STATEMENT BY UNA-SF PRESIDENT MARY STEINER

June 26, 2020 | San Francisco, California

As 2020 marks the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, it is the time to recognize the creation of the United Nations Charter in San Francisco, California, during the ending of World War II. It represents the determination of humanity to end “the scourge of war” and “protect the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.” The just rule of law is to prevail. Social progress with “better standards of life in larger freedom” are to be developed. Peace and security are paramount with the establishment of the mechanisms in the United Nations Charter.

San Francisco was selected by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt as the place for the United Nations Conference on International Organization. It is equidistant to the fifty Allied nations who were to convene on April 25, 1945. The City had been host to other international conferences and featured the War Memorial Opera House and Veterans Building to accommodate the nearly 5,000 delegates, administration, consultants, press, and civil society organizations engaged in the committees, plenary sessions, and consultations. The American Association of the UN (AAUN), which was the predecessor to the United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA), was formed in 1943 and was the predication for the founding of the UN. The United Nations Association, USA, San Diego attended the UN Conference on International Organization as the AAUN.

On June 26, 1945, the UN Charter was signed in the Herbst Theater of the War Memorial Veterans Building. The War Memorial Opera House and Veterans Building are newly restored and remain in use for the performing arts as well as veterans affairs. The UNA-SF is honored to be located in the historic War Memorial Veterans Building and use this venue for our many programming activities both in-person as well as virtually to support the vital work of the United Nations.

At seventy-five, the United Nations has one hundred and ninety-three members. The geopolitics are vastly different with the COVID-19 pandemic, unresolved racial justice, global warming, economic inequity, and other pressing challenges and existential threats. As fractures in the aging systems appear, it is time to talk. As the United Nations Association, USA, San Francisco (UNA SF) responded to the call to participate in the largest ever global conversation on “The Future We Want, The UN We Need; Reaffirming Our Collective Commitment to Multilateralism” started by the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, it recognized the symbolic significance of including and amplifying the diverse voices of San Francisco—the Birthplace of the United Nations in the ancestral, unceded territory of the Muwekma Ohlone people.

The results of these consultations were submitted to the United Nations through the UNA-UNA National Office and are now presented to national, state, and local officials for consideration and to the general public for learning and inspiration. The UNA-SF is releasing the report “Voices of San Francisco—the Birthplace of the United Nations” in solidarity with all other stakeholder engagement efforts conducted by the UN, governments, and civil society organizations in service to a better future for all.

Mary Steiner
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