

Geneva Reporter

Updates on a new international migration agreement

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QUNO's Cat Baker adds to a display at the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network conference (February 2017) highlighting actions taken by Quakers on forced displacement.

Our Human Rights and Refugees programme shares the latest developments towards a “global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration,” how QUNO is involved and why it matters.

What is this Global Compact for Migrants?

In September 2016, through the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, States called for a new international agreement covering all dimensions of international migration. The State-led process towards developing a “global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration” is now under way, due for adoption by the United Nations (UN) in 2018.

Will the agreement make a difference?

An agreement on this issue offers real opportunities: to create a fact-based, positive narrative about migration and to improve the treatment of migrants. Yet in the current context of nationalism, xenophobia and policies violating migrants’ rights, this is not guaranteed. We must be vigilant in ensuring that a people-centred outcome is achieved.

What are the latest developments?

States and others, including non-governmental organizations, trade unions, academics, and businesses, have begun sharing ideas on the content the global compact will cover through a series of six thematic sessions as part of the ongoing initial consultation phase. After these consultations, there will be a “stocktaking” conference, followed by negotiations early next year.

How has QUNO been involved?

We’re working with a wide range of partners to ensure that the agreement is fair, effective, people centred and grounded in existing human rights standards. We’ve been coordinating with civil society organizations in Geneva, and increasingly working with partners in New York and around the world to ensure that civil society voices are effectively heard. We’ve produced a series of papers to support the process and collaborated on a set of joint civil society key messages for a human rights based global compact.

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What's next?

In the next few months we will continue to follow the process closely, working with States, UN agencies and others. At this stage, it is unclear what a “compact” will consist of, what legal status it will have and how it will tangibly improve the lives of migrants. To help States and other stakeholders think about some of these questions, we have recently produced a paper that takes inspiration from other international agreements and considers what might constitute effective implementation, monitoring and accountability mechanisms under this new agreement.

A more detailed briefing on this work, including ways Friends can engage, can be found at quno.org/friends-briefing.

Sustaining peace & human rights

Since the beginning of 2017, QUNO has been working on a project to strengthen the links between the peacebuilding and human rights communities within the UN and on the ground through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The UPR is a UN process that reviews the human rights records of all UN member States every five years. To support this process, information from UN agencies and civil society organisations are compiled to provide recommendations to the State under review and background for other States to create recommendations and questions.

For the UPR sessions that took place in May, we chose to focus on Indonesia, facing dangers of religious intolerance and polarization, and Brazil, plagued with one of the highest murder rates in the world and deep inequalities. We invited two peacebuilding civil society representatives to attend the regular briefing sessions for diplomats and also off the record meetings organized by QUNO in Geneva. Ivan Marques, from Sou da Paz in Brazil, and Ruslan, from KOMPAK (Kupang Peacemakers) in Indonesia, were able to discuss their work and explore, with a selected group of diplomats, ways in which the UPR could better support peacebuilding and violence reduction and elimination.

We believe that the UPR, and human rights processes in general, provide useful tools that peacebuilders could use in their work but of which they have been largely unaware. Conversely, peacebuilding approaches could help strengthen the implementation of human rights agreements if human rights defenders could be encouraged to tap into this potential.

In January, QUNO worked with Britain Yearly Meeting to organize two high level inter-faith luncheons in London with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Some 60 people, including representatives from some thirty faith communities, met with scientists working on issues related to climate change.

The meetings were held off-the-record at Friends House London, with participants sitting with scientists in a circle to help create a shared discussion and accountability. The purpose of the meetings was for faith representatives to hear the latest climate science findings, and to engage on the development of the 6th IPCC Assessment Report. The IPCC compiles the most comprehensive collection of climate science worldwide and its reports have a significant impact on policy decisions at the international and national levels.

QUNO believes that conversations between science and faith communities play an important and supportive role, and come at a time when decision makers are increasingly turning to technical fixes and geo-engineering. While technical “fixes” may address some symptoms, many fail to address the root causes embedded in our human behaviour, thus enabling continued pollution.

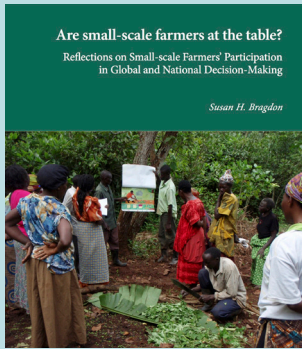
We observe with concern a low confidence in the science and climate negotiator communities in an ability to limit global temperatures to 1.5C above preindustrial levels. Yet this comes alongside insufficient research on the potential of changes in human behaviour, coupled with uncertainty that enough people would want to transform their behaviours for the greater good.

Faith communities are increasingly offering a positive and empowering voice of hope over fear, of compassion over indifference, and urgent and fair action as a moral obligation. During the lunches, faith representatives asked detailed questions on the science, wishing to better inform their congregations. But they also asked scientists to engage in research on ways to transform our human behaviours and to empower individuals and communities in their efforts to live sustainably on this earth. This was an encouraging message for the scientists to hear.

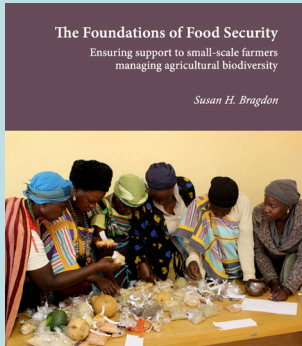
Recently, we learned that the IPCC's upcoming 6th Assessment Report will indeed include research and insights into “how social practices and patterns of economic development shape emissions” and “how changes to human behaviour can promote climate change mitigation.”

QUNO welcomes this news.

Recent publications



Are Small-scale Farmers at the Table?
Reflections on small-scale farmers' participation
in global and national decision-making
Susan H. Bragdon (March 2017)



Briefing for Friends: Protecting Refugees and Migrants under the New York Declaration
Challenges and opportunities at the UN level
Catherine Baker (January 2017)

Foundations of Food Security
Ensuring support to small-scale farmers managing
agricultural biodiversity.
Susan H. Bragdon (May 2016)



Towards a Human Rights Based Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration: Implementation, monitoring and accountability mechanisms
Catherine Baker and Laurel Townhead (June 2017)

The Time is Ripe for Governments to Strengthen Sustainable and Food-Secure Farming
A call to action by the small-scale farmers and
agrobiodiversity Dialogue-to-Action group
QUNO (March 2017)



All publications are available for
download on our website at:
quno.org/recent-publications.

News from QUNO New York: Working for Peace During a Time of Change

The past 12 months have seen great political change, and the UN has been no exception. In New York, we witnessed the election of a new UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, the former High Commissioner for Refugees, and former Prime Minister of Portugal. Mr. Guterres has highlighted the prevention of conflict as a priority for the UN going forward.

Prevention of violent conflict is one of QUNO New York's main areas of work, and an essential part of this program is the convening and facilitation of the Civil Society - UN Prevention Platform. The Platform is a relatively new initiative, which brings together a global network of civil society actors working on diverse elements of prevention, from early warning to long term preventative action. Launched in 2016, the Platform is serving a critical role of linking civil society actors to UN policy makers by drawing attention to the importance of including civil society in conflict prevention initiatives. Since its launch, the Platform has aimed to support

the UN's prevention agenda by working in close collaboration with different UN agencies.

Likewise, a vital part of our peacebuilding work is ensuring that policy discussions in New York are being informed by and connecting to the work led by peacebuilding practitioners, and communities affected on the ground. As a component of this program, we hosted Getry Agizah, a Kenyan Quaker, and Coordinator of the Friends Church Peace Teams and Transforming Communities for Social Change, to share her work on peacebuilding at the community level. During her visit, Getry shared her perspectives on local-level peacebuilding by highlighting examples of how she has successfully used her training to support the communities she works with in the areas of healing and reconciliation. Such briefings provide concrete and relatable examples from the grassroots and in turn help policy makers better understand the needs of the local communities.

QUNO Q & A with Carolan Redfearn



In QUNO Q&A, we feature interviews with alumni about their perspectives and experiences as Programme Assistants (PAs) or Geneva Summer School participants. For this issue, we spoke with 2010-11 PA for Human Rights and Refugees Carolan Redfearn (pictured above sitting at her desk as PA in Quaker House Geneva). After her time at QUNO, Carolan returned to her work at the UK Department for Education. She is currently working on a review of education in the north of England and leading the Department's flexible resource team. Since 2014, she has also served as a member of the Quaker United Nations Committee (QUNC), helping to guide the work of QUNO Geneva.

Can you recall what first led you to apply for the PA position at QUNO?

It feels as though I've always been aware of QUNO's work and PA positions, mostly from reading about people's experiences in magazines like *The Friend*. I decided to apply for the PA position because I was looking for a break from my existing role and wanted to try working for a charity, doing something I really cared about. QUNO's focus on children of prisoners was a good fit with some work I was doing at the time on children's rights.

How do you remember your experience at QUNO Geneva?

Eye-opening! It was fascinating seeing the UN in action—although in practice that sometimes meant sitting through very long meetings. The UN is incredibly slow moving, which makes it particularly satisfying when you manage to do something which changes its course, even slightly. I met lots of wonderful people during my time in Geneva, and particularly enjoyed working with the NGO Working Group on the Rights of the Child.

I also tried to make the most of living in Switzerland: I skied, sailed, hiked, cycled and visited lots of nearby towns and villages to see as much of the country as I could while I was there.

What's notable about your work then?

The big focus for my year was securing a "day of general discussion" on children of prisoners at the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Securing a day of general discussion was a way to get the UN, states and NGOs to focus on the issue. After lots of lobbying, we succeeded in securing the day—it took place a couple of months after I had left, but I hear it was a big success.

Has serving on QUNC given you a perspective on our work that perhaps you didn't have as a PA?

As a PA I was quite focused on the Human Rights and Refugees programme. Joining QUNC has helped me see QUNO's work in the round, including its connections with QUNO New York and other international Quaker bodies. I hope I've also held onto my perspective as a PA, though, particularly when thinking about how our decisions will affect QUNO staff.

Is there anything in your experience with QUNO that feels especially relevant to you now?

Quakers believe that there is that of God in everyone. I think that leads QUNO to listen carefully to everyone, seeking to understand their point of view. Everyone's perspective is heard and valued, and QUNO also creates space for governments, civil society and their representatives to listen to each other. Time and again this helps people to see each other as humans, to find common ground, and to find ways through intractable problems.

QUNO depends upon support from individuals, Quaker Meetings and others.

Visit quno.org/donate and help us continue working to promote peace and justice at the UN and other institutions.

