

Minutes
Monthly Envoy Conference Call
Tuesday, February 18, 2020 3pm & 6pm Eastern

- I. In attendance:
 - a. 3pm EST
 - i. Allison Hess (NYC)
 - ii. Bruce Knotts (NYC)
 - iii. Jeannie (San Marcos, TX)
 - iv. Ron Glossop (Alton, IL) Interested to hear more about ICJ's ruling on Myanmar
 - v. Peggy Montgomery (New York, NY) Hope to talk about UN's 75th anniversary
 - vi. Nasreen Sarah Gagner (Long Beach, CA)
 - b. 6pm EST
 - i. Allison Hess (NYC)
 - ii. Bruce Knotts (NYC)
 - iii. Phyllis Baxter (North Hatley, QC) Very serious crisis in Canada with arrests of indigenous protesters on Wet'suwet'en land and protesters in solidarity with the water protectors disrupting rail systems which has upset the economy as much of Canada relies on rail lines.
 - iv. Joanne Dufour (Lacey, WA) Lots of energy in the local peace community around opposing nuclear weapons
 - v. Gabor Kiss (Morristown, NJ)
 - vi. Marilyn Mehr (New York, NY)
 - vii. Janet Bendowitz (Manhasset, NY)
- II. Bruce's updates from the United Nations
 - a. Things at the UN are not that happy, despite going into the 75-year anniversary which should be a time to celebrate. Instead we're dealing with a lack of commitment globally to multilateralism as well as lack of countries paying their dues to the United Nations.
 - i. Some of these neglected dues are in protest to officials not being permitted to get a U.S. visa to come to the UN (heard something like 40 countries are refusing to pay due to this), in violation of the Host Country Agreement. One example is the Iranian Foreign Minister being denied a visa after the U.S. killing of General Soleimani. U.S. simply did not issue a visa and the UN was forced to tell them that they were not given a visa.
 - b. News from International Court of Justice: Gambia (where Bruce served as a U.S. Diplomat) brought a case against Myanmar on its treatment of its Muslim minority, the Rohingya. They won and ICJ has affirmed that the Rohingya do need further protection. Need to enforce this and it's up to countries themselves to sanction Myanmar. UN only has limited tools to enforce such things which is one of its perennial problems.
 - c. 75th Anniversary: Quite a few events throughout the year! UN is criticized most of the time for many things, but if you think about where we've come in the last 75 years we've actually made significant progress. Notably in the fields of human rights and development globally. If you look at the people who signed the UN Charter, it was pretty much white men with a few exceptions; now it's the whole world with much more

diversity and inclusion. Much more needs to be done, to be sure. Primary purpose of the UN is peace; don't have world peace, but also no WWII yet.

- d. The UN has many different agencies all dealing with important global issues. The one that's getting lots of press right now is the WHO (World Health Organization), monitoring the coronavirus. The UN doesn't necessarily have a great deal of expertise itself (has some) but biggest role is bringing people together. So the UN is able to bring health organizations, doctors, and researchers from around the world to find solutions to halt the progress of the virus.
- e. UN brings experts together to tackle problems and come up with solutions. We should celebrate its ability to bring people together to solve global problems and make the world better.
- f. Indigenous resistance in Canada is important to recognize – will be highlighted during our intergenerational spring seminar.
- g. Gabor: Is this an existential crisis? How serious is this?
 - i. Bruce: has been at the UN since 2008. This was shortly before Barack Obama took over as U.S. President. Since then, the U.S. mission to the UN has been very strong during the 8 years of Obama's term. He, Xi Jinping, & other leaders signed Paris Climate accords. Strong U.S. activism for multilateral diplomacy. The U.S. Mission now is very absent on issues of human rights. Kushner was here at the UN last week presenting his peace plan for Israel-Palestine which really only included Israel and the U.S., but that's the main area for muscular diplomacy these days from the U.S. Mission. The UN is kind of an American idea, and the UN works best when the U.S. is committed to it. When we're not playing a leading role, it doesn't work very well.
- h. Joanne: When Kurt Waldheim was UN Secretary-General the UN built a facility in Vienna and it was proposed that become the new HQ in the event that the U.S. didn't work out. Is this being discussed as an option now?
 - i. Bruce: If U.S. continues to violate the Host Country Agreement, might consider moving, yes. But with the UN's financial difficulties, it's unlikely since it'd be such a huge expense to relocate the HQ.
 - ii. What can we do to help you at the UN? Vote! Get us a government that's going to help us at the UN!
- i. Phyllis: Glad that Canada has paid its dues fully. Norway, Ireland, and Canada are competing for a seat on the Security Council.
 - i. Bruce: It'd be great if they could all be there, but it's good that North Atlantic/European countries work together on issues at the UN.
- j. Joanne: Will voices of indigenous folk who have been victims of nuclear testing be lifted up at the UN level? People don't recognize the human cost of nuclear weapons development. Need to bring attention to that – well-publicized meeting to tell stories and share the legacy of the health defects.
 - i. Bruce: pretty sure Marshall Islands took the case against nuclear powers to the ICJ, but ended up with a split court so it did not succeed. Kazakhstan has created a nuclear-free zone because so many Kazakhs were injured from Soviet testing. Lots of people around the world are still suffering from nuclear testing.

- ii. April 24-26 Bruce and Joanne will attend a global meeting on nuclear weapons in NYC at Riverside Church. Hope to deliver millions of signatures to the Secretary-General calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. This will come right before the NPT. Civil society pushing and getting lots of people energized to talk about this. Bruce tends to use the argument a lot about the money being spent on maintaining and upgrading nuclear weapons, we need that money for addressing climate change and other issues.
- iii. NPT = Nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Developed ~50 years ago. It gives global framework for trying to control the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

III. Office updates

a. Planning for several upcoming big events:

- i. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) conference is at the UN in mid-March. We're hosting a panel on [March 10](#) on protecting trans rights in health care, on [March 17](#) about doulas in vulnerable communities, and co-sponsoring a panel along with IWC on [March 19](#) about women's leadership for peaceful sustainability. All are open to the public and at least the first two will be recorded and shared on UU-UNO's YouTube page.
- ii. Intergenerational Spring Seminar in NYC April 16-18 "All In For Climate Justice: People, Power, Planet"
 - 1. Keynote Speaker: [Xiye Bastida!](#)
 - 2. Working on getting a room at the UN for the Theme Panel highlighting indigenous movements for climate justice
 - a. The theme panel will be streamed live on UN Web TV and the recording will remain accessible online
 - b. Many congregations hold a special screening and discussion of the Theme Panel for folks who were not able to make it for the Seminar
 - c. (Probably screen the recording as the live event takes place on a Friday morning! 10:30-12pm EST April 17)
 - 3. Registration ends on Monday, March 2
 - a. Envoys can get a \$50 registration discount!
- iii. Canadian Unitarian Council's National Conference is May 15-17 in Halifax, NS. UU-UNO is hosting a workshop on engagement with the United Nations!
- iv. UUA General Assembly in Providence, RI June 24-28.
 - 1. UUA's International Office is hosting two workshops & UNO will hopefully be doing a poster presentation. More details to come!
 - 2. We'll have an Envoy gathering and a reception!

IV. What else is on people's minds:

- a. Jeannie: There's a movement at SMUUF to abolish women's group (been meeting once a month for 20 years now) – saying such a group represents "binary gender segregation." Some language that might be used: "*Trans and cis womxn, as well as all femme-of-center folx along the gender spectrum (gender queer, non-binary, etc.) are welcome.*" --- (ideally you can talk with congregants to co-create the language that

works for everyone there, and/or hire someone who does this work to create a more inclusive policy.)

- b. Ron: On the topic of Human Rights: one of the rights that tends to get neglected is language rights. Since English is becoming so predominant, this is a real problem for non-English-speaking people. Need to be sensitive to language rights. Ron is an Esperantist. Designed to be easy to learn. Check out the gathering in Montréal this August.
 - i. Allison: Also in Montréal this year is the ICUU conference (Int'l Council of Unitarians and Universalists) Oct. 26 – Nov. 1, 2020.
 - c. Gabor: Planning is coming along for Allison's visit for UN Sunday at Morristown Unitarian Fellowship this weekend. Youth will also share about their experiences at the Intergenerational Spring Seminar next year
 - d. Janet: Big group will come from Shelter Rock to GA in Providence!
 - i. Allison: All are welcome to come to the reception we host! Not just Envoys.
 - e. Joanne: Olympia Coalition Against Nuclear Weapons: ecumenical group, supported by a coalition in Seattle – this is a lively topic in the state. Preparing 8-hour class on the situation with nuclear weapons. Doing a trial run at the Unitarian Church, then plan to go on the road with it. Quakers are next then hope to find other sponsors. Originally programmed it over the spread of 4 Mondays in a row. Might do it on Friday night then all day Saturday. Will get feedback to see what modifications are needed.
- V. Adjourn.