

Newsletter

Special edition for the 70th Anniversary of the United Nations

25 October 2015

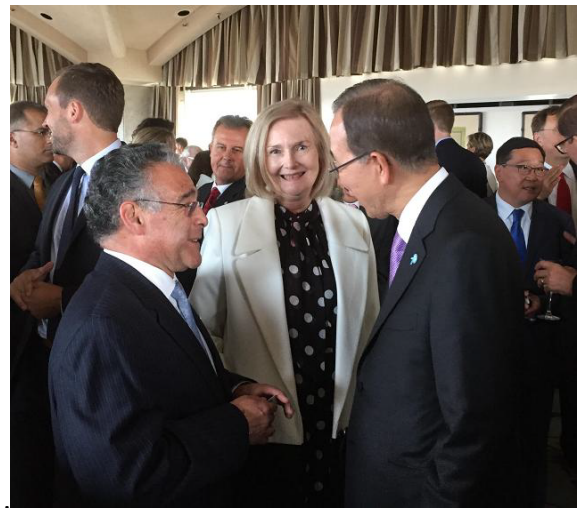
The 1945 San Francisco International Conference

By: Hossein Kamali

Seventy years ago, in San Francisco, 280 delegates from 50 nations representing 80% of the world population created and signed the United Nations Charter. The founding members at the largest international gathering ever to take place, in the name of the peoples of the United Nations, pledged to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, the rights of men and women, and the rights of nations large and small. **The United Nations Charter was drafted at the Historic Garden Room in the San Francisco Fairmont Hotel¹**

The San Francisco Chronicle on June 27, 1945 wrote: “San Francisco Conference was written into the pages of history at a dramatic closing ceremony yesterday in which President Truman called upon the whole world to resist the forces of reaction and tyranny in their efforts to divide the United Nations.” Lord Halifax of Britain, who presided over the Voting Session, told the audience: “This

¹ The Fairmont San Francisco, Known as the “White House of the West”, was host to the international Conference, including a banquet for all 280 conference delegates



The UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon in conversation with UNA-SF President Pablo Castro and Director Mary Steiner in Palo Alto on UN 70th Charter Day, June 26, 2015.

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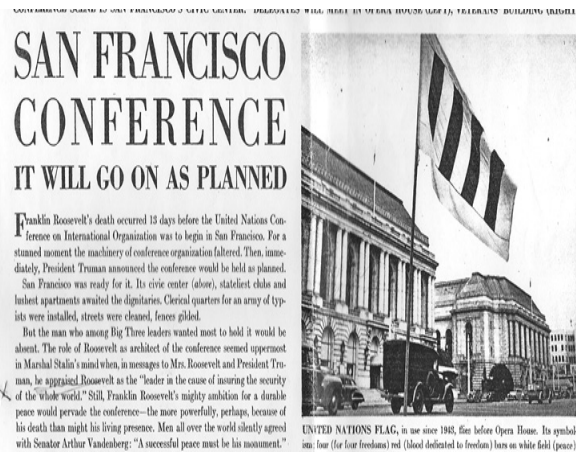
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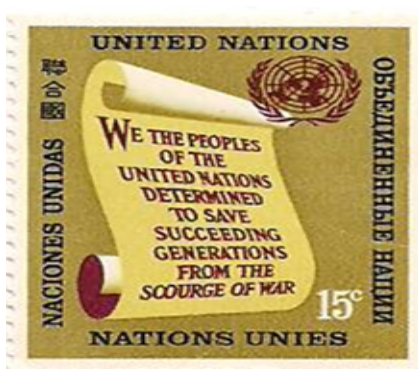


Special UN Conference badge designed for use by the representatives, news media reporters and secretariat personnel.

issue upon which we are about to vote," he said, "is as important as any we shall ever vote in our lifetime."



United Nations Flag, in use since 1943, flies before the Opera House at the Conference -- San Francisco Chronicle April 24, 1945.



The preamble of the United Nations Charter

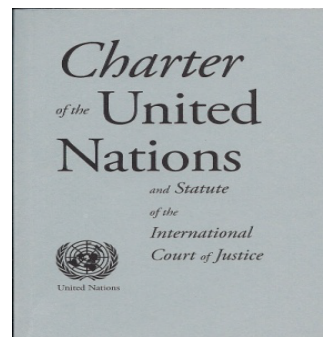


The War Memorial Building
Photo taken before its recent renovation

President Truman, upon signing the UN Charter, congratulated the delegates and said **“The Charter of the United Nations you have just signed is addressing a solid**



President Truman arriving in San Francisco
Source United Nations



structure, upon which we can build a better world. History will honor you for it.” **The Charter, as the constitution of the United Nations came into force on 24 October 1945.**

How San Francisco was selected

While San Francisco, the city of peace and diversity, is best known for its Cable Car, Golden Gate Bridge and recently the capital of technology and innovation, many people are unfamiliar with the founding of the United Nations² in this great city. It was in February 1945 during World War II, when President Roosevelt met with Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin, in Crimea at the Yalta Conference, The leaders of the Soviet Union, and Britain at this meeting, agreed



Golden Gate Bridge

Symbol of San Francisco, was declared one of the wonders of the Modern World.

Its 70th anniversary was celebrated in May 2007

with the President Roosevelt's proposal to choose San Francisco, as the host city for the UN International Conference It's interesting to know that San Francisco, the birthplace of the United Nations and, the gateway to Asia-Pacific was **designated by the United Nations among few cities as possible sites for the UN headquarters.**,

² President Franklin D. Roosevelt first suggested the name "United Nations" in January 1942 at the Atlantic Conference in Washington D.C. When, representatives of 26 countries signed the "Declaration by United Nations"



UN HQ in New York City

The origin of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Future We Want

"We do not inherit the land from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children

Rio Earth Summit



The UN development agenda emerged from UN conferences and can be traced to the principles and values of the United Nations Charter, The outcome of the 1945 San Francisco International Conference and subsequent UN events including the **Universal Declaration on Human Rights** adopted in 1948; the first United Nation Conference on Human Development in Stockholm, June 1992, which **raised a generation's awareness of the issue of global environment**, and the United Nations Millennium Declaration launched in 2000; were all guided by the purpose and principles of the United Nations Charter. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development known as the



Eleanor Roosevelt holding a poster of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights



**UN stamp on RIO+20
Kamali's personal collection**

Rio+ 20 Earth Summit in June 2012, a follow up of the MDGs, led to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. The world leaders at this conference, in achieving a sustainable future, under the heading "the future we want", set out a mandate to develop a set of action-oriented development goals to be integrated into the Post-2015 UN development agenda. The SDGs were to be aspirational, concise, limited in numbers, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries.

Let's clarify that, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) developed out of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), **Poverty Eradication**, the number one priority of the MDGs, was reiterated by the Rio+20 as the greatest global challenge facing the world to-day. Ending poverty and hunger" is the first among the six themes developed for the post-2015.

Kofi Annan, the former UN Secretary-General, hosted the largest get-together of world leaders in New York to sign the Millennium Declaration. He declared that "Everyone must strive to reach the Millennium Development Goals aimed at



Eradicating poverty and improving the quality of life; those countries that succeed, by the 2015 deadline, must be urged to do more."

To my knowledge, the great achievements of UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) comprise the most significant global development project in the history of the United Nations.. United Nations Development Programme (.UNDP) should indeed get credit for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of this project at the country level worldwide since it was initiated in 2000.



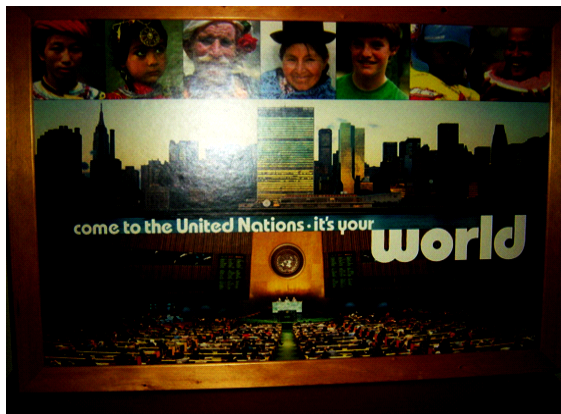
Kofi Annan

was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for having revitalized the UN and for having given priority to human rights

Great expectations of the United Nations!

Pope Paul VI said in 1965

“The people of the Earth turn to the United Nations as the last hope of concord and Peace



**Come to the United Nations
It's Your World**

UN HQs -photo; H. Kamali

“A stronger United Nations for a Better World”, was the theme declared by **Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General** after he took office as Secretary-General on 23 January

2007. He emphasized “I am determined to make progress on the pressing issues of our time.”

While there has been some progress in the functioning of the UN administration, and the specialized agencies and great achievement in every aspect of the MDGs, fighting global poverty in particular, still it must be said that the United Nations, has failed the great expectation of the people in dealing with the most pressing issues.

The growing tensions and continued armed conflicts in the Middle East and Syria in particular, appear to be the most complicated pressing issue currently facing the international community. **Syria's armed conflict** has left over 200,000 dead and, seven million people internally displaced while UN observers were present with no chance of ending the bloodshed. Let's see what the United Nations has accomplished to deal with the pressing issues, as the Secretary-General has promised.



Why Do You Leave Your Country?

photo by H Kamali

On 24 September 2014, at the opening of the 69th session of the General Assembly, speaking of the Gaza war, Ban Ki-moon said:

“It has been a terrible year for the

principles of the United Nations Charter. From barrel bombs to beheadings, from the deliberate starvation of civilians to the assault on hospitals, U.N. shelters and aid convoys, human rights and the rule of law are under attack.”

UN’s Chief, once again in 2015, this time about the armed conflicts in Syria, *admitted that the “UN Security Council is failing Syria, because division among the super powers has prevented needed action to end the armed conflict”* So, the international divisions on dealing with the external intervention in Syria including funding and supply of weapons to foreign fighters has greatly contributed to Syrian continued bloodshed!.



Europe facing the worst migration crisis since World War II, a result of Syrian humanitarian disaster

Reforming the Security Council:

Under article 24 of the UN Charter, **maintaining peace and international security is the** primary responsibility of the Security Council. Article 25 requires the Member States to accept and carry out the decisions of the Council. Why has no effective measure been taken to deal with this humanitarian disaster? The Security Council should indeed exercise its

independent authority to deal with such pressing issues rather than taking the position of “wait and see”!

The New York Times, on June 9, 1945, with respect to the UN Security Council and Veto Power under discussion at the San Francisco Conference wrote that the inclusion of the Veto Power into the proposed Security Council was the critical issue before the International Conference. The issue was whether each of the Five Members of the Security Council should have power individually to Veto a decision or a dispute brought before the Council for discussion. The issue finally was settled by the US and the Russian Delegation in favor of the Veto.

The Secretary-General is now facing a political challenge since each of the veto powers can block any proposal to investigate the Syrian crisis or take action against the aggressors. He is disappointed since he has no power or authority over the Security Council to initiate any action.



Ban-Ki-moon: “UN Security Council is failing Syria, because division among the super powers has prevented needed action to end the armed conflict”

The world has changed since the creation of the United Nations in 1945, while the

Security Council structure, power and decision-making procedures has remained the same. The question of reform in the functioning of the United Nations Security Council, the UN's top decision-making body, has long been under consideration.

Now, the time has come to initiate some constructive action.

Reducing Inequality in the Bay Area

by Roger Eaton

UNA-SF Communications Chair

The “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals with 169 corresponding targets.

There is also a lengthy introduction explaining the vision and direction of the SDGs and a long section about how the SDGs might be implemented.



In paragraph 77 there is a reference to regular and inclusive reviews of progress at "sub-national" as well as national, regional and global levels. This reference gives us the foundation we need to consider the SDGs from the perspective of the Bay Area.

As a powerful example, take SDG 10, “Reduce inequality within and among

countries”. Target 10.1 is specific and could be adopted here in the Bay Area at the Metropolitan level: “By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average.”

In a way target 10.1 is rather minimal. The idea is just to turn things around so inequality is decreasing rather than increasing. Still, success will not come easy to say the least.

So how could the Bay Area get itself together to address the challenge of SDG target 10.1? Whatever we do here in the Bay Area might be preempted by a national response to this target, but even if Bernie Sanders becomes president, the national level may not be the easiest place to start. Locally, there are a number of NGO, academic and governmental bodies that would be interested.

The first task, presumably, will be to get a measurement process in place so we can have a baseline against which to gauge progress. Putting just that much together will acquaint the interested parties and set the stage for effective action. Let's make it happen!³

³ The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of UNA San Francisco.