



United Nations
Association – UK

UNA-UK STRATEGY

2026-2030

Contents

Vision, Mission and Context.....	02
Continuity and change.....	03
Key areas of continuity.....	03
Key changes.....	03
Our unique role.....	04
Strategic objectives—ends, ways and means.....	05
Ends: the change we want to see in the world.....	05
The future UN.....	05
The UK’s role.....	05
Grassroots and global citizenship.....	06
Ways: how we get there.....	06
Means: what we need to make these changes.....	08
Diversifying and increasing funding.....	08
Mobilised and expanded membership.....	08
Youth engagement.....	09
People, talent and expertise.....	09
Higher profile as a "go-to" organisation.....	09
Targets and milestones.....	10
Policy impact milestones/indicators of progress.....	10
Policy activities, projects and outputs.....	11
Profile, reach and impact.....	12
Membership and community-building.....	12
Finances and funding.....	13
Governance and management.....	14

Vision

A world that puts the principles of the UN Charter into practice: advancing peace, equality, human rights and protecting the planet.

Mission

To mobilise and inspire people to support multilateral cooperation through the UN to make this vision a reality.

Context

The United Nations Association - UK was founded before the UN itself as a people's movement for international cooperation. We have a proud history of combining grassroots mobilisation with high-level policy reach. The 2026-30 strategic period comes at a time of deep, systemic change and transformation in international politics. These changes present profound challenges for the multilateral system, and raise vital questions about how the UN can renew and regenerate cooperation for the future.

In the current period of global transition, we need to:

- Emphasise the continued relevance and need for the core principles of the UN Charter;
- Honour our history as a grassroots organisation mobilising a wide variety of British people and organisations for principled cooperation; and
- Set a clear vision for the future of multilateralism, responding to – and not just reacting to – the present challenges.



Photo: UNA-UK hosts an expert briefing for the Permanent Representative of the UK to the UN. Credit: UNA-UK.

Continuity and change

Key areas of continuity

- We will work at multiple levels and along different time horizons: policy and advocacy with the UK, UN and internationally; encouraging grassroots volunteering, dialogue, and activism on international issues; informing parliamentary debate; educational activities to inform the next generation.
- We will collaborate in coalitions and partnerships on campaigns including nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation; seeking a global treaty on lethal autonomous weapons; supporting human rights; and pursuing peace with justice in key conflict areas.
- Building on our previous work on UN senior appointments, we will work with a global coalition for a transparent process to select a qualified and visionary Secretary-General for the UN, with a strong emphasis on the positive case for women's leadership and the women, peace and security agenda.

Key changes from the previous strategic period will be to:

- Respond to the current international and domestic context with a vision for the UN in a changed international political landscape.
- Increase engagement with the UK government, bringing to the table a clear and purpose-driven vision for the UN and the UK's role there.
- Reclaim our role as a voice for multilateralism with a systemic, big-picture and forward-looking approach, which will tie our various campaigns together and place more emphasis on the UN role in addressing climate change and other planetary risks, with an approach informed by justice and inclusion.
- Ensure members and supporters, community-building, and future generations are at the centre of UNA-UK's work and identity.
- Re-energise the UNA-UK premises in Whitehall Court as a hub for connecting changemakers united by a desire to strengthen multilateralism, international law and human rights.

Our unique role when multilateralism is in crisis

Current political trends are all too often alarming and dispiriting: violent conflicts are on the rise, civic space is shrinking, and international law is being broken by some of the world's most powerful countries. Transactional politics, dominated by a few heads of state with highly concentrated power, appear to be eclipsing multilateral cooperation and international law.

Our strategic approach anticipates – and insists – that there will be a backlash against these trends, because it will become increasingly clear that they are not leading to a more peaceful, secure or sustainable world. We will help drive that pushback, working in partnerships and coalitions with many others, with our specific added-value being our focus on the UN and the UK's role in it.

While drawing on history (including our own organisational history and traditions), our vision is of an UN that is equipped to adapt to a changing world, rooted in public support, and prepared to address emerging international and planetary challenges.

We need to make the case for multilateralism afresh, not assume people already value it. We will remind people of the purpose and principles of the UN, set a vision for a UN fit for the future, and build ideas, recommendations and political will to make it a reality.



Photo: the first meeting of the UN General Assembly at Methodist Central Hall in London, 1946. Credit: UN Photo.

Strategic objectives—ends, ways and means

Ends: the change we want to see in the world

1. The future UN

We will hold out a vision of what positive, transformative change could look like: a UN fit for the future, adaptive and resilient, more effective in peace and security, successful in steering the world away from climate tipping points, while still grounded in the core principles of the preamble to the UN Charter, including human rights and international law, because:

- There will continue to be a need for coordinated global action to deal with interconnected global threats.
- The UN provides the most inclusive global forum and platform to bring all countries together with shared reference points.
- The UN will need reform, renewal and regeneration, or else it will eventually need replacement.
- The UN's ability to bring non-like-minded countries together is a valuable counterweight to the trends of minilateralism and coalitions of the willing.

2. The UK's role

UNA-UK will encourage the UK government, parliament, and public to stand up for international law and the protection of human rights; to take a leading role in steering the climate transition; to reinstate its role in international development, and at the same time to champion reforms to the global economic and financial architecture so there is a fairer playing field for poorer countries.

UNA-UK will draw on perspectives from other countries, including UNAs in a diverse range of countries and advisers from beyond the UK, to help the UK “see itself as others see it” and address blind spots.

2. Grassroots and global citizenship

An effective, adaptive, resilient UN will need to be rooted in public support, transparency, accountability and relevance to people's needs – if it is not to seem like a distant gathering of governments that people already feel alienated from. In this context, UNA-UK's mobilisation of members and supporters, and its international coalitions and partnerships, is not only a means to deliver policy campaigns, but is itself part of the change that we want to see in the world.

A big-picture vision needs to be complemented by concrete examples and specific proposals where people and communities can take action – whether global, UK or local. We should offer young people ideas and concrete opportunities to make a difference: joining campaigns, organising locally, making commitments. We should emphasise that *large-scale systemic transformation will happen through the cumulative effect of many small changes.*



Photos: UNA-UK's 2025 UN Day reception at Methodist Central Hall. Credit: Ruth Blakey/ UNA-UK.

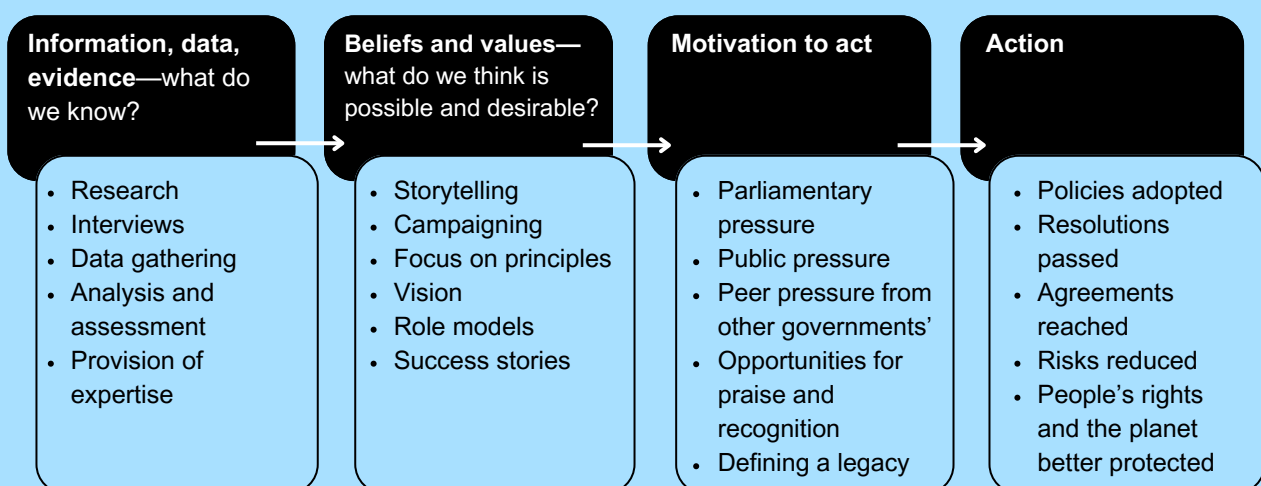
Ways: how we get there

We will set out a compelling narrative that helps to drive hope and action to support the core principles of the UN, effective international cooperation more generally, and a strong UK role in both. We will aim for a virtuous circle of engagement, briefing, campaigning across policy, parliament and public.

UNA-UK will use a variety of tools to mobilise members, parliamentarians, policymakers, and the public:

- Policy and legal research coupled with targeted advocacy;
- Parliamentary outreach, especially through the UN APPG and other relevant APPGs;
- Public campaigning, including a growing focus on mobilisation of members;
- Strategic communications, ranging from policy publications to op-eds to social media and broadcast media commentary;
- Convening meetings, events and conversations from large-scale public events to focused policy briefings for officials;
- Working in coalitions and partnerships, building networks and acting as a hub and a “superconnector”;
- Supporting members and UNA Groups to build communities of people working as active global citizens in support of the UN, with a local or thematic focus;
- Educational outreach by providing materials to schools, universities and the public (helping to build a future support base and talent pipeline).

These tools enable us to work along the pathway from ideas to action, based on a theory of change that differentiates between information and ideas; beliefs and values; motivation to act; and action and behaviour change.



On the various policy areas we prioritise, we may choose different tactics for different kinds of impact within our charitable objectives. Not all projects need to follow the same model or theory of change. For instance, different initiatives might:

- Put forward actionable recommendations (for government, potentially also businesses, strategic litigation);
- Hold government to account/scrutiny/bear witness;
- Reframe debates, shift the political window, catalyse innovative thinking;
- Mobilise members/build community/support partners;
- Raise awareness for longer-term impact (education initiatives, student outreach).

Communications should reframe the discussion from polycrisis and collapse of a supposed golden age to a future-focused discussion which acknowledges the “rules-based order” was never complete. We need to speak to people’s hearts and humanitarian values as well as their heads – offering some practical hope and a sense of purpose rather than conveying messages of fear and chaos.

Means: what we need to make these changes

Diversifying and increasing funding: We need to put UNA-UK’s finances on a more sustainable footing, and to obtain resources for new areas of work. The top three priorities will be to seek new and larger-scale grants from foundations (given the potential scale), to widen and increase donations from members and supporters (with easier donation functionality on the new website, and targeted appeals), and to monetise the premises by renting the premises for office space and events (with some investment in sprucing up and marketing the space).

Mobilised and expanded membership: We will seek to increase our membership numbers and engage our members more systematically in communications and campaigns. Given the current trust deficit and suspicion of elites and governments, there is a particular value, credibility and legitimacy that UNA-UK derives from being rooted in a tradition of grassroots membership. We will work with members and groups to draw linkages between global and local issues and to engage with parliamentarians. Local UNA groups are important and need to feel more valued. They consistently express an interest in working more closely with the staff and Board.

Youth engagement: The commitment to peace for future generations—is one of the founding principles of the UN, and future generations are also at the heart of the 2024 Pact for the Future. Our existing membership is aging and expresses a strong interest in engaging intergenerationally and bringing in more young people. We can build on UNA-UK traditions of school and university outreach, ongoing interest in Model United Nations and student UN societies, and interest in UN careers, to re-engage with younger-generation members, supporters, and potential members. This could be achieved with help from volunteers in UNA Groups and from other networks including the British Association of Former UN Civil Servants which regularly undertakes outreach on UN careers. In person meetings and opportunities for action (beyond social media) will be key to meaningful engagement with young people. Many are now reacting against digital-only activities, linked to a fear of social atomisation and a desire for real world connection.

People, talent and expertise: We will seek to retain our staff and provide further professional development for the team; refresh the list of advisers; review the role of patrons and alumni and expand our network of consultants to provide “surge capacity” as needed on projects. In particular, we will need more expertise on climate, accessible expertise on international law, advisers from outside the UK, and advisers with interest in mobilisation and civil society. We will refresh the list of advisers by January 2026 and have clearer terms of reference for them.

Higher profile as a “go-to” organisation: Become better known among policymakers and media as the voice of UK civil society on the UN and the UK’s role there, and the first port of call for briefings, insights and expert commentary.



Photo: UNA Youth participate in an event on the Nuclear Challenge in the 21st Century. Credit: Mark Bryan Makela/ UNA-UK.

Targets and milestones

Policy impact milestones/indicators of progress

At the UN: Our 2026 campaign priority will be the race for the next Secretary-General of the UN, a key inflection point for the future direction of the UN, as well as an opportunity to engage in a wider debate about the kind of leadership needed in the international system.

In this context, we would love to see: The next SG is a woman whose vision is coupled with a talent for coalition-building in a way that helps empower the UN and harness the backlash against big-power transactionalism. UN reform and restructuring is linked to a clear fresh vision. The next SG uses good offices to drive dialogue between P5 states, including on nuclear arms control and risk reduction. We would like to see the selection of a candidate with wide appeal and buy-in who can act as an inspiring leader for core principles, and who is able to navigate an age when the UN will sometimes need to work with, without or around the US.

We will help to drive an engaging UK public debate about the type of leadership that is needed for international cooperation and influence in a multipolar and often divided world. Subject to fundraising, we will develop policy recommendations for a revitalised SG role on international peace and security, and on nuclear disarmament and risk reduction.

In the UK: we would love to see the UK government make good on its promises to put international law at the centre of foreign policy, and to develop policies on peace and security that take a holistic 360 degree approach, beyond the current narrow focus on defence and deterrence. We will seek funds for a “Strategic Peace Review”.

We would like to see: the UK develop a clear vision of the UK in the UN, looking beyond the Europe and NATO focus that has dominated the first year of the current government, with a renewed sense of purposeful and principled leadership.

¹ This refers to a useful theory of change framework from ODI which suggests setting targets for what the organisation would expect to see, like to see, and love to see – to enable the setting of ambitious stretch targets without suggesting that it's a failure if they are not fully realised.

In either scenario, we expect to inject more hope into the UK public debate about peace, human rights, women's leadership and international cooperation. UNA-UK groups, members, staff, advisers working with others can help to shift the "Overton window" towards peace, human rights, equality, and protecting the planet, both by unapologetically emphasising ethics, and by how the UK benefits from global cooperation, responsibility-sharing, women's empowerment and the green economy.

UNA-UK will engage in dialogue with government and across political parties, offering ideas for manifesto writing ahead of the next general election so that international cooperation, international law and the UN have a more positive place, including commitments on international development spending and the refugee convention.

Policy activities, projects and outputs

We will develop a clear overarching narrative and vision on the future of UN and the UK's role in it, focusing both on common interests (preventing war, catastrophic risks, disasters) and on principles (equality, fairness, human rights).

In addition to existing projects on nuclear disarmament, lethal autonomous weapons and SG selection, new projects (subject to funding) will include work on: the role of global governance and international law in responding to climate change and protecting the planet; the future of UN mediation and peacebuilding amid technological and geopolitical change, with strains on the power of the nation-state bumping up against resurgent nationalisms; and the future of nuclear arms control in the multilateral system amid intensified great-power competition. We will also explore possible work on governance of other global catastrophic risks; reform of international economic and financial architecture; and the scope for UN Security Council reform or workarounds.

We will prepare operational plans for each year (July-June) linked to milestone events and influencing opportunities. In the current 2025-26 year, key milestones include:

- A flagship event on 17th January to mark the UNGA's 80th anniversary;
- 1 for 8 Billion coalition activities around the selection of the new UNSG, as a springboard for conversation about what leadership and vision the UN needs;
- Marking the anniversary of the Refugee Convention;

- Fundraising for a report on UK policy, “Strategic Peace Review” as a counter to the narrow defence focus of the Strategic Defence Review and continuing our work in the Rethinking Security coalition;
- Developing activities under the Mackeith Legacy on women and girls.

For 2026-27, we will fundraise to take a UNA-UK delegation (including representatives of UNA Groups) to the WFUNA plenary in Geneva and support the UNA Youth Platform campaign for the UK to bring a youth representative to UNGA.

Profile, reach and impact

We will reinvigorate our role as the UK’s go-to organisation for information and ideas about the UN. This should include more frequent contacts with the UK government, especially but not limited to the FCDO; continued strong parliamentary engagement,, with at least four UN APPG meetings per year, and briefings across political parties ahead of next elections.

We are boosting our public profile with sustained media engagement and outreach and are keen to engage with local media around the UK, providing context and “explainers”, as well as international and national journalists covering UN issues.

We will refresh and improve the reach of our social media and digital engagement significantly with the new website (expected December 2025), more audiovisual materials (videos, audiograms, podcasts), and more provision of analysis and insights. We will review the format of our magazine and will aim for a good agenda-setting policy report once per year.

Membership and community-building

UNA – UK premises: We should shift our thinking about 3 Whitehall Court from primarily being UNA-UK’s office, to being a centre for the UK’s conversations about the UN, and a hub for the community of partner organisations that we can work with. We will re-energise our premises as a centre for engagement, community-building, networking and forging connections among changemakers. This approach is based on the belief that in-person convening has a particular value for building relationships and community, although hybrid and virtual events will remain essential for broader reach and cost efficiency.

Members and supporters: We have established a need to clarify what UNA-UK offers to and gains from members, as distinct from supporters. Membership is fundamentally about belonging to a community based on shared principles, with opportunities to meet, deliberate, and sometimes take action together. We will increase our communications and “touch points” with members, for instance by launching members-only newsletters or members-only webinars.

The enhanced platform for UNA-UK groups on the new website, and regular UNA Groups virtual meetings, will help to foster horizontal collaboration and experience-sharing. UNA-UK will aim to provide some platforms for UNA Groups to contribute to UN and UK policy debates.

Finances and funding

A significant deficit was recorded in 2024-25, following the conclusion of a large grant from the Open Society Foundations and with few fundraising applications being made during a period without a fulltime CEO. The organisation’s financial reserves allow it to weather the occasional year in deficit. However, there is a pressing need to fundraise to return to a sustainable financial position, while keeping a tight lid on costs.

The top fundraising priorities will be to seek grants from foundations; to appeal to members and supporters for donations and legacies; and to increase rental of the London premises. We will also consider options for government funding; corporate fundraising (e.g. linked to the UN Global Compact); attracting high net worth individual donors; and potentially other sources such as paid-for events and content.



Photos: (left) attendees at the UNA-UK members conference, (right) the UN APPG meets in Parliament. Credit: UNA-UK.

Governance and management

The Chair and the Board of Trustees will review progress against the strategy, drawing on an updated Transformational Index (which captures progress and impact) on a quarterly basis.

This five-year strategy will be complemented by 12-month operational plans which should normally be set from July to June in parallel with UNA-UK's financial year.

Objectives for individual staff are set in January each year and will continue to be set with direct reference to the strategic plan. We will work actively on our teambuilding, staff development, and a working culture that offers psychological safety, high levels of trust, and recognition of everyone's efforts.

The current trends in world politics mean that the issues we work on and care about are highly contested, and there are many setbacks. Cultivating resilience, connecting with positive change-makers, and identifying signals of hope are therefore important for the team's wellbeing as well as for our organisational strategy and impact. Managers will have regular check-ins on staff wellbeing and workload and remind colleagues that making systemic change is a marathon rather than a sprint.

This strategy was developed in July-September 2025 through a process of consultation with Trustees, staff, advisers, UNA-UK Groups and five brainstorming focus groups with a variety of experts, along with a survey of UNA-UK members.