assistant at AFICS/NY, passed away on Saturday, 22 February 2025, in a hospital in Queens, New York, after a prolonged illness. Her AFICS/NY family expressed deep sadness at the news.

Jamna served five Presidents of AFICS/NY in their tenures.

Former President Richard Nottidge recalled Jamna coming to work for AFICS/NY in March 2001 on the recommendation of his Vice-President and successor Andrés Castellanos del Corral, when one of the secretaries was unable to continue her tenure of some years. “She demonstrated quiet competence and calm efficiency and was very thoughtful to all her colleagues and AFICS/NY members who visited the office. She was a joy to work with and will be missed by all who got to know her.”

Former President Andrés Castellanos del Corral, with whom she had worked while both were staff members, had a close relationship with her family and shared this personal perspective: “Being a stalwart in the office for so many years, she greatly facilitated our work. She was reliable, hardworking, patient, pleasant and efficient. She readily and enthusiastically discharged all her responsibilities, addressed all requests to the office and assisted UN retirees who needed it, whether they were AFICS/NY members or not, in line with our policies.”

Former President George Saddler, after he stepped down from the Presidency of AFICS/NY, was still President of FAFICS for a year and continued to use

the AFICS office, and her services. Jamna would also extend a hand to Lydia Ontal, another pillar, who was his secretary and assistant, because wherever you would need her, there was Jamna. For that reason, George Saddler, in expressing condolences to her family, said: “Jamna’s competence, knowledge, skills and tact were indispensable to the proper functioning of AFICS/NY. May she now rest in peace.”

Another former President, Ed Omotoso, recalled working closely with her when he was Vice President and then later as President. He said she was the lynchpin of her family, a fact acknowledged by many who knew her well. Ed Omotoso noted in this regard: “I also know how much she loved and cared for her family. May the family be comforted in this hour of grief. May her memory be a blessing to them.”

Former President Linda Saputelli remembered Jamna as “reliable, responsible and caring. So many of us counted on Jamna more than we realized.”

Former President John Dietz emphasized her invaluable contributions. “I agree fully with the deeply heartfelt praise and recollections that have been expressed by others about Jamna, both as a person and as an integral, essential presence in the AFICS/NY office literally for decades. She was of immense help to me when I became AFICS/NY President



and then throughout my entire tenure in that role, always with a very personal and caring touch.”

In her remembrance, immediate past President Deborah Landey wrote: “Jamna was a very special person. She cared and did so much for others and was so very dedicated to her responsibilities at AFICS/NY in service of the retiree community.” For her part, AFICS First Vice President Nancy Hertz-Soyka on receiving the news of Jamna’s demise, stated: “Again, very sad news... I would like to add that she was very helpful to me as a brand-new governing board member. I can see from all your comments that she was very well loved.”

Jamna’s singular kindness and caring endeared her to those whose lives she touched. Furio De Tomassi, who worked with her in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) recounted: “I had the privilege to be on the same team with Jamna when she was working in DESA programmes. She was a great and dedicated staff member and an element of peaceful, calm collaboration in the team until she retired. Her smile and calm behaviour helped all the team members. I had the pleasure to meet Jamna again when I joined AFICS/NY as a member in 2016, and she was very helpful and supportive.”

Her dedication to duty, her thoughtfulness, calm efficiency and the warmth with which she greeted everyone who came through the AFICS/NY doors were heralded by all who fondly remembered her. As members paid tribute to her memory, there were so many stories of Jamna’s gentleness and humanity. Lola Esnard fondly reflected on her presence: “I will always cherish her soft manner and cheerful nature. She and Lydia were such an important part of my experience serving on the AFICS Board.” Suzan Habachy highlighted Jamna’s dedication to the Charities Foundation, recalling: “Jamna was always there to help with the Charities work. A truly helpful and devoted presence at AFICS/NY.” This

was echoed by Anthony Fouracre, the President of the Foundation, in lamenting her loss.

Former Vice President, Jayant Karia, shared a sentiment echoed by many: “She was a kind and gentle person who was so helpful to our members and to all of us. I will always remember her gentle demeanour.”. These sentiments were also echoed by Leon Hosang, a former Deputy Treasurer, who recalls Jamna as “a good friend and colleague. I was privileged to have worked with her. We had many short and meaningful discussions as we undertook our separate tasks.”

Gail Bindley-Taylor, Chair of the AFICS/NY Communications Committee, said: “She was a warm and caring person who always greeted you with a smile. She was the soul of patience and cared deeply about the members who came through our doors and always went the extra mile to help. We were blessed to have her for 20 years, and I was lucky to have shared a wonderful relationship with her. She will remain fondly in my heart.”

Lydia Ontal, a former AFICS/NY work colleague, wrote “I worked with Jamna for many years in the AFICS office. We shared many lunches together, mostly in the conference room, sometimes in the restaurants nearby. I only have pleasant memories of the many years we worked together.”

Velimir Kovačević, who took over from Jamna, recalled how she made his transition as a new partner smooth and welcoming from the very start: “Her advice was always simple, and straight to the point. She taught me and helped me to understand that everybody is different. Lately, we were periodically in touch; she hardly talked, so we wrote. She was so smart, competent, compassionate, and an understanding person. I will miss her greatly.”

Former President Andrés Castellanos del Corral, who spoke both as the representative of the President, the Bureau and Governing Board of the Association

of Former International Civil Servants, as well as in his capacity as a close family friend of the Israni family, talked movingly of both relationships with Jamna: "Jamna was a treasured part of AFICS for 20 years; and also in my personal capacity because in my family, Jamna was an extended member for 40 years. We go back to the period when we both were members of the then Department of Technical Cooperation of the United Nations. And in the last period of my tenure, she was my excellent secretary and personal assistant in many forms."

He recalls her being hired after retirement at the end of 1999, by then President Richard Nottidge: "Our then President asked me if there was anyone whom he could interview (because one of our long-time secretaries was retiring from AFICS), and I mentioned Jamna to him. He said, "I have, I believe, one more to see, but I do want to interview her...", And there was no need to interview any further, for as he declared "I would love to have Jamna with us." This then opened a new chapter for Jamna with AFICS/NY.

As acknowledged by former President Andrés Castellanos del Corral, the extraordinary outpouring of messages of condolence and expressions of sorrow and admiration since Jamna's passing are "nothing short of a testimony to this extraordinary human being." Describing her as "a woman of not only physical beauty (as she was a dazzling beauty among our friends in the department), always with that sweetness that characterized her personality", he underscored that at the same time, she was also a humble person who embraced all the members of AFICS/NY who entered its offices, regardless of rank.

In his closing remarks, Castellanos del Corral referred to a quotation from Rabindranath Tagore and the image of a butterfly displayed in the space beside Jamna's coffin, which he noted beautifully captured Jamna's life and legacy: "The butterfly counts not months but moments and has time enough. Time is a wealth of change, but the clock in its parody makes it mere change and no wealth. Let your life lightly dance on the edges of Time, like dew on the tip of a leaf."

"We were fortunate, all of us, to come across the life of Jamna Israni... And Jamna Israni would always remain like that butterfly on the screen, leaving behind glittering dust while her soul is at peace in the Glory of God. May she rest in peace."

As a fitting tribute to her memory, Jamna's funeral was well attended by her AFICS/NY family, including four of its former presidents, Governing Board members and other AFICS/NY staff and members.

Our deepest condolences to Jamna's family: her husband Kanayalal, her son Sandeep, her daughters-in-law, her four grand-children and her six siblings.

Mary Lynn Hanley: Fond Memories of an Outstanding Editor

Tributes from Her Sister and AFICS/NY Colleagues

“Mary Lynn’s first job—and it lasted 10 years—was with Henry Strauss Film Productions. It was on Fifth Avenue and they produced training and travel films. She loved anything theater, film, scripts, etc. John Von Arnold was her supervisor and she apparently did so well with him that when he was offered a position with UNDP, he asked for them to find a post for Mary Lynn.

That would have been about 1969. That is the year, I think, she began work with the United Nations. She was thrilled and so were her family.

Her first home in Manhattan was on East 6th Street, a studio walk-up that cost \$42.00 per month. I spent summers and non-resident college terms with her. We had cots, a space heater and plenty of cockroaches. In about 3 years she moved to a one bedroom on West 74th Street. She had a roommate to share the \$81.00 monthly rent. She bought her first coop in about 1975 at 5 Riverside Drive. She had been robbed several times and had found it very unsafe to live without doormen. I remember she paid cash and it was a studio with a sunken living room. She had saved the entire amount. Her last coop was purchased in 1998 at 137 Riverside Drive where she finally had a one bedroom and windows to the River. She remained living there until 2024 when her health issues required she come live with me, her sister Carol.



Thank you for all your efforts on her behalf—she would be so appreciative.

Thank everyone for caring about our wonderful sister, co-worker and

friend. All of our lives were touched and enriched by her presence and will continue to be a blessing in memory.

Mary Lynn—so typical—requested no funeral, but being a devout Catholic had all the blessings of the priest. Her remains were cremated and in spring we will have a service at the family gravesite where our parents are buried. There will be a stone for her there. My name will also be there and space for the final date. We had agreed to go there for our final earthly union.”

Carol Gotay, sister



Mary Lynn, June 1959, in NYC as a graduate of Bennington College, Vermont.

Mary Lynn Remembered by AFICS Collegues

Mary Lynn, who faithfully served AFICS/NY as Editor of the AFICS/NY Bulletin from her appointment on 1 March 1988 until her retirement in 2021, is remembered fondly by those who knew her as a critical reader and a meticulous editor. Former President of AFICS/NY Richard Nottidge, in paying tribute to her during the 50th anniversary of AFICS/NY, noted: “I always read the Bulletin before it went to print. I do not believe I ever had reason to change or even to suggest a change to what Mary Lynn produced.” Mary Lynn, as a result, had the pride of

place at all AFICS/NY Governing Board meetings as the Editor of the Bulletin and its official note taker.

As tributes poured in upon hearing of her passing from AFICS/NY colleagues who knew and worked with her, one description resonates deeply: her humble, kind, and gentle manner in which she treated everyone, along with her ever-warm and embracing smile that greeted all. We will all miss her more than words can express. Former President of AFICS/NY, John Dietz, reflects our collective sentiment about Mary Lynn: "She was truly a unique and remarkable person who lived by and upheld the ideals of the UN system, recognising the vital role played by retirees.

Almost single-handedly, she took full responsibility for preparing and issuing the periodic AFICS/NY Bulletin for many years, including my entire tenure as President of AFICS/NY (2016-2022). She remains in our hearts and will be missed as a steady contributor and reliably positive presence on the AFICS/NY Board and at our social gatherings."

Mary Lynn was also a talented actress and an accomplished musician who played the flute and piccolo in the United Nations Symphony Orchestra. She also dedicated her time to the Charities Foundation of AFICS/NY, where she served as its Secretary before her retirement. She will be missed.

We know how important it is for many of you to remember and pay tribute to colleagues who have passed away between editions of the Bulletin. If you would like to share a personal remembrance, we invite you to send your tribute to afics@un.org, attention In Memoriam. These tributes will be published as submitted on our website, allowing us all to share in honouring their lives and contributions. We share this one, submitted by Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, development economist, and currently Professor of International Affairs at the New School for Social Research in New York, as well as former Director of the Human Development Report Office of UNDP.



Thord Palmlund passed away on 14 December 2024, peacefully at home in New York. His wife Susy writes: “He’s off to his next adventure. He was at ease, comfortable, at home and in his bed. He went quietly. And the full moon out tonight is very bright. All good.”

Thord joined UNDP in 1988 to head the Management Development Program in BDP, created by the then Administrator, Bill Draper. He brought with him the wisdom and skills garnered through his long and distinguished career in Sweden, where he had held many positions, including the SIDA representative in Pakistan, State Secretary for bilateral aid in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Director General of the Immigration Board.

In UNDP he was highly respected for his ideas and known as a supportive colleague who always had

a lot of common sense and could be trusted to be principled. He was highly committed to ethical principles in development and to the UN’s role in the world. He pioneered human rights as a relevant issue for UNDP, and through the UN development system. Even long into his retirement, he stayed engaged in public policy debates, writing letters to the *Financial Times*, calling for more humane and global perspectives in migration policies.

For me, he was both a supportive colleague and a friend. Together with our respective spouses, we shared the enjoyment of concerts, discussing ideas and books, and good food. We will miss his home-made gravlax on brown bread with wasabi mayonnaise.

Sakiko Fukuda-Parr

As the United Nations turns 80, we are honoured to welcome home the original UN Charter.



Secretary-General António Guterres (*right*) and Philémon Yang, President of the 79th Session of the General Assembly, as they attend the Inauguration of the Exhibition **Revitalizing the Spirit of San Francisco**.