

UNA-SA President's Review

Dear members of the Executive Committee and Chapter Chairs

How time flies! It is already more than six months since our very successful ARMUN conference, MDG Competition and A.G.M., 5 – 8 September 2005. May I once more congratulate Monique Theron and her Stellenbosch team for the excellent organization of the conference events. Monique produced a comprehensive ARMUN report which was circularized on October 5, 2005 and also sent to WFUNA. The Acting Secretary General of WFUNA, Pera Wells, acknowledged receipt of the Report and the ARMUN General Assembly Final Resolution which would be passed on to the formal UN structures. This Report and Resolution will be a permanent fixture in our national office at U.W.C.

Our Secretary General, Cedric de Coning wrote an excellent UNA-SA Annual Report for 2005 which states our history since the founding General Assembly meeting on 26 November 2003 at the University of the Western Cape. The Report summarizes our national initiatives and our financial state in 2005. The Report stated that in 2006 the UNA-SA will focus on “consolidating its national institutional framework, supporting existing chapters, establishing new chapters, national initiatives such as the Three Continents Film Festival, the MDG Competition and the Model UN Conference, so that they can be developed even further as vehicles for achieving the aims and objectives of the UNA-SA.” This Report was sent to WFUNA and all our ARMUN conference funders. We are on track in implementing our 2006 objectives.

A number of possible follow-up projects for ARMUN were proposed by our Youth Coordinator, Monique Theron and circulated to the Chapters. All ARMUN delegates were requested to develop an MDG-related follow-up community project and the best project will be selected by the UNA-SA Executive Committee in consultation with the ARMUN Committee and WFUNA-Youth. Monique Theron is our link with the Chapters and she feeds valuable ideas and information through to the Chairpersons of Chapters.

We hope that our Chapters will continue to grow and expand beyond universities to civil society. We are encouraging Chapters to embark on at least one community project per year and to establish links with NGOs, CBOs and other civil society structures. In many countries the UNAs have predominantly elderly members of society, whereas we have an abundance of youth through our university chapters. The UWC Chapter is in its final phase of formal establishment with more than forty members and a newly completed draft constitution. I have managed to secure another office for our UNA at UWC, so we now have a national office and a Chapter office in the Faculty of Education building. Liansky Bestenbier, Melissa Brown, Andiswe Magele and a number of other core members have done well to establish the UWC Chapter. They participated in the Film Festival and have organized for the International Book Day (23 April on the UN Calendar) and they will distribute the books collected among libraries in disadvantaged areas in the Western Cape.

Apart from the International UN Calendar, a schedule of possible UN Days for projects in 2006 have been circularized by our Youth Coordinator, and it would be preferable for these events to be related to the Millennium Development Goals.

We supported Monique Theron and Walter Lotze to go to Grahamstown to assist the Rhodes University Chapter in the planning of the Model United Nations project to be held in Grahamstown later in the year. Monique will give a progress report to the Executive Committee at its meeting on 20 April 2006.

The UWC Chapter has secured a collection of information documents, brochures and other publications from the UN Office in Pretoria which will be displayed in the National Office together with other documents received over the past year, ARMUN photographs, etc. The UWC Chapter has been invited to participate in the World Press Freedom Day (3rd May on UN Calendar) by the UN Office in Pretoria with poems and other forms of artistic expression as its central focus.

Our Association has received copies of numerous e-mails from the Irish UNA to WFUNA in which they criticized WFUNA and the New York office, and stating that the Geneva Office is treated unfairly. There has been heated exchanges between the Irish UNA and WFUNA-New York and it looks as though the issue of management of WFUNA will come to a head at the 38th Plenary Assembly of WFUNA in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 7 – 10 November 2006, with an international symposium to be held on 6 November. There will also be Youth Meetings and we hope to have funding from WFUNA for a youth delegate to attend. The Secretary General, Cedric de Coning has requested that I attend the Plenary on behalf of UNA-SA in Argentina. If I go I would like to do a presentation, an African perspective. We have decided not to participate in the debate between the Irish UNA and WFUNA, as we are not informed well enough about the issues. However, I will make a study of WFUNA and its operation. I have also nominated our Secretary General, Cedric de Coning, to be a Committee member of the Global Civil Society Committee on UN Management Reform which WFUNA and UNA-USA have established and asked UNAs to participate in. We hope to strengthen our knowledge and position vis-à-vis the WFUNA and UN structures to participate fully in WFUNA activities and structures. The letter of invitation from WFUNA came to us from the Acting Secretary General, Pera Wells.

Some of the Executive Committee members met Mr. Ricardo Dominicé, a WFUNA Vice-President and member of the Argentinian UNA at the Courtyard Hotel/Wild Fig Restaurant on 13 April 2006. He stopped over in Cape Town for a day enroute from Argentina to the Philippines. He briefed us on the issues and management of WFUNA and the November 2006 World Plenary of which he is an organizer. This meeting convinced me that we should be present at the plenary and make inputs there after thorough research of the dilemmas facing the management and funding of WFUNA. I took the visitor on a short tour of the City of Cape town. Raymond Fonseca-Steenkamp kindly met the visitor and arranged the meeting for us.

I sent a bank draft to WFUNA in the amount of US\$691.00 in payment of our 2005 outstanding dues (US\$283) and our 2006 dues (US\$408). This gives us voting rights at WFUNA.

The 60th anniversary of the UN was on 24 September 2005 and Raymond Fonseca-Steenkamp wrote a piece for us to release to newspapers as our contribution to the 60th anniversary celebrations. Raymond will also inform us at the April 20 meeting about progress in establishing the UCT Chapter.

The Millennium Development Goals Competition was won by one of the Stellenbosch University teams. They visited the UN in December 2005 – the prize for the winning team. We await their report on their visit. Unfortunately UNDP has done little so far to get the papers of all seven teams published. At the previous Executive Committee meeting, Raymond was asked to get quotations for journal type publication of all the MDG papers, quotes to be submitted to UNDP.

In January 2006, the Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation participants who had taken part in ARMUN held their follow-up project. This project took the form of a Model United Nations similar to ARMUN, which focused on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in Africa. Monique Theron and Walter Lotze assisted the Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation and the Emerging Leadership Programme in the planning stages of the MUN, and acted as advisors to the conference when it was held in Stellenbosch from 8th to 13th January with 30 participants. Monique and Walter assisted the organisers of the MUN, served on the steering committee for the duration of the conference, assisted the youth delegation from the Emerging Leadership Programme with their work during the conference, and held informative sessions about the UNA-SA, the United Nations system, and the Millennium Development Goals. The conference was judged a resounding success by its organizers and its participants, and UNA-SA has been invited to work with the Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation and its Emerging Leadership Programme in the future. Conference Participants were not only educated about the United Nations and the Millennium Development goals, but also gained valuable skills and knowledge, and were empowered to take these back to their communities.

The UNA-SA Website and Internship projects are priorities for 2006, to be handled by the UNS-SA Pretoria Chapter who has to submit a proposed budget. The S.G has asked that Kevin Town of the Pretoria Chapter join the Executive Committee and we have more meetings through tele-conference mode.

All Chapter Chairs are to submit their membership list and dues to the Youth Coordinator, Monique Theron, and Treasurer, Karen Smith as soon as possible. We also expect a report on the activities of the Chapter at the latest at the time of the Grahamstown MUN conference.

Prof. Harold D. Herman
President of UNA-SA
26 April 2006