



QUAKER UNITED NATIONS OFFICE

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Partnerships Roundtable

Statement by The Quaker United Nations Office and the Sisters of Mercy The International Conference on Financing for Development 3.19.02

Thank you for this opportunity. My name is Lori Heninger, and I represent the Quaker UN Offices in New York and Geneva. My partner is Wendy Flannery, representing the Sisters of Mercy at the UN.

For over 300 years, Quakers, as pacifists, have worked locally, regionally and internationally for a peaceful world grounded in justice and equality; most of this work has been done quietly, over long periods of time. We have learned that peace-building is a process of relationship-building and inclusion. Partnerships have proven to be the most effective tool for this work.

Our organizations have been deeply committed to Financing for Development at all stages because we have witnessed, first hand, the relationship between poverty and violent conflict. We see the opportunities created by the Financing for Development follow-up process as an essential component for the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals. Eradicating poverty decreases the possibility of violent conflict, and creates the structures that lead to peace.

Partnerships are based on relationships. Relationships are based on trust. Without trust, true partnership cannot exist; instead, exploitative interactions take place. Through our experiences from the grassroots to the multilateral level, we have found that genuine partnerships have the following characteristics:

- **Equality:** acknowledging and valuing the different strengths provided by each partner. Decision making must be equitable so as to provide an enabling environment and not foster dependency.
- **Benefits:** partnerships benefit all stakeholders involved and take into consideration benefit for others who are not immediate stakeholders; the most important question to be asked in any partnership is, "Whose needs are being met?" When loans are made to governments of countries, the people on the ground in the countries may or may not benefit from those loans; indeed, millions

suffer from the fallout of governmental loan default and the corresponding flight of foreign direct investment.

- Communication: consultation must be held, by external stakeholders, with as many people/sectors as possible in a society, and is essential to the fair distribution of resources and jobs; this can help prevent conflict before it begins. External stakeholders and those wishing to establish links with partners in-country need to listen much more than they talk, as well as ask questions to develop a genuine understanding of the situation. Assumptions need to be challenged.
- Recognition and respect: partnerships have different meanings and have different implications in different cultures and settings. Uncovering the expectations and understandings, and jointly building the structure of the partnership is mandatory for mutual benefit. This takes time and patience and involves financial commitment, and will vary from setting to setting. In her book, "First Do No Harm", Mary Anderson delineates criteria for choosing partners when intervention is needed in humanitarian crises so as not to exacerbate conflict.
- Choice: Choice needs to be provided by all partners wherever possible. People who have no choice develop ways around the system or institution, which has taken away their right to choose. This is a direct route to violent conflict.
- Responsibility and Accountability: All criteria for work together should be clear at the beginning, and a process for dialogue and monitoring around change of terms and/or grievance must be incorporated into any agreement. Partners are accountable to partners; this is the key to trust.

From these experiences of successful partnerships, our recommendations are:

- That partnerships are based on the mutual recognition and transfer of resources and not evaluated solely in terms of monetary transfers;
- That guidelines for effective partnerships, already developed in multi-stakeholder contexts, be collated and promoted through the UN system;
- That the need for funding to establish effective partnerships be acknowledged and incorporated into all partnership initiatives;
- That the military expenditures of developed countries be reduced, and that those funds, along with military aid, be redirected to poverty eradication;
- That research be undertaken on the links between poverty and conflict.