



May 2026 Newsletter

From the Executive Director

Greetings from the Tennessee World Affairs Council. TNWAC has remained highly active throughout April and May, continuing its mission to bring distinguished voices and meaningful global conversations to Tennessee.

We had the privilege of hosting two exceptional keynote speakers. Frank Lavin offered a compelling presentation on Cold War policies and their continuing relevance to today's geopolitical landscape. We also welcomed Ambassador Georg Sparber of Liechtenstein, who shared valuable historical perspectives on the Principality, its economic achievements, and its strong global ties with the United States. On May 8, we concluded our Distinguished Speakers Series with an outstanding presentation by Seth Bernstein, CEO of AllianceBernstein, moderated by Karl Dean.



Dr. Liane Hentschke
Executive Director

April also featured two webinars in our signature online series. In the Global Dialogue Series, Dr. João A. de Castro Neves, Senior Director for Global Strategic Risks at ExxonMobil, discussed "Navigating Geopolitical Risk: How Multinational Corporations Are Adapting to a More Fragmented World." The conversation was moderated by Carolyn Buccerone, Senior Vice President and Associate General Counsel at AllianceBernstein. In our Global Nashville with Karl Dean series, we welcomed Kumar Kolin, Chief Business Officer, Healthcare & North America at Trinetix. Together, they explored "The Nashville Edge: How Global Thinking and Enterprise Innovation Are Building a Local Legacy."

As we conclude our 2025–2026 Distinguished Speakers Series, we reflect with gratitude on a remarkable season of sixteen events hosted at four outstanding venues: Bass, Berry & Sims, AllianceBernstein, Pinnacle Financial Partners, and First Bank.

At a time of profound geopolitical, economic, and technological change, your commitment reflects something deeply meaningful: a shared belief that understanding the world matters, and that dialogue, knowledge, and human connection remain essential in challenging times. The Tennessee World Affairs Council remains deeply committed to its mission of equipping Tennesseans with the global understanding and civic confidence needed to engage thoughtfully in an increasingly interconnected world. Our vision is to help prepare Tennessee to compete, lead, and prosper in a globally connected future.

As a proudly nonpartisan organization, TNWAC continues to provide a space where people from different backgrounds, professions, cultures, and perspectives can come together in good faith to exchange ideas, ask difficult questions, and learn from one another. In today's world, that is not only valuable — it is essential.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liane Hentschke". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Explore International Careers

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

In this role, you will support initiatives aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a focus on climate action, economic inclusion, and community resilience. You will collaborate with international organizations, NGOs, and government agencies to design, implement, and monitor programs that drive long-term impact across regions.

[Learn more...](#)

HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS ANALYST

In this role, you will assess crisis situations, support emergency response coordination, and contribute to the development of humanitarian policy. You will work with global partners to analyze data, prepare reports, and help improve response strategies for vulnerable populations affected by conflict and disasters. [Learn more...](#)

The 4 Faces Shaping the Race for UN Secretary-General in 2027



Macky Sall
Senegal



Michelle Bachelet
Chile



Rebeca Grynspan
Costa Rica



Rafael Grossi
Argentina

The race for the next UN Secretary-General (2027–2031 term) is underway, with candidates nominated by member states and selected through the UN Security Council and General Assembly process rather than a public vote.

Among the key names being discussed are Rafael Grossi from Argentina, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency; Rebeca Grynspan from Costa Rica, former Vice President and UNCTAD Secretary-General; Michelle Bachelet from Chile, former President and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; and Macky Sall from Senegal, former President.

Each candidate represents different global priorities, from nuclear security and development to human rights and stronger representation for the Global South.

Sponsor Highlight: **trinetix**

Trinetix is a trusted digital product partner that helps forward-thinking companies transform ideas into impactful solutions. With expertise in strategy, design, and technology, Trinetix empowers businesses to innovate, streamline operations, and deliver exceptional user experiences. Serving a diverse range of industries, Trinetix blends creativity and technical excellence to drive digital transformation. We're proud to have Trinetix as a 2025/2026 Silver sponsor and thank them for supporting our global education and community engagement programs.

Thank you for your support!



Board Member Highlight: **Allan Ramsaur**

This month, we're proud to recognize Allan Ramsaur, our dedicated Secretary and longtime Board member, for his decades of leadership and service within Tennessee's legal and civic communities. With a distinguished career spanning more than 40 years, Allan has played a transformative role in organizations in helping expand access to legal services, strengthen professional education, and advance public service initiatives across the state.

From advocating for programs like Tennessee's mandatory school breakfast initiative and IOLTA funding to leading statewide legal organizations through periods of significant growth, Allan's impact has been far-reaching. A graduate of Lambuth University and the University of Tennessee College of Law, Allan continues to bring wisdom, integrity, and a deep commitment to community engagement to TNWAC's mission of fostering global awareness and informed dialogue throughout Tennessee.

Guest Columnist

The views and opinions expressed in our guest column are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Tennessee World Affairs Council.

In a corridor at the Milano Cortina 2026 athletes' village, an Iranian skier and an Israeli skier stopped, greeted each other, and wished each other well. There were no cameras, no officials; just two athletes whose governments can barely share a continent, sharing a moment because the setting made it possible.

A volunteer chaplain witnessed it and wrote it down. I thought about how few institutions on earth could still produce that scene.

Most people watch the Olympics and see athletes. Governments see something else. They see one of the few opportunities for a country to present itself on its own terms to billions of people at once.

Beijing 2008 was a display of capability. Every visual, every Ceremony, every timing decision conveyed a single message: China can do hard things flawlessly. Sochi 2014 was a different exercise, a projection of sheer scale, with infrastructure as statecraft. South Africa's 2010 FIFA World Cup was a third version: more than half of foreign fans said afterward they would never have considered visiting the country otherwise, and a young democracy was put on the global map in a way years of conventional diplomacy could not. Joseph Nye called this kind of attraction soft power. Sport may be its most reliable delivery mechanism.

The next race is already underway. India, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, South Africa, and Chile are vying for the 2036 Olympics, and what is being negotiated isn't stadiums; it is status, credibility, and global standing. For most countries, hosting is the last public-facing chance to define their narrative before someone else defines it for them.

I have worked on 15 Olympic bids over 30 years, 6 of which were successful. I can tell you what every IOC evaluation is trying to answer: is this country going to make us look good or give us headaches? At heart, that is a foreign-policy question. A bid is a diplomatic campaign, and the Games' legacy is a reputation that pays dividends for decades.

Guest Columnist Continued

President Kirsty Coventry, the IOC's first woman and first African leader, is reviewing how the Movement selects its future hosts. The procedural questions matter. The bigger question is whether the Olympics is still the rare place where every country shows up in the same room.

Back in that corridor in Cortina, two athletes shook hands. Outside the venue walls, their countries cannot. For 17 days every 2 years, the Olympics remain the place where that exchange is possible. In 2026, that may be the most consequential thing sport does.

So, the next time you watch the Olympic Games, remember that you are watching the most reliably attended diplomatic gathering on earth. The athletes are competing. Their countries are signaling. And for seventeen days, every two years, every nation has agreed to be in the same place, peacefully. That is rarer than it sounds, and it may be getting rarer still.



Terrence Burns
TNWAC Board Member

APRIL & MAY EVENT RECAP



GLOBAL AFFAIRS KNOWLEDGE QUIZ

1 Which nation recently left the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) over the fallout of the Iran war?

A Iran

B Iraq

C United Arab Emirates

2 Which has been the key stumbling block that has forced the Trump Administration to continue the war and blockade despite its domestic unpopularity?

A Iran's refusal to give up its nuclear program

B Iran's refusal to give up its missile program

C Iran's support of militias in Iraq and Lebanon

3 In which year did the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action collapse as the United States withdrew?

A 2015

B 2017

C 2018

4 The British Ambassador to the United States was leaked, admitting that the United States had only one special relationship left, as the bilateral relationship had deteriorated. Which country is this?

A Canada

B Israel

C Saudi Arabia

5 Which Latin American leader has been openly supportive of the war against Iran to such an extent that leaked Pentagon emails have hinted at resolving a long-running territorial dispute with the United Kingdom in his country's favor?

A Argentine President Javier Milei

B Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva

C Chilean President Jose Antonio Kast

Find the answers to the quiz on the last page of the newsletter



TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES



BOHEMIAN WONDERS – CZECH REPUBLIC

May 16 - May 25



EUROPEAN COASTAL CRUISE: LISBON TO LONDON

May 23 - Jun 01

REGISTER NOW



Support TNWAC

As a nonpartisan nonprofit organization, our mission is to **promote international awareness, understanding**, and connections to enhance the region's global stature and to prepare Tennesseans to thrive in our increasingly complex and interconnected world.

1

Bring a friend to one of our events and encourage them to join us as a member!

2

Introduce our team to an **expert in your network** to join us as a speaker in 2026!

3

Encourage **businesses you love to join TNWAC** as a corporate member or sponsor!



Answers for the knowledge quiz

1) C 2) A 3) C 4) B 5) A

- 5/5 – Your global knowledge is amazing
- 4/5 – Impressive
- 3/5 – Not bad
- 2/5 – A good start
- 1/5 – You're just getting started
- 0/5 – Join us at our next event to learn more