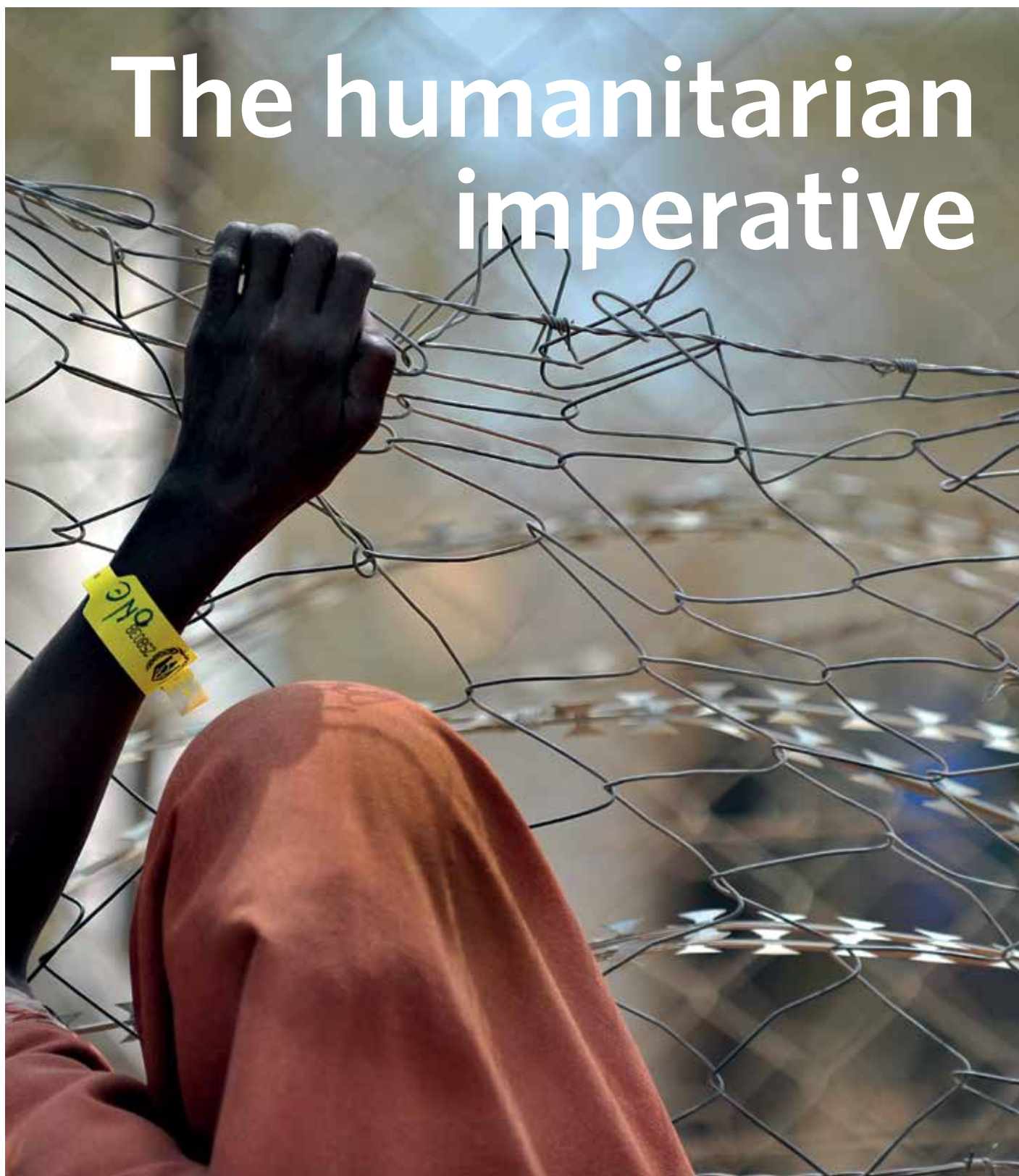


## The humanitarian imperative



**WITH** [Tony & Juliet Colman](#) on the SDGs / [Amanda Meral Gray](#) on working for the UN Refugee Agency / [Sara Pantuliano](#) on the future of humanitarianism / [Charles Petrie](#) on UN action in conflicts / Four major emergencies



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**The UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo launches an Unarmed Aerial Vehicle for the surveillance of armed groups in the region.**

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# New World

Spring 2014 // [www.una.org.uk](http://www.una.org.uk)

New World is published by UNA-UK, bringing news and comment on the UN to the UK

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Alexandra Buskie, UNA-UK

### Tackling maternal and child mortality rates in Africa

Louisa Collins Boyle, St John International

### Violence against healthcare workers

Sarah Cotton, International Committee of the Red Cross

### Small arms, big problem: can the Arms Trade Treaty make a difference?

Ben Donaldson, UNA-UK

### Human rights and humanitarian action: complementary or contradictory?

Iain Levine, Human Rights Watch

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**Cover photo:** A Somali woman looks out over Dadaab refugee camp, the largest of its kind in the world. © AFP/Getty Images

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## Scaling up relief

Hayley Richardson on meeting a growing humanitarian challenge

Since the last issue of *New World* went to press in October 2013, the humanitarian landscape has shifted significantly. In November, the strongest typhoon ever to make landfall devastated parts of the Philippines. By December, the Central African Republic (CAR), which experienced a coup last March, descended into violence which the UN has described as constituting crimes against humanity. The same month rivalries in South Sudan turned into full-scale clashes between government and rebel forces, with civilians in the crossfire. And in January, the UN announced that due to the increasing difficulties of verification, it would stop counting the dead in Syria.

Of course, these four crises did not spontaneously emerge onto the international agenda (see pages 16–17 for a snapshot of these situations). The CAR and South Sudan have both fared poorly on the UN Development Programme's Human Development Index; the Philippines was already dealing with the effects of another natural disaster, an earthquake in October 2013 which affected millions; and Syria's conflict is deeply embedded in historical grievances and much wider regional changes. As Deepayan Basu Ray asks in his opinion piece on page 13, what more can be done to effectively coordinate humanitarian relief and longer-term development work, where clearly both are vital to a country's sustainable recovery?

Nor should we forget that these situations, though top of the UN's list of humanitarian concerns, represent just four of the world's current crises. The UN website [www.reliefweb.net](http://www.reliefweb.net) counts 58 countries as experiencing ongoing crises or disasters (see Alex Buskie's web exclusive on how the UN defines such emergencies). How much we know about these other situations often depends on press coverage.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has for years endured a humanitarian crisis which drops in and out of the mainstream media's interest. Whilst



**ZA'ATARI REFUGEE CAMP**  
 FORMED JULY 2012 | WORLD'S SECOND LARGEST REFUGEE CAMP  
 | OVER 100,000 SYRIANS | JORDAN'S FIFTH LARGEST CITY |  
 COSTS £320,000 A DAY | THREE HOSPITALS | 3,000 SHOPS  
 | THREE SCHOOLS | USES 4 M LITRES OF WATER DAILY

Yemen, where conflict, an economic crisis, and rising fuel and food prices have left nearly half the country food insecure, likewise merits very few mentions.

What our four “major emergencies” do usefully demonstrate, however, is the range of common challenges a humanitarian crisis can present – whether natural or man-made – and the exceptional efforts of the UN and its partners in addressing them. From how to deliver urgent supplies to those in need in a volatile and dangerous setting, to ensuring the protection and security of a scattered civilian population, or the deeper-rooted problem of assisting a refugee host community whose already scant resources and ailing infrastructure are stretched beyond their limits. Each would be worthy of its own issue of *New World*.

These emergencies will no doubt absorb much of the UN's time and attention over the course of the coming year and beyond. In his main essay on pages 10–12, Charles Petrie, former chair of the Panel of Experts, which assessed the UN's actions in Sri Lanka, reflects on the lessons learned from that conflict and looks at what role there is for the UN in current and future violent crises.

As the events since last October have shown us, perhaps the most important issue for the humanitarian community is the need to adapt in this fast-changing landscape. On page 8, Sara Pantuliano looks at how the system must evolve if it is to address these crises, meet their challenges and better serve those people caught in the middle. ●

## Get in touch

UNA-UK welcomes your thoughts and comments on this issue of *New World*, or your suggestions for future issues.

You can email the editor, Hayley Richardson, at [richardson@una.org.uk](mailto:richardson@una.org.uk), tweet us @UNAUK or write to **UNA-UK, 3 Whitehall Court, London SW1A 2EL.**

*New World* – required reading for global citizens from all walks of life.



## Humanity comes first

Sir Jeremy Greenstock, UNA-UK Chairman, on putting the needs of ordinary citizens above politics

One of the most encouraging developments over the past decade has been the increased professionalism of civil society organisations (CSOs). In the humanitarian field, this stems from the gradual accumulation of experience on the ground, as they test what really works over more than the short term.

There is also a deepening recognition that the achievements of governments and international institutions are limited, and therefore that the scope for CSOs to fill the gap is growing (see Sara Pantuliano's related piece on page 8).

The pursuit of peace, human rights and sustainable development really is becoming a partnership between different categories of actors, and I have seen plenty of evidence that governments understand and appreciate this.

The issue for CSOs is scale. No amount of experience can overcome the challenge of a widespread conflict's impact on a large population. One of the most heart-breaking obstacles remains the difficulty of humanitarian access. Syria hits the headlines most frequently in this respect, for obvious reasons; but Sudan and South Sudan, DR Congo, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Central African Republic and many others continue to throw up persistent examples.

Is it inevitable that access will prove impossible, or just too dangerous, in the worst cases? Humanitarian workers, whether representing an international NGO or a grassroots network, already display remarkable courage in persevering to deliver help to conflict-ridden areas. But there is a limit to what we can reasonably expect from them. UN agencies and peacekeepers have always said they can only achieve results when the politics allow it and there is a recognised peace to keep.

As local and tribal identities assert themselves with increasing legitimacy, securing permission to operate from the de facto authorities on the ground is complicated. The government has to give

permission for access of humanitarian supplies, but their opponents may hold sway over the localities where people are suffering the most. Politics can quickly trump basic human requirements.

Some progress has been made in establishing norms for putting people first in such circumstances, but enforcement remains limited. An opportunity was lost when arrangements were made for the removal of chemical weapons from Syria with no strong measures being threatened against any continuation of conventional attacks on civilian populations. The search for an end to the conflict immediately became more difficult. The recent adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2139 was welcome but it has to be implemented on the ground.

## Politics can quickly trump basic human requirements

Somehow the stakes must be raised for the Assads of this world, and their backers. Moscow had a “good” second half of 2013, yet stands as the principal cheerleader of the most brutal slaughter of civilians since Saddam Hussein. For all the complications of civil wars, the cost of not giving priority to the needs of ordinary civilians has got to rise for all sides involved. Short-term motivations must not be allowed to excuse humanitarian abuse, and accountability has to be seen to come later.

It is clear that no eventual victor by such methods will be able to govern with any legitimacy. That the UN can stand higher in the 21st century for determining international legitimacy than any power or group of powers, needs to be reinforced. Now that the voice of citizens, not least global citizens, has gained strength, governments implementing peace plans and humanitarian projects, and regimes resisting them, must be made to take note. Civil society should concentrate on delivering that message with vigour. ●



● UN launches humanitarian appeal

In December 2013, the UN and partners launched a record-breaking global appeal for humanitarian funding. In 2014, aid agencies will require \$13bn – half of which is sought for the Syrian crisis alone – to assist 52 million people affected by emergencies worldwide. Speaking at the appeal launch, UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres said: “What is clear already is that 2014 will be a very challenging year for all of us.”

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OHCA) has classified the following crises as its top four major emergencies: the Central African Republic, the Philippines, South Sudan and Syria (see pages 16–17 for more information). OCHA has also announced that it has allocated \$86m from the UN’s Central Emergency Response Fund for what it called the world’s “most neglected crises”: Chad, Colombia, Djibouti, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Haiti, Mali, Myanmar, Sudan, Uganda and Yemen.

● Climate conference held in Warsaw

The UN’s annual climate talks took place in Warsaw, Poland, last November. Delegates laid the groundwork for a pivotal summit set to be held in Paris in 2015, where it is hoped a new global climate treaty will be agreed. Governments have until the first quarter of 2015 to lay out their plans for curbing carbon emissions. Targets will take the form of “contributions” rather than fixed “commitments” in a concession to developing states.

● Iranian nuclear agreement reached

An interim deal was reached late last year which aims to suspend Iran’s programme of enriching uranium above 5 per cent in return for the easing of sanctions. In January, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors confirmed that Iran has begun implementing the “Joint Plan of Action”, which sets out several conditions that Iran must meet by May

The “average” country affected by a humanitarian crisis:

- Has a GDP per capita that is less than a tenth of the global average
- 10% of its children will die before the age of five
- 24% of its people do not have access to clean water
- 45% of its adults have not completed primary school

Source: World Humanitarian Data and Trends 2013, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

World Food Programme staff load bags of split yellow peas for distribution in camps for displaced persons in North Darfur. © UN Photo/Albert González Farran

2014. Monitoring the plan will require a significantly expanded role for the IAEA, which the agency has estimated will cost £4.9m to carry out.

● Saudi Arabia refuses Council seat

In an unprecedented move, Saudi Arabia refused a place on the UN Security Council last November, citing the “inability of the Security Council to carry out its duties and responsibilities”, most notably in relation to Syria. While there have previously been boycotts of the Council, this was the first time in the UN’s history a state has refused to take up a Council seat to which it has been elected. The Security Council held a special election in December which was won by Jordan, the only country to contest the vacant seat.

● World Trade Organization deal

For the first time in nearly two decades, the World Trade Organization (WTO) has reached a global trade agreement. The landmark deal was agreed by 159

countries in Bali last December as part of the latest round of Doha talks. It seeks to simplify global trade and customs procedures. The WTO estimates the agreement could eventually boost the global economy by \$1trn, although critics say it will disproportionately benefit developed states.

*“We must all raise our voices against attacks on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex people. We must oppose the arrests, imprisonments and discriminatory restrictions they face ... Hatred of any kind must have no place in the 21st century”*

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addressing the International Olympic Committee prior to the opening of the Sochi Winter Games

● Tension increasing in Afghanistan

A suicide bombing in Kabul on 17 January killed 21 people, including four UN staff. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said: “Such targeted attacks against civilians are completely unacceptable and are in flagrant breach of international humanitarian law.” A new UN report says civilian casualties in Afghanistan rose by 14 per cent in 2013. Afghanistan faces a testing year ahead of a presidential election and the withdrawal of NATO troops.

● UN budget agreed at 11th hour

On 27 December, the General Assembly passed by consensus a \$5.5bn budget for the UN’s work in 2014–15. The new budget included a reduction of over 200 posts. The UN’s biennial budget is usually agreed by 24 December. However, the process was held up by two key reforms – on staff mobility and private sector partnerships – which were deferred until later this year.

● Children’s rights given boost

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which allows for individual violation complaints to be received by the CRC committee, received its 10th ratification in January. Children will be able to access redress at the UN in the same way that adults currently can under other treaties. As of 14 January, Albania, Bolivia, Gabon, Germany, Montenegro, Portugal, Spain, Thailand, Slovakia and Costa Rica have all ratified the Optional Protocol, which will come into force in April.

● Syrian peace talks falter ...

In January and February the UN held two rounds of peace talks in Geneva with both the Syrian government and the opposition represented. Concluding without any resolution to the conflict, the UN-Arab League Joint Special Representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, said “I apologise to the Syrian people that ... we haven’t helped them very much.” Some cooperation was achieved over a ceasefire in the Old City of Homs leading to the

evacuation of 1,400 people who had lived under a siege without receiving any aid. Since then, the Security Council has for the first time unanimously passed a resolution calling for greater humanitarian access in Syria.

● ... as chemical weapons removed

A third consignment of chemical weapons has recently been shipped out of Syria under the supervision of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. In January, UK Foreign Secretary William Hague announced that a British warship was to join China, Denmark, Norway and Russia in providing maritime protection for the weapons transfer. In total, however, only 30 tonnes of Syria’s estimated 1,300 tonne stockpile has so far been removed due to security concerns. Under a UN Security Council resolution, all of Syria’s chemical weapons must be destroyed by 30 June.

In 2013:



70 journalists killed

highest number in Syria (28)

N.B. if killed in reprisal for their work, on a dangerous assignment or reporting from a conflict zone



211 journalists imprisoned

highest number in Turkey (40)

Source: Committee for the Protection of Journalists, Attacks on the Press: 2014 Edition





*The traditional humanitarian aid system is being challenged by ‘new’ players, writes **Sara Pantuliano***

**There is a systemic shift afoot in the humanitarian world. This shift has been long in the making but we are only now beginning to recognise the changes in who is funding, organising, contributing to and delivering humanitarian aid.**

The international humanitarian system has seen the rising involvement in humanitarian action of non-traditional donors, Southern organisations, regional organisations, diaspora networks, the military, the private sector and so on. As increasing numbers of new – or newly acknowledged – humanitarian actors take their place on the humanitarian stage, what does it mean for the traditional humanitarian system?

Looking historically, it is clear that this is not just a change in humanitarian action itself, but a change in our own perceptions or understanding of this work. The history of humanitarianism that we are most familiar with is that of the formal system – the beginnings of the Red Cross movement, the establishment of the UN agencies, as well as their forerunners in the League of Nations, and the creation of Western NGOs. But this is far from the whole picture of humanitarian action, both today and in the past.

“We’re not new actors. We’ve been around for decades,” said one non-OECD donor at a recent international humanitarian conference. Their agency had been funding humanitarian aid for more than 40 years, and yet it had only recently been recognised as a notable contributor.

However, the main issue at hand is not simply recognition, but rather a better understanding of how to engage with these rising and emerging actors in order to help bring about a more effective and inclusive humanitarian system, better equipped to deal with the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Traditional donors are keen to understand how to engage with these unfamiliar faces. Indeed, during another recent meeting of humanitarian donors and agencies, one delegate asked: “So how can we bring these new actors into

the tent?” While this may seem like a fair question to many established players, it misses a more fundamental point.

Rising global actors do not aim simply to supplement the traditional humanitarian aid system. Many are looking instead to develop their own mechanisms and approaches when responding to humanitarian crises. There is a reluctance to join existing multilateral networks as the current system is seen as inadequate, bureaucratic, cumbersome and cost-ineffective – issues that this sector has grappled with for decades.

Working outside of the traditional system can allow organisations to respond in a flexible and dynamic manner, particularly in terms of funding processes. However, this departure is not without its problems as multiple, uncoordinated mechanisms can make it almost impossible to construct a coherent and accurate picture of effectiveness and accountability across all actors engaged with an issue.

Another key issue the humanitarian sector will have to address is partnerships. Partnerships between international and local organisations have often been criticised for their asymmetries of power and a lack of respect on the part of the global players for local knowledge, culture and capacities. Many partnerships are in essence sub-contracting agreements, with large international NGOs delegating work to smaller local organisations and then claiming the credit.

Sub-contracting aid work to local agencies is not intrinsically problematic. In today’s crises, such as Syria, many local organisations have better access to the communities in greatest need. But these relationships should be openly recognised, and partnerships made meaningful. If traditional humanitarian actors fail to embrace the contribution of emerging and rising actors, the former risk being excluded from the process of reshaping the future of humanitarian responses within this new landscape.

These are all issues, challenges, questions and dilemmas that the humanitarian sector must examine in coming years. In 2016, the first World



**Volunteers for Kuwait Patients Helping Fund prepare a mixture for malnourished children, to be distributed by the World Food Programme at a camp for displaced persons in Darfur, Sudan.**

© UN Photo/Albert González Farran

Humanitarian Summit, will take place, under the auspices of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The Summit will seek to “make humanitarian action fit for the challenges of the future by broadening and deepening partnerships to assist those in need”.

In order for this meeting to achieve this aim, a wide range of humanitarian actors must input into the process. Together they can help bring about a more inclusive and effective architecture that reflects the true diversity of humanitarian action today.

It is difficult to predict what the future of humanitarian action will look like but, without a doubt, these new, non-traditional, emerging and rising humanitarian actors have a significant role to play. That is something to look forward to, to offer better support to those affected by crises today and in the future. ●

*Sara Pantuliano is the Head of the Humanitarian Policy Group at the Overseas Development Institute, the UK’s leading independent think tank on international development and humanitarian issues*



***Rebecca Johnson** describes how humanitarian principles are driving a fresh push for nuclear disarmament*

**A frisson – of anticipation or anxiety, depending on the listeners – went around the UN High-level Meeting on 26 September 2013 when the Federal President of Austria declared: “Nuclear weapons should be stigmatised, banned and eliminated before they abolish us.”**

As over 140 governments departed from the Second International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, hosted by the Mexican Government in Nayarit last month, it was clear that something rather interesting is happening in the nuclear arena. What is behind the humanitarian disarmament initiatives, and how are they likely to affect the longstanding problems of nuclear possession and proliferation?

Humanitarian arguments to facilitate disarmament are not new. Recognition of the indiscriminate, disproportionate and uncontrollable impacts of other weapons of mass destruction created strong incentives for banning biological and chemical weapons in 1972 and 1993 respectively. More recently, the unacceptable humanitarian harm caused by conventional weaponry was utilised in successful campaigns to ban landmines and cluster munitions.

When states with vested economic or military interests in these weapons obstructed efforts in established fora, cross-regional governmental and civil society coalitions bypassed the blockages and achieved effective prohibition treaties. Whether they accede or not – and many erstwhile opponents have – all states have ended up having to change their behaviour because of the stigmatisation and restrictions placed on weapons banned under international humanitarian law (IHL).

The application of IHL considerations to nuclear weapons inevitably challenges Cold War power structures and some states do not like it. Some, but not all, nuclear-armed states boycotted the Nayarit Conference, as they did the UN General Assembly’s open-ended working group on multilateral nuclear disarmament in 2013.

In public statements some have said that they prefer to work through the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the 66-member Conference on Disarmament (CD). Less publicly, diplomats have admitted that they prefer the NPT and CD because there they can “control the narrative”. That, combined with the widely acknowledged facts that the NPT has serious weaknesses and the CD has been paralysed since 1996, may be why so many other governments are looking for different ways to accelerate nuclear disarmament.

**Arms reductions are always welcome, but too often they serve to enhance rather than diminish the status and mystique that attracts politicians to nuclear weapons**

Attempts to portray the humanitarian initiatives as being at odds with the NPT will not wash. The 2010 NPT Review Conference’s final document expressed “deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons”. Since then, there have been several cross-regional statements on this issue, and these have attracted growing support.

Most recently, in October 2013, New Zealand presented a follow-up humanitarian statement on behalf of 125 UN member states to the General Assembly’s First Committee (which deals with disarmament and international security). This noted that the “humanitarian focus is now well established on the global agenda”, and underscored that the “catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons affect not only governments, but each and every citizen of our interconnected world”.

If a key motivator behind these new disarmament efforts is to prevent nuclear catastrophes from occurring by accident or design, another is deep frustration shared by the majority of nuclear-free states.

Arms reductions are always welcome, but too often they serve to enhance rather than diminish the status and mystique that attracts politicians to nuclear weapons. By reminding everyone that the consequences of nuclear use would threaten everyone’s survival, the humanitarian approach is challenging the status quo assumption that treats these weapons as an issue purely for nuclear-armed states to decide on. The governments in Nayarit heard loud and clear that banning and eliminating nuclear weapons must be a priority security imperative for non-nuclear nations as well.

So far governments are mainly talking about the problems. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) is pressing for a multilateral treaty to prohibit the use, deployment, manufacture, transporting and stockpiling of nuclear weapons, and require their total elimination. With or without the nuclear-armed states on board from the start, such a treaty is seen as an achievable next step towards nuclear disarmament. It does not try to solve all the technical, verification and disarmament challenges in one go, but aims instead to give teeth to elimination obligations. Its importance lies in its transformational legal and political role – a clear and universally applicable prohibition that nuclear states cannot weasel out of or manipulate, as they do the NPT.

Even before a nuclear ban treaty enters into force, it will stigmatise nuclear weapons and make it much harder for anyone to keep funding, making and deploying weapons that the rest of the world has undertaken to ban. This could be a great game changer. At the very least it is worth a try! ●

*Rebecca Johnson is Director of the Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy and Co-Chair of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*

**Editor’s note: interested and want to hear more? Rebecca Johnson will be speaking at UN Forum 2014 (see pages 14–15 for more details).**





Syrians in Damascus gather to protest the barrel bomb attacks and the situation in the Yarmouk refugee camp.  
© Anadolu Agency



Former UN Assistant Secretary-General Charles Petrie, who led the organisation's internal review on Sri Lanka, has close to 30 years' experience working in contexts of conflict and famine

# The challenges of UN action in situations of escalating conflict

*In 2010, after the bloody end to the country's decades-long conflict, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon established a Panel of Experts to examine the UN's actions and accountability in Sri Lanka. The former Chair of this Panel, **Charles Petrie**, writes for New World on the vital need for the international organisation to exercise "moral force"*

## A new reality

An observer could be forgiven in concluding that many of the current conflicts in the Middle East seem intractable and the cycles of violence in parts of Africa hopeless. And left wondering how increasingly the best intentions of the international community, and more specifically the UN, have such limited success in bringing to an end such situations of violence. It is undeniable that the contexts in which violence plays out have become more complex. But the underlying causes of conflict are not necessarily new. It may be that the issue has less to do with the dynamics of the conflicts, and more to do with the means to address them having become so much less effective.

Over the course of the last decade the ability of traditional powers to leverage situations seems to have become less clear or straightforward. This could be, in part, because of the emergence of new powerful actors on the international scene, some of whom do not necessarily fully understand, or share, the significance of the values promoted by Western powers. But could it also be that the traditional international instruments, conceived during the first half of the last century, forged during the Cold War, and applied energetically in the course of its aftermath, have become blunt? This is not to say that they have lost their relevance, but rather to question whether, as instruments, they can still mobilise timely and effective responses to situations of escalating conflict.

Of course, this characterisation is a sweeping generalisation that does not necessarily do justice to those international attempts to mediate ends to conflict that have been successful. But the question is worth asking and it is particularly important to do so in relation to one of the leading tools, or justifications, of post-Cold War intervention – the humanitarian imperative.

It is clear to a number of practitioners that over the course of the last decades, humanitarian action has lost the acceptance of its neutrality and impartiality that has been so critical to defining its legitimacy and ensuring the security of its actors. Now in a number of conflicts, humanitarian actors, and in particular the UN, are seen as being extensions of wider political agendas. And, as a result, it has become a lot more difficult to deliver humanitarian aid in conflict settings. It could be argued that it has become even more dangerous for humanitarians to do so now than at the height of the Cold War.

To deal with the consequences of this new political and security context, humanitarian actors have had to put in place varying levels of much tighter security regimes – and none more so than the UN. Systems have had to be developed to address new threats that, even if local, can be acted on globally. This has led to a greater physical distancing of most humanitarians from the contexts in which they have to intervene and the communities they are there to serve. And unfortunately, with that is being lost one of the more critical means of understanding conflicts, the resilience of communities, and the potential to identify paths out of the violence.

Even in this new context, which surpasses the capacity of any one entity to handle, the UN humanitarian community continues to be accused of inaction and inefficiency. The latest salvo is the open letter by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) to UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos, in which the NGO accuses the UN of failing in its responsibility to provide assistance in the Central African Republic (CAR). MSF charges the UN with applying security measures that are disproportionate to the realities on the ground. The open letter

argues that the UN is too frequently in "lock-down" and, as a result, unable to deliver critical assistance, while MSF and others continue to move through the country providing essential emergency assistance.

But is this assessment correct? In many ways it could be argued that the essence of the accusation made in MSF's letter to Valerie Amos on CAR has less to do with the UN needing to adapt its security regime to be able to do more, and much more with the need for all to acknowledge the fact that sometimes it cannot. The apparent inaction is not just the outcome of a lack of will, but more a confirmation of the level of risk UN operations in environments of growing insecurity are willing to assume.

If there is a valid accusation to be made, it is possibly the UN's continued need to be seen to do everything. The key point being that the UN needs to be clearer, more transparent and humble in stating what it can and cannot do. The UN needs to be encouraged to find ways to really partner and support those who can intervene in areas and ways that it cannot. And unfortunately respectful partnership has never been seen as one of the UN's stronger points, at least not in the past.

## The UN's strength

The UN does hold a unique position in the international community's response to violence and conflict. The strength of the UN is the values and principles that underpin the mandates of its different bodies. The UN system embodies the compact made by the powers in 1945 to end "the scourge of war".

But the last phase of the war in Sri Lanka in 2008–09 demonstrated how much the UN as a system had lost its ability to uphold those foundational values. The main finding of the Internal Review Panel on the UN's actions in Sri Lanka, which I chaired, was the systemic failure of the organisation. This systemic failure was defined by poor institutional reflexes and timidity, stemming from the organisation's unwillingness to reveal the full extent of the horrors being perpetrated in the country in the hope of gaining greater physical access (which was not, in the end, forthcoming), and the secretariat's hesitation in raising Sri Lanka with a Security Council that it knew to be unwilling to take on the issue. Ultimately, it came down to a lack of ownership of the problem, by the system as a whole and at the highest levels. In such a context, the UN Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator and a number of his colleagues tried valiantly to do their best, but it was not good enough.

It has been argued that, even were the UN to have performed better, or been more forthright in stating the information it had, this would potentially have made little difference to what ultimately unfolded in Sri Lanka. It is of course impossible to know and easy with hindsight to say it would have (or not). But that was not the issue. The point is that the system did not use to the fullest extent its *moral* force. Even the most aggressive governments have been seen to change their behaviour when confronted by evidence of violations of international humanitarian law. And even if a stronger stance on Sri Lanka would not have altered the outcome, it would have demonstrated the UN's willingness to stand up for its principles, rather than allow them to be eroded, to the detriment of its future leverage in other situations.

In November 2013, the Secretary-General issued a message to all staff accepting the characterisation of "systemic failure" for the UN's actions in the final stages >>





**Ban Ki-moon visits Sri Lanka in May 2009, a week after the end of the civil war. 250,000 were interned at this camp for internally displaced persons alone.** © UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

>> of the Sri Lankan conflict. In his message he renewed, on behalf of its senior leadership and all staff, the body's commitment to upholding the responsibilities assigned to it by the Charter, the Security Council and the General Assembly. It takes extraordinary courage for the head of a global organisation to acknowledge such a fundamental failure and to propose measures to address it.

There has been resistance from some parts of the UN, not only to the findings of the report and the Secretary-General's embracing of them, but also the steps taken to address them. Some agencies view the "Rights up Front" initiative, established by the Secretary-General in response to the report's recommendations, as not relevant

to their organisation's mandate. But the UN's inability to position itself at the time was to a large part a result of a long series of flawed assessments of the Sri Lankan conflict and a lack of understanding of the implications for the broader development and governance of the country.

The failure of the UN in Sri Lanka has to be owned by the system as a whole. The body's senior leadership has shown the courage to accept this. It only requires simple commonsense, let alone wisdom, to understand that if the UN system fails in upholding the principles and values with which it has been entrusted, then it does not have much else to offer that other entities could not attempt to provide in a more cost-effective manner. ●

## Rights up Front?

Established in December 2012, the Secretary-General's "Rights up Front" initiative is the UN's official response to the Panel of Experts' findings on the UN's actions in Sri Lanka. Speaking on behalf of all UN staff members, Ban Ki-moon described the initiative as a renewed commitment to the principles of the UN Charter, to be "fulfilled promptly and systematically, with compassion, integrity, impartiality and with courage by us all".

The document itself is short and emphasises the protection of human rights as well as the protection of civilians during unfolding crises. It also seeks to ensure that the UN secretariat, funds and programmes receive better preparation for and support during future events similar to those that occurred in Sri Lanka. To do this, the initiative sets out six key areas of action:

- **Action 1:** integrating human rights into the lifecycle of staff so that they understand what the UN's mandates and commitments to human rights mean for their department, agency, fund or programme and for them personally.

- **Action 2:** providing member states with candid information with respect to peoples at risk of, or subject to, serious violations of international human rights or humanitarian law.
- **Action 3:** ensuring coherent strategies of action on the ground and leveraging the UN system's capacities in a concerted manner.
- **Action 4:** adopting at UN headquarters a "One-UN approach" to facilitate early coordinated action.
- **Action 5:** achieving, through better analysis, greater impact in the UN's human rights protection work.
- **Action 6:** supporting all these activities through an improved system of information management on serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

Alexandra Buskie, UNA-UK's Responsibility to Protect Programme Officer, welcomed the initiative, saying: "It is a positive attempt by the UN to take responsibility for protecting civilians at all levels. However, problems of political will still represent a major challenge to preventative action and this is only the first step in tackling this issue."

## Opinion



*Development and humanitarian efforts should be better coordinated to have greater impact, argues **Deepayan Basu Ray***

There is a growing need to find solutions that address the complex nature of today's emergencies. There are no clear-cut cases (and arguably never have been) of a humanitarian crisis which has made a linear progression across the aid spectrum – where assistance in the aftermath of a crisis winds up operations, and that space is then neatly filled by long-term development projects. The reality is much more chaotic, contested and ad hoc.

Much of this chaos and contestation stems from the differing guiding principles for humanitarian and development action. Humanitarian assistance, as we know, is guided by the principles of humanity, independence, neutrality and impartiality. The driving focus is often to get lifesaving assistance (such as medicine, water, food etc.) to those who need it most in a crisis, without necessarily addressing the politics or causes of the crisis.

In conflict settings, assistance is often channelled through the UN system or civil society because the government of the country in question may itself be directly involved. In many instances, strict adherence to these principles has been the only way to ensure emergency aid has a hope of reaching its intended



**A sign posted to a small grocery store in Cebu, Philippines, thanking those that gave help in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan.** © imagegallery2/Alamy Live News

recipients, as was the case in Darfur between 2005 and 2008.

Development assistance, on the other hand, takes a very different approach. It is expressly focussed on the national ownership of development strategies, which are then resourced by external development aid. This type of assistance is encouraged to be channelled through government systems and budgets, and is expected to be predictably recurrent and unconditional. Three broad sectors accounted for over 55 per cent of all development assistance provided in 2011 – education and health, social infrastructure and economic infrastructure.

The two approaches are predicated on the differing circumstances in which assistance is provided. Humanitarian agencies work amid armed conflict or violence or in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster (the word "disaster" is misleading – earthquakes or floods should only be considered disasters if inadequate attention has been paid to preventing the negative consequences of their occurrence).

Development actors are rarely the first to intervene in such situations, often starting operations once a semblance of stability has been established in the crisis-hit area. In some cases, where long-term core development work was in place before a crisis, development actors may decide to remain in situ.

In addition, over the past decade, development actors have increasingly implemented programmes during a state's transitional phase, through fragile states or early recovery initiatives. Despite growing budgets for these two areas over the past decade, there remains little agreement about what actually works in transitional circumstances.

The physical location of those receiving emergency assistance is particularly important. For instance, it may not be appropriate to implement long-term, development-focussed programming (such as investments in health infrastructure) in a humanitarian camp setting. These camps are, by design, intended to be temporary facilities, but investing in such infrastructure may encourage permanent

settlements. In Haiti, refugee camps that were erected in the aftermath of the January 2010 earthquake have begun to take on a degree of permanence.

That said, in the aftermath of earthquakes or floods, where people have been dispossessed of their homes and livelihoods – but not entirely displaced from their land – there are opportunities for immediate humanitarian relief and long-term development assistance to take place simultaneously.

Indeed, in the area of disaster risk reduction, there is much coordinated work being done by UN agencies, government development bodies and civil society to ensure communities are better able to withstand similar threats in future with measures including flood-proof housing and reinforced water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure. In countries like Bangladesh, where the threat of floods is recurring, such investments have already started paying dividends in terms of protecting lives and livelihoods.

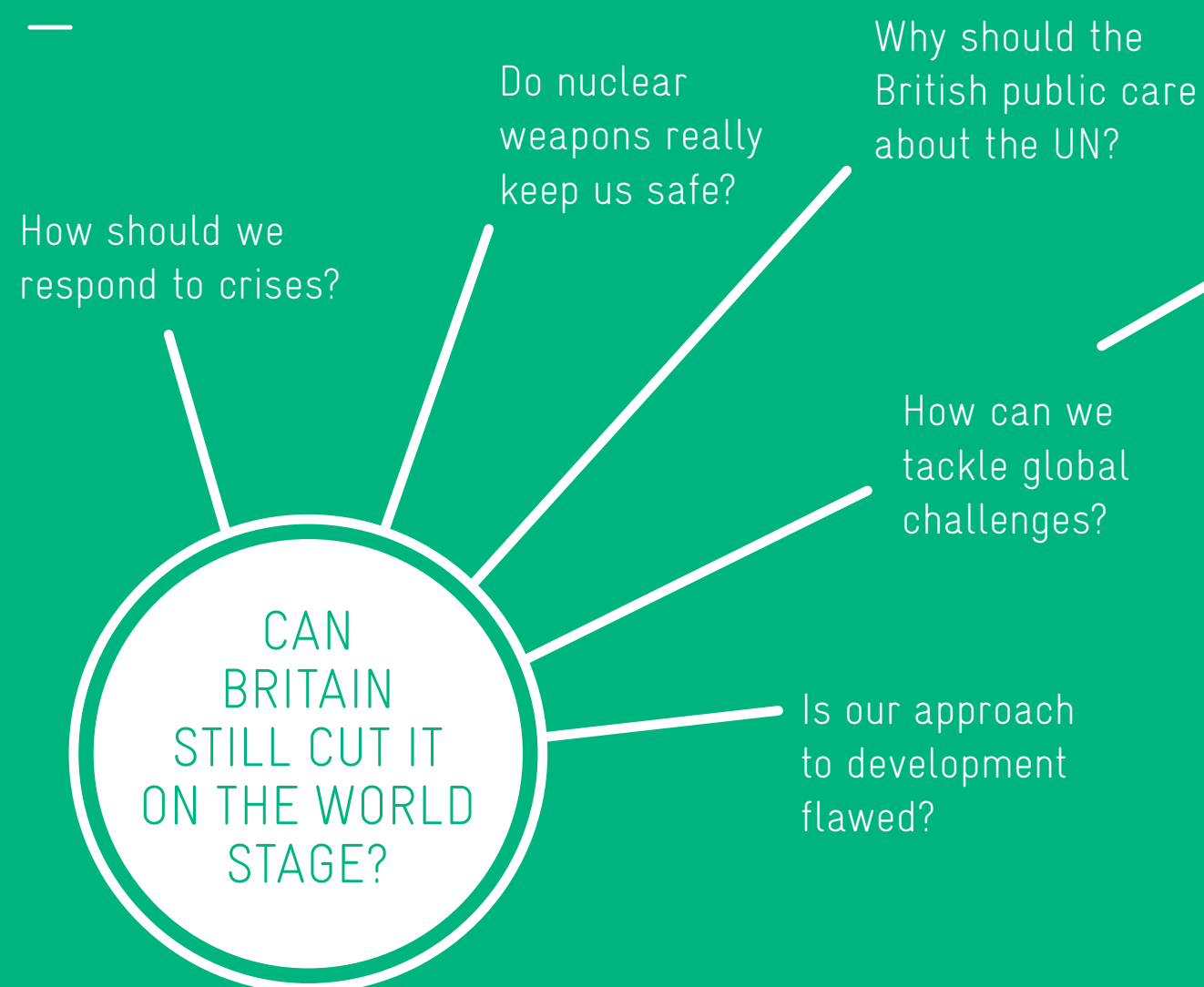
Strict adherence to their respective principles allows both humanitarian and development actors to achieve successful outcomes with often limited aid resources. But such rigidity is a real problem for meaningful engagement: it hampers the ability to deliver tailored assistance that is responsive to the nuances of the crisis, it prevents innovation and it excludes (or includes) actors based on arbitrary rules not specific to the situation.

Both approaches struggle with the systematic interrogation of the structural causes of crises. Humanitarian intervention appears at first glance to avoid this conversation entirely, and traditional development interventions tend to be focussed entirely on technical solutions to the challenges at hand. Attempts are being made to address these problems, but until the structural rules of humanitarian and development assistance are questioned more deeply, more coordinated efforts will remain at the periphery of possibility. ●

*Deepayan Basu Ray is a Policy Adviser (Resilience and Emergencies) for ActionAid*

# UN FORUM 2014

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# Crisis management

*As 2014 began, the UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs faced four major emergencies. While each is unique, all comprise a range of humanitarian challenges. From supplying food and water to health services and education, frontline agencies face a testing year*

## Central African Republic

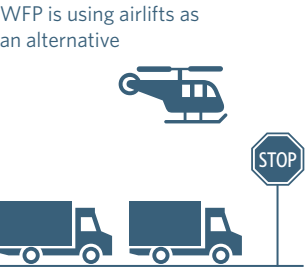
After months of unrest, Séléka rebels ousted President François Bozize in March 2013. Violence has since spread across the country, with clashes between Christian militias and Muslims they accuse of involvement in Séléka. In January 2014, Catherine Samba-Panza, former mayor of Bangui, was appointed interim president and tasked with steering the country out of the crisis.



- 714,000 people are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and 280,000 are refugees
- OCHA is appealing for \$552m for the crisis
- 100,000 IDPs are sheltering at the airport in the capital, 90 per cent of whom still need shelter, buckets and soap
- An estimated 2.4 million people need urgent health services
- Over 100,000 children in the country will suffer from acute malnutrition in 2014
- 25 cases of sexual violence against girls in Bangui IDP sites were documented during one week in February

### UN ACTION

**43** World Food Programme (WFP) trucks with food for over **155,000** people were blocked at the Cameroon border due to instability.



Since December 2013, the UN Refugee Agency has distributed **21,000** bars of soap and **20,000** mosquito nets

Since May 2013, UNICEF and partners have secured the release of **229** out of **6,000** children associated with armed groups

## Philippines

Despite being familiar with natural disasters and extreme weather events, the devastation was catastrophic when Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines in November 2013. The typhoon – believed to be one of the strongest ever to make landfall – brought sustained winds of up to 250kph (160mph), a 5m (16 foot) storm surge, and at its widest point stretched 600km (372 miles) across.



- 4.1 million people are IDPs
- OCHA is appealing for \$788m for the crisis
- 14.1 million people have been affected – 13 per cent of the total population
- 33million coconut trees were damaged in one region alone. Previously the world’s second largest producer of coconuts, the industry has been set back six to nine years
- 5.9 million workers lost their sources of income and livelihoods
- An oil spill caused by Typhoon Haiyan has left 550 nearby residents homeless

### UN ACTION

Over **310,000** people have received tools to help rebuild over **1.1m** damaged homes

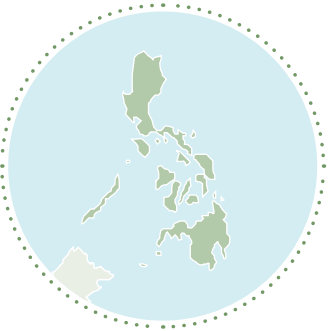


**44,000** affected rice farmers have received enough rice seeds to feed **800,000** people for a year

UNICEF has provided water treatment kits for **877,000** people across three provinces



CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



PHILIPPINES



SOUTH SUDAN



SYRIA

## South Sudan

Since independence, South Sudan has experienced frequent disputes with neighbour Sudan. But tensions within South Sudan itself erupted in December when an apparent power struggle between President Kiir and Vice President Machar descended into clashes between government and rebel forces and along ethnic lines. Both sides have since signed a ceasefire agreement, though violence continues.



- 716,000 people are IDPs – 75,000 of which are sheltering in UN bases – and 166,000 are refugees
- OCHA is appealing for \$1.2bn for the crisis
- 24,700 people have fled to neighbouring Sudan, which has requested assistance from the UN Refugee Agency
- The global emergency standard is one toilet for every 50 people but at one IDP site there is just one toilet for every 500 people
- WFP estimates that some 4,400 tonnes of food has been looted, enough to feed 265,000 people for a month

### UN ACTION

Over **56%** of **200,000** at risk children have received vaccinations against measles



**267,500** people have received food aid since start of the emergency

In January, over **400** students were able to sit their Primary School Leaving Exams in a UN compound in Juba



## Syria

Since anti-government protests began in 2011, Syria’s conflict has become increasingly brutal and intractable. Three years of intense fighting between President Assad’s armed forces and various rebel militias has brought the country close to collapse. To date, the destruction of Syria’s chemical weapons is behind schedule and UN-brokered peace talks have made little progress.



- 6.5 million people are IDPs and 2.3 million people have become refugees, mainly residing outside formal refugee camps
- OCHA is appealing for \$6.5bn for the crisis
- Over 60 per cent of public hospitals have been damaged or destroyed
- Over 9 million Syrians – nearly half the population – are in need of humanitarian assistance
- A negotiated ceasefire allowed 1,400 people to be evacuated from Homs Old City after two years under siege and without receiving any aid. However, around 1,000 remain trapped

### UN ACTION



In 2013, the UN Population Fund provided maternal health services to more than

**2 million** women and assisted with over **10,000** deliveries and **5,000** caesarean sections



WFP has provided IDPs with over **13,000** litres of emergency fuel for heating and cooking



The UN seeks to assist **915,000** Syrian refugees in Lebanon, comprising almost **25%** of its population





# Azerbaijan and the United Nations

*New World* interviews His Excellency Fakhreddin Gurbanov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to the UK

*Azerbaijan is a relatively new member of the community of nations, having joined the UN in 1992. What has been your country's greatest achievement so far?*

Gaining a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council just 20 years after independence speaks for itself, and clearly demonstrates the progress Azerbaijan has made since the collapse of the old Soviet political and economic system. Today Azerbaijan is a reliable and trusted member of the international community, strongly contributing to efforts to preserve peace and security. At home, Azerbaijan enjoys stability in a relatively volatile neighbourhood. Abroad, Azerbaijan has strengthened its relationships with many regions and has taken an active role in a number of regional and international organisations. The experience gained during two years at the Security Council will undoubtedly contribute to our engagement in international affairs in the years ahead.

*What were your country's priorities for its 2012-13 term on the Security Council?*

Addressing the UN in 2012, President Ilham Aliyev stressed that Azerbaijan would stand for international law, norms and justice at the Security Council. Unfortunately, the non-implementation of Council resolutions adopted in 1993 calling for the withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from the territories of Azerbaijan, has led some to question the credibility of the organisation. We saw our term as an opportunity to address this.

During Azerbaijan's presidency of the Council in May 2012, we organised a high-level meeting to explore ways to strengthen cooperation in the fight against international terrorism, and in October 2013 held a special session on the issue of strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). We also paid attention to development issues, in particular those facing Africa, and arranged a tour to Africa's Great Lakes region. This was an excellent opportunity for ambassadors to witness at first hand the challenges and threats on the ground.

*Given the changing nature of global politics, how did these priorities shift in response to international events?*

Emerging crises and unforeseen developments around the world of course entail inevitable changes in plans. Over the past two years a range of crises, such as those in Syria, Mali and South Sudan, have been on the Council's agenda. In fact, most of its time and resources have been devoted to putting an end to those crises.

It is right that issues of great urgency, in particular, conflicts, are given high attention and consideration. But I am proud to say that our key priorities, including terrorism, cross-cultural dialogue and UN-OIC cooperation, received due attention, and that progress has been made to advance these topics.

*What is Azerbaijan's position on the perennial issue of Security Council reform?*

I believe there is a general consensus on the need to reform the UN system, in particular the Security Council. Difficulties arise when it comes to how to enact that reform. Azerbaijan stands for full and comprehensive UN reform based on the broadest possible consensus. A

new UN system, and in particular the Security Council, should include broader geographic representation and improved working methods to enable it to respond to new challenges swiftly and efficiently.

*The Security Council has faced gridlock over the Syrian crisis. How does a non-permanent member, or smaller-sized state, make an impact on such an issue?*

It is unfortunate that the Security Council has failed to take concrete actions to end the Syrian crisis. There have been welcome developments, such as the agreement on destroying Syrian chemical weapons, and the presidential statement, adopted under Azerbaijan's second presidency, calling for greater humanitarian access.

Small or non-permanent member states bring their own regional expertise and experiences to such situations, and are crucial to ensuring that any agreements reached at the Council enjoy the broadest possible support. On the Syrian crisis, we have called for a peaceful political settlement. Azerbaijan is close to Syria geographically, culturally and historically and we have much to contribute to the discussions.

*How can the UN become more effective in preventing gross violations of human rights?*

Gross violations of human rights are of course a matter of great concern. Continuing crises around the world, from the Middle East to Africa, highlight this necessity. It is important that the governments directly involved take all actions necessary to protect civilians and their fundamental rights.

When it comes to the UN, the recently adopted "Rights up Front" strategy – an important step in the right direction – calls for a swift and early reaction to

gross human rights violations. It is important that the UN stands ready in terms of capacity and resources to take the lead in protecting civilians.

*What more could be done by states to support the UN's humanitarian work?*

The swift and efficient delivery of humanitarian aid to disaster-hit areas is a challenging task for the international community. The role of the UN system is critical to achieving this task. Member states are also closely involved in this field, and I believe that as their resources and capacities increase, states should shoulder more responsibility in helping the UN's humanitarian aid efforts globally.

Equally important is the coordination of such efforts, particularly with those organisations that are actually based in the affected area. The Azerbaijan International Development Agency carries out wide-ranging projects in many regions and is expanding joint operations with other humanitarian stakeholders.

*As a country rich in oil and gas, what are Azerbaijan's hopes for the Sustainable Development Goals currently being discussed at the UN?*

Experiences learned during the Millennium Development Goals should guide all of us throughout discussions for the post-2015 development agenda. The focus should be on poverty reduction, capacity-building assistance to developing states, in particular the least developed countries, trade liberalisation and new mechanisms of financing development.

Azerbaijan is an energy rich country that takes environmental issues seriously, but we are also thinking about ways to move the economy beyond its traditional energy basis in the future. Azerbaijan has a state agency for renewable and alternative energy with pilot projects well underway and ambitious plans to increase the share of renewable energy in the overall mix.

*Finally, on a lighter note, would the UN be better off if its headquarters were in Azerbaijan?*

A very interesting question. This would be a dream come true situation, but of course dreaming is always the first step on the road to achievement. Realistically, as we witness a shift to the East in economic and geopolitical affairs, one cannot exclude the possibility of some international organisations being headquartered in the region. Hopefully we will see at least one UN specialised agency headquartered in Baku in the future.

**Fakhreddin Gurbanov has been Ambassador of Azerbaijan to the UK since 2007. He is a career diplomat and has held a number of posts including, Ambassador to Canada (2004-07) and consul in Washington D.C. for two terms during 1993-2001**

**H. E. Fakhreddin Gurbanov**  
© Embassy of Azerbaijan






## The UN & the UK

*This section features an update on UN-related developments in the UK and on UNA-UK's work with British policy-makers*

### Parliamentarians briefed by UN experts

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on the UN (UN APPG) has hosted several high-level UN representatives and experts in recent months, including James Stewart, Deputy Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court, Ben Emmerson, Special Rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights, Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict, and Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the new Executive Director of UN Women, who was on her first official visit to the UK.

 Audio recordings of each of these meetings can be found at [www.una.org.uk/media](http://www.una.org.uk/media)

### Call to Action on protecting women

On 13 November, the UK's Department for International Development held a



*Mark Simmonds (centre), UK Minister for Africa, and Diane Corner (left), UK Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), recently visited a transit camp for ex-combatants in Bweremana, DRC. They were accompanied by Martin Kobler (second from right), who is Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN peacekeeping mission in the country.*  
© UN Photo/Sylvain Liechti

call to action event on protecting women and girls in emergencies. Attended by numerous governments, UN agencies and international aid organisations, the conference concluded with a communiqué in which signatories called for, among other things, increased investment in measures to prevent violence against women, support for equal access to essential services and respect for “the primacy of safety, security and dignity of all women and girls affected by violence”.

### UK elected to UN rights council

The UK has taken up the seat on the UN's Human Rights Council it won in a General Assembly election last November. The Western Europe and Others Group fielded a “clean slate” for the two available seats (where the number of candidates is equal to the number of available seats), with the other seat going to France. UNA-UK has plans to launch a report containing recommendations for the UK's term on the Council.

### Evidence to Parliamentary committee

UNA-UK has recently submitted written evidence to two separate inquiries being undertaken by the House of Commons Defence Select Committee: “Intervention: When, why and how?” and “Deterrence in the 21st Century”. UNA-UK's submission on intervention addressed the issue as one aspect of the responsibility to protect principle. On deterrence, UNA-UK questioned the defensive value of the UK's nuclear weapons and emphasised the importance of the UK's commitment to multilateral disarmament.

 Both submissions can be read in full at [www.una.org.uk](http://www.una.org.uk)

### Food security in Zimbabwe

In a bid to address food security concerns in Zimbabwe, the UK has launched a new partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization. The four-year initiative will focus on strengthening the resilience of the country's agricultural sector – which provides livelihoods for 70 per cent of the population – as well as improving farmers' access to markets and financing.

### Boost for UN relief fund

In December the UK announced a further \$33m in funding for the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund

(CERF), taking its total contributions in 2013 to \$113m. This made the UK the largest bilateral donor to CERF last year, followed by Sweden, which gave \$71m. The Fund was established in 2006 to provide reserve funding for responses to humanitarian emergencies.

### Detainee report published

The UK government has partly published the interim report of the Detainee Inquiry, which was led by former Lord Justice of Appeal Sir Peter Gibson and investigated claims that Britain has been implicated in the improper treatment of terrorist suspects held by other countries. According to the report, documents indicate that the UK was “inappropriately involved” in cases of rendition, and was aware of the mistreatment of some detainees by partner countries. Ben Emmerson and Juan E. Méndez, the UN's Special Rapporteurs on counter-terrorism and torture respectively, welcomed the report but expressed concern over the UK government's decision not to establish a judge-led inquiry to examine the issue further.

### The next UN Secretary-General

In response to an oral question posed by Lord Judd, who is a member of the UN APPG, Baroness Warsi, Foreign Office minister with responsibility for the UN, endorsed calls for a more comprehensive and credible process to be established for the appointment of the next Secretary-General of the United Nations. During the debate, peers also noted that since the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 there has not yet been a female Secretary-General.

 A full briefing on the UN Secretary-General recruitment process can be found at [www.una.org.uk](http://www.una.org.uk)

### UK to accept Syrian refugees

The UK government has announced its plans to begin the temporary resettlement of some of the “most vulnerable” Syrian refugees, which by its definition includes: women and children, elderly and disabled people and those who have been victims of torture or sexual violence. Numbers are expected to be restricted to the hundreds. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) welcomed the decision, though the initiative will be separate to UNHCR's own resettlement scheme. See Natalie Samarasinghe's column on page 23 for more on this decision.

### Petition to the Prime Minister

UNA-UK has joined a global campaign appealing for an independent, international investigation into Sri Lankan war crimes allegations. The UN Human Rights Council is expected to debate a resolution on this issue at its next session, taking place on 3–28 March. As part of the campaign, a petition will be sent to UK Prime Minister David Cameron, urging him to act on his call made at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Sri Lanka last year, for a UN probe into alleged violations.

## Round up of UNA-UK monthly actions

### UNA-UK membership drive

In celebration of UN Day in October 2013, UNA-UK launched a new membership drive. As the people's movement for the UN in the UK, we called on members to help grow our network and buy gift membership, and asked supporters to come on board.

### Call to protect OHCHR budget

More than 140 UNA-UK members and supporters joined UNA-UK's call for the UK to protect the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) from cuts to its already small budget. UNA-UK welcomed the UK's announcement of a further £500,000 contribution to OHCHR but remains concerned about the organisation's remaining \$15m deficit.

### Development and equality

UNA-UK called on its members and supporters to write to their MPs and ask them to back the International Development (Gender Equality) Bill, which obliges the UK to consider the impact its aid spending has on gender equality. Over 150 of you responded and we're pleased to report the Bill was passed by MPs. It is now with the House of Lords and is expected to pass into law.

## UNA-UK holds annual Youth Conference

On 1 February, 200 students from across the UK gathered in Edinburgh for the UNA Youth Conference 2014, which was held in partnership with the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

The day began with a substantive debate on the responsibility to protect principle, with attendees hearing from Ian Martin, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya, and policy experts Jess Gifkins and Aidan Hehir.

The UNA Youth Council also addressed the conference before moving on to a busy networking lunch break.

Following this was an informative session on UN careers, chaired by John Ericson of the Office of Human Resources Management at the UN in New York. Mr Ericson was joined by panel members whose level of experience ranged from established career to second internship. All were grilled by participants, who later said they felt better informed and more motivated to pursue a career at the UN.

After the event, Mr Ericson said: “I was impressed by the calibre and enthusiasm of the people I met at UNA-UK's Youth Conference and was delighted to have had the opportunity to engage with them.”







The Annual General Meeting of  
UNA-UK will take place at 10.30am  
on Saturday 29 March 2014 in  
Seminar Room 2 of the Resource for  
London Centre, 356 Holloway Road,  
London N7 6PA

All paid-up and honorary UNA-UK members have been sent the notice and other relevant information with this issue of *New World*. Please refer to the letter from UNA-UK's Chairman, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, which provides further detail on proceedings. Information has also been sent via email; included in mailings to UNA branches, regions and nations; and posted on [www.una.org.uk/AGM2014](http://www.una.org.uk/AGM2014).

**Voting**

Every paid-up and honorary member of UNA-UK has the right to attend and vote. Those unable to attend can appoint another person to act as their proxy. Proxy voting forms are available for downloading from [www.una.org.uk/AGM2014](http://www.una.org.uk/AGM2014) or from the Company Secretary, UNA-UK, 3 Whitehall Court, London SW1A 2EL (telephone 020 7766 3455). Completed forms must reach the Company Secretary by 10am on Thursday 27 March 2014.

**Topics for discussion at the AGM**

The Board of UNA-UK has agreed that all paid-up and honorary members of UNA-UK should be given an opportunity to propose topics for discussion at the AGM. The topics for discussion must focus on general management and governance and should not be policy proposals, as these are considered at policy conferences. The process for submissions is included for members with this issue of *New World*. The deadline for submission is 21 March 2014.

**Distinguished Service Awards**

As in previous years, the 2014 Distinguished Service Awards will be presented at the AGM, following nominations from UNA Nations Regions, and Youth. Nominees will be published on the UNA-UK website.

If you have not received this information please consult the UNA-UK website or contact the Company Secretary at [donnelly@una.org.uk](mailto:donnelly@una.org.uk) or on 020 7766 3455.

We would greatly appreciate it if members intending to come to this event register at [www.una.org.uk/register](http://www.una.org.uk/register) or by calling 020 7766 3454.



**Staying Connected**

UNA-UK's Procedure Committee will be hosting a brand new event that will give members an update on UNA-UK's 2013 Policy Conference.

Issues to be covered include key topics raised at the Conference in relation to UNA-UK's three policy areas of safer world, fairer world and sustainable world, and notable member suggestions via UNA-UK's Policy Inbox, with opportunities to ask questions.

The event will be chaired by the Procedure Committee, with UNA-UK staff presenting on these themes. This meeting will be held in the same venue as UNA-UK's AGM, an hour after the formal meeting concludes. Lunch will be available to purchase at the on-site café. This event is open to paid-up members of UNA-UK only. Space is limited and so registration is essential at [www.una.org.uk/register](http://www.una.org.uk/register) or by calling 020 7766 3454.

**UN Forum outreach grants**

As part of our outreach drive for UN Forum 2014, UNA-UK has relaunched our outreach grant scheme to help local UNAs to engage with their own communities.

Branches, regions and nations can apply for grants of between £100 and £500 for events that will be held at any time in the run-up to UN Forum which will take place on Saturday 28 June. Full details have already been sent to local UNAs but if you would like to see this information again, go to [www.una.org.uk/outreach-grants](http://www.una.org.uk/outreach-grants).



Natalie Samarasinghe, UNA-UK's  
Executive Director, on why charity  
shouldn't end at home

*New World's* contributors highlight the scale of the humanitarian challenges facing the UN. When disaster strikes, it acts to alleviate suffering even when it is overstretched or underfunded. The humanitarian imperative is ingrained in its mission and in our expectations of it.

This principle has long roots in the UK. Britain's oldest charity was founded in the 12th century and today, over 40,000 UK charities work on overseas causes. These groups have joined UNA-UK in welcoming the UK's decision to meet the 0.7 per cent aid target and initiatives such as the Foreign Secretary's campaign to prevent sexual violence in conflict. But these actions have attracted criticism too and in recent weeks, the government has been forced to defend its humanitarian projects.

After flooding caused serious damage in the UK, there were calls to divert aid money to help those affected. A petition by the tabloid *Daily Mail* garnered some 300,000 signatures and high-profile support. Nearly half of those polled by YouGov, meanwhile, disagreed with the government's decision to host up to 500 Syrian refugees. During my visits to local UNAs, many members expressed frustration at these reactions.

It is easy to dismiss such opinions as narrow-minded. Yet, to do so is to shy away from engaging with legitimate concerns. I have received messages from people who give generously to appeals but worry about the UK's capacity to increase aid or take in refugees. UNA-UK should listen to these concerns and, when appropriate, challenge the assumptions on which they are based.

In a 2011 Chatham House survey, the average estimate of UK aid spending was £79bn. It was £8.5bn that year. Polling across the OECD consistently shows that people believe their governments spend 10-20 per cent of gross national income on aid and that they think it should be 1-5 per cent. Only Sweden and Norway have reached one per cent. Aid from OECD countries as a whole stood at \$127bn in 2012, far less than the UK spends on work and pensions, and far, far less than global military spending – a staggering \$1.7trn.

Perceptions of refugee numbers are similarly skewed. When people are forced to flee their homes, they overwhelmingly go to neighbouring countries. Pakistan has the world's highest refugee population (over 1.6 million). Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt have taken in nearly all of Syria's 2.4 million refugees, with Lebanon alone hosting a million (its total population is 4.4 million). In the first half of last year, Uganda received more asylum claims than the UK.

As members of UNA-UK, we should strive for a more informed debate on these issues. Internally, we should recognise that numbers aren't everything. Yes, we believe the UK should be a leading aid contributor and we hope it will join the UN's Syria resettlement scheme. But we should also encourage it to promote aid effectiveness and to champion the principle of providing asylum.

And we should seek to change the language of humanitarianism from charity to responsibility. In the UK, people have been calling for long-term investment in flood defences and response capacity. This approach should be applied internationally. Aid should not be seen as a donation that we can drop when we're feeling squeezed. Stable countries contribute to the global economy and are less prone to violence and terrorism. Humanitarian assistance is an investment in our future, essential to building a secure and prosperous world for us all.

We'll be tackling these issues and more at our UN Forum on 28 June 2014. I hope you'll take part and give us your views (see pages 14-15). As ever, comments and questions to [samarasinghe@una.org.uk](mailto:samarasinghe@una.org.uk) or @Natalie\_UNA.



UNA-UK Members



Sustainable Development Goals: *Tony and Juliet Colman ask, how do we get there?*

Last autumn, we were fortunate to be able to attend sessions of the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the UN headquarters. Formed following the Rio+20 conference, the OWG is tasked with proposing a set of SDGs, to be combined with poverty reduction goals when the current Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) expire in 2015.

The headline themes for the meetings covered economic growth, infrastructure development, industrialisation and energy. However, the discussions themselves were more broad-ranging, looking at the wider challenges the goals must address.

Jeffrey Sachs, as part of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), of which we are also members, gave the keynote speech during which he put forward 10 “priority challenges” suggested as a basis for the SDGs:

- 1. End extreme poverty including hunger
- 2. Achieve development within planetary boundaries
- 3. Ensure effective learning for all children and youth for life and livelihood
- 4. Achieve gender equality, social inclusion, and human rights for all
- 5. Achieve health and well-being at all ages
- 6. Improve agriculture systems and raise rural prosperity
- 7. Empower inclusive, productive, and resilient cities
- 8. Curb human-induced climate change and ensure sustainable energy
- 9. Secure ecosystem services and biodiversity, ensure good management of water and other natural resources
- 10. Transform governance and technologies for sustainable development

The OWG leaders stated that the new SDGs should be sharp and clear, encompass economic, social and environmental dimensions and provide a compelling argument for member state commitment. They should be universal in nature, applying to developed countries as much as to developing ones. And all of the goals should be underpinned by good governance – tackling corruption, tax avoidance and so on.

Convergence to a common goal could be measured. For example, currently, each person in the US produces an average of 17 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> whilst the global average is around 5 tonnes per person, but even the latter would need to be reduced to 2 tonnes if we are to curb the effects of climate change. As the Hungarian Ambassador, serving as co-chair of the OWG, stated, climate change is a game changer which needs to be factored into all SDGs, with economic growth decoupled from fossil fuels and planetary boundaries clearly identified and respected.

*“Today’s problems will expand dangerously without an urgent and radical change ... the world needs a sustainable development framework that can mobilise all actors”*

Sustainable Development Solutions Network

Another key point to emerge from the discussions was the inclusion of language on human rights, which has the potential

to be a transformative shift in its own right. Civil society is eager to ensure that this is a much stronger feature in the SDGs than it was in the MDGs.

Similarly, another perceived weakness of the MDGs was the lack of accurate and available data. Governments need to be held accountable for providing access to relevant, transparent information.

The SDGs are also an important focus for other UN bodies. While in New York we attended meetings of UN Women and the Experts Workshop on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements. Here attendees debated the best way to get their respective priorities onto the SDG agenda, and the value of advocating standalone goals. What was certainly clear is that there is a lot of good groundwork going on across the UN, and that momentum for the SDGs can surely only grow from here. ●

**Tony and Juliet Colman have both recently received their PhDs from the University of East Anglia – Tony’s on water reforms in Botswana and Juliet’s on social and cultural aspects of consumption in Botswana. Both are continuing to utilise their expertise in working with the SDSN and UNA-UK**



UNA-UK Youth



*Tom Clarke on UNA-UK’s exciting new UN careers portal*

Whether you want to work in international development, humanitarian assistance, human rights or peacebuilding, a career with the UN is an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to tackling some of the most pressing problems facing the world today.

Getting a career in the UN system is definitely worthwhile, but it’s not always easy. Once you start to research a career in the UN, things can quickly get confusing – different bodies have different hiring processes, some opportunities have specific requirements and others are only open to applicants from certain countries.

UNA-UK’s careers portal

This is where UNA-UK’s UN careers portal comes in. The purpose of the portal is to give guidance on UN careers for a UK audience. It provides clear, concise and accessible information on the opportunities available to UK nationals, as well as staff profiles, tutorials and careers tips from UN experts.

*As a recent UK graduate, I wanted to find out about what sort of opportunities might be available to me*

Routes into the UN

As a recent UK graduate, I wanted to find out about what sort of opportunities might be available to me. If you feel ready to jump straight in, the careers portal gives a useful introduction to Inspira, the UN secretariat’s online application system.

I discovered that although I’m not eligible for the popular Young Professionals Programme (the UK is not currently a participating country), the Junior Professional Officer programme (JPO) is an available option. The careers portal provides detailed information on how to become a JPO, and directs you to where you can find out more.



The careers portal doesn’t stop at paid positions – there is guidance on interning at the UN secretariat in New York and over a dozen other UN organisations.

And if you’re looking for advice on gaining valuable experience in the field, the dedicated section on the UN Volunteer programme is a great place to start.

Multimedia content

Of course, wading through page upon page of text can be a bit of a bore. Fortunately, the careers portal hosts a range of multimedia content, with audio recordings from major UN agencies and inspirational videos, including a keynote speech given by former UN Deputy Secretary-General Lord Malloch-Brown at UNA-UK’s UN Forum in 2012.

Insider tips

The best insights into job hunting and career development often come from those who have actually been there and done that. The portal contains careers tips, staff profiles and first-hand accounts from staff at all levels of the UN system.

Find out how a UN internship helped a young professional land her dream role with the UN Development Programme, or how UN Women’s Chief of Finance, Procurement and Administrative Services got the job.



You can find all this and more on UNA-UK’s website – just visit [www.una.org.uk](http://www.una.org.uk) and select “UN Careers” from the menu bar. Don’t miss out on your chance to kick-start a career in the UN. ●

**Tom Clarke is currently volunteering for UNA-UK as a Communications and Social Media Intern**



## UNA-UK Young Professionals



**Amanda Gray Meral, UNA-UK**  
*Young Professional, on working for  
a frontline UN agency*

**You're currently a Senior Protection Associate for the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in London. Tell us about your job.**

I work on a project aimed at improving the quality of the asylum process in the UK. This role involves me keeping abreast of the latest asylum policy and legislative developments in order to identify areas of concern, conduct research and better advocate with the UK authorities for persons of concern to UNHCR.

**What first attracted you to this work?**

I have always been interested in using the law to improve the lives of those excluded in society. I decided to complete my master's degree in international human rights law and this allowed me to study all areas of human rights law and refugee law.

My passion to work in refugee issues specifically rose out of a recognition of their extreme vulnerability in the country where they seek refuge. Even in a rich country like the UK, refugees and asylum seekers can be living in extreme poverty, being stigmatised and suffering social exclusion because of their migration status, at the same time as having to rebuild their lives in a new country. Working for UNHCR provides me with a highly respected, professional platform to represent and advocate for these individuals.

*Even in a rich country like the UK, refugees and asylum seekers can be living in extreme poverty, being stigmatised and suffering social exclusion*

**What do you see as the most important aspect of your job?**

The most important aspect is engaging with the UK authorities to bring about change for persons of concern. I aim to do this in a credible way, through research and ensuring the voices of those affected by the policy and process are heard. While it can be challenging in a demanding and busy

environment, I also try to connect to what's happening at a grassroots level through engaging with initiatives and charities that work with asylum seekers and refugees.

**UNHCR, alongside other UN agencies, is also present on the front line in emergency situations. What is UNHCR's responsibility here?**

UNHCR is mandated to protect refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers and stateless people, who are especially vulnerable in humanitarian crises. To fulfil that mandate, UNHCR's response in an emergency is multi-faceted, with protection, external relations, programming and administration all potentially involved. However, whatever the specific role, we have the same goal as a protection-focussed agency – to help those who need us.

UNHCR has also developed mechanisms for mobilising financial resources to help meet an emergency without delay. To maintain this capacity and preparedness UNHCR has developed training programmes that prepare staff to go on to its emergency roster and who can then be deployed on the ground with the speed and required expertise which is so necessary in an emergency context.

**You've recently returned from emergency deployment in Iraq. Tell us a bit more about that experience.**

I was deployed for three months as an eligibility officer in Baghdad, Iraq. I was part of a team tasked with determining the international protection needs of a group of persons of concern. This involved conducting interviews and assessing whether they were eligible to be resettled to a third country.

The most challenging aspect of the experience was the deteriorating security situation in Iraq right now. Fighting in Anbar province was destabilising the country and Baghdad was increasingly insecure and volatile. Working in that environment can bring its own stress and on top of that we had to get through a number of cases each week.

However, I loved having direct contact with persons of concern and met some wonderful colleagues. It was good to see the tangible outcomes of our work that directly changed lives, like when someone was relocated from Iraq to Europe.

**In what ways are you able to provide protection for the most vulnerable?**

Protection work within the agency is varied and depends on the environment or the type of emergency you are responding to. In a camp environment, it may be providing support to survivors of sexual or gender-based violence, or in somewhere like Europe, it can be engaging in asylum processes.

In other contexts, like the Syrian crisis, UNHCR is tasked with determining international protection needs (or what is called "refugee status determination").

**With record numbers of forcibly displaced people around the world, what is UNHCR's biggest challenge?**

There is no doubt that UNHCR's biggest challenge is maintaining its ability and capacity to respond to an ever-increasing number of crises across the globe.

Last year was unprecedented with emergency situations in the Central African Republic, the Philippines and Syria, and 2014 does not look like it will be much better. I think resources are the crucial issue for UNHCR in emergencies, and one that is becoming more and more pressing.

**Finally, what does 2014 have in store?**

Right now I am back in London and embarking upon a piece of research that will look at the experience of victims of trafficking in the UK. UNHCR's mandate, given by the UN Secretary-General, means we can speak with authority on critical concerns such as this. ●

**Amanda Gray Meral is a human rights lawyer who has worked for UNHCR in the UK since 2010. Prior to this she worked as a solicitor and at Amnesty International**

*"The United Nations is more than a humanitarian agency and international peacekeeper. It is more than a platform for discussion and a champion for the voiceless. Simply put, the UN stands for a better life for us all."*

*UNA-UK's work in bringing the UN to people in the UK has never been more important. We are, all of us, citizens of the world, and it is in our interests to support an effective UN that delivers global solutions to global problems."*

**SIR PATRICK STEWART**

*Actor and UNA-UK Patron  
Keynote speaker, UN Forum 2012*

UNA-UK is the UK's leading source of independent analysis on the UN and a vibrant grassroots movement campaigning for a safer, fairer and more sustainable world



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