

Geneva Reporter

Quaker United Nations Office - Geneva

QUNO says 'Thank You' to David Atwood



David Atwood joined QUNO sixteen years ago and in that time he has left a great impression on QUNO and the wider community here in Geneva. A founding partner of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, the Geneva Forum and the Geneva Process, he has played a significant role in changing the way civil society interacts with States and UN organisations on the issues of disarmament and peace.

During the course of the last few months we have received numerous messages of gratitude and admiration for

David's work with QUNO. Many cited his involvement in the campaign to ban landmines and his work on small arms, as sources of inspiration. Describing him as an 'unsung hero', and a 'catalyst for change' it is clear that he has made a lasting impression on the lives of many.

There is no doubt that despite his retirement from QUNO, David will continue to shape and influence disarmament work in Geneva and further afield. We sincerely thank him for the time and energy he has invested in this work and wish him well in his future endeavours.

Message from Jonathan Woolley

Jonathan Woolley assumed duties as Director of QUNO Geneva on June 15th 2011. He writes:

It is an honour for me to join QUNO's long tradition of consistent, inspired, quiet diplomacy for a more peaceful and just world and to become part of such a committed group of people within and beyond QUNO itself. I believe we are faced with several great opportunities and challenges over the coming years, evolving while

being true to the original vision of the effectiveness of small groups and long-term commitment to the principles of the UN.

I sincerely thank David Atwood for all he has given to QUNO as Director in Geneva and as Representative for Disarmament & Peace. His personal warmth and commitment can be seen in many, many initiatives in Geneva, New York and beyond.

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Governmental Experts: Small Arms and Light Weapons

The Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the UN Programme of Action (PoA) to Prevent Combat, Eradicate the Illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in all its Aspects took place in New York 9th – 13th May 2011. Discussions focused on the issues of marking, record keeping and co-operation in tracing.

Ambassador McLay of New Zealand directed discussions through a series of thematic discussion papers distributed prior to the meeting. These fuelled interesting presentations and exchanges of views on recordkeeping mechanisms,

marking techniques, and tracing software. Discussions on international co-operation and assistance also proved highly useful in addressing implementation challenges.

Aoife Reaper-Reynolds attended the meeting on behalf of QUNO and the Geneva Forum. In association with UNIDIR (UN Institute for Disarmament Research) and the permanent missions of Germany and Norway, QUNO conducted a side event on the 'Challenges and Viabilities of Tracing Conflict Ammunition'. This was one of the best attended side events during the week, demonstrating the interest of member States in developing

ammunition tracing methods. An article based on this side event can be found at www.reachingcriticalwill.org/legal/salw/mge2011/MGEMONitor-4.pdf.

While the meeting fulfilled its mandate, a number of States called for further dialogue on other SALW related issues such as border controls, ammunition and civil society cooperation. There is growing recognition that the scope of analysis must be broadened in order to improve implementation of the PoA and effectively contribute to the control and eventual eradication of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

QUNO Summer School 2011

Two weeks spent in Geneva, visiting places where the world is being changed was an amazing and memorable opportunity which I will never forget. Our small group of 23 people from all around the world was taught by passionate experts, diplomats, climate change campaigners and other professionals. Moreover, we got to know how the Quaker United Nations Office researches issues of concern and raises them through the United Nations system to get them on the international agenda. It was very valuable to learn how QUNO staff engages with the UN and the wider international community through holding meetings and producing written submissions and briefings, researching and producing publications on relevant

topics, making oral statements and organizing side events at meetings of the UN and other international bodies.

Furthermore, QUNO focuses on areas of concern and values where it has leading expertise, such as Disarmament and Peace, Global Economic Issues and Human Rights & Refugees. Related to these three fields, we received informative and revealing lectures which helped us discover and understand the workings of the UN. Almost every day we had the chance to visit various international organizations such as UNHCR, WHO, ILO, WTO, ICRC and to see from inside the 'kitchen of policy making' in these internationally significant bodies.

Through a friendly working atmosphere and united common values, the discussions and staff seminars gave us a chance to get to know each other better and by the end of the Summer School we all became close friends, making the summer school two of the most unforgettable and rewarding weeks of my life!

*Written by Dovydas Svetkauskas,
Lithuania.*

The next Geneva Summer School will take place from 1—13 July 2012. For details, please visit www.quno.org/getInvolved/IntlSummerSchool-Geneva.htm or contact QUNO directly.



Quakers at the Crime Commission

The twentieth UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice took place in Vienna in April. Held annually, the Crime Commission is where ministries of justice, prison staff, UN officials and NGOs meet to discuss criminal justice issues. Quaker representatives have been attending since its inception.

One priority for Quakers at the 2011 Commission was to raise awareness of the new UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules). QUNO staff and Quaker Crime Commission representatives were heavily involved in drafting the Bangkok Rules, which they had worked on together at the UN's human rights and criminal justice bodies. Oliver Robertson from QUNO spoke at a side event on the Rules organised by the Thai government in Vienna in April, talking about the situation of children of prisoners and the upcoming Day of General

Discussion on the issue, which will take place on 30 September 2011 at the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Quakers also co-sponsored two other side events. One was on the benefits and challenges of consulting prisoners about prison regimes, with Quaker



representative Kimmitt Edgar advocating greater consultation with prisoners, through prison councils, prisoners in representative roles, and surveys or one-off focus groups. The other was on foreign national prisoners and highlighted the danger that some people detained as foreign national prisoners may have been victims of human trafficking.

Quakers also made two public statements to the Commission. One highlighted the value of different UN agencies working together, drawing on the Quaker experience in developing the Bangkok Rules; the other focused on the principles that should underlie the treatment of prisoners. The coming year will see the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (SMRs) reviewed, and Quakers are concerned that punitive attitudes in governments may mean the protection given to prisoners in this 1955 document is reduced. The Quaker statement affirmed 'the humanity of all those in prison, staff and prisoners' and that 'all are entitled to dignity; all are capable of good', encouraging listeners that 'it should be the aim of all of us in all our endeavours to encourage the flourishing of the human spirit.'

Conscientious Objection to Military Service

For several years now, the UN Human Rights Committee has been clear that conscientious objection to military service is protected under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In April this year, it reiterated this position in relation to the cases of 100 Jehovah's Witnesses imprisoned in the Republic of Korea for their conscientious objection. However, the Committee moved to an even stronger position than before, holding that it 'inheres in the right to freedom of thought,

conscience and religion. It entitles any individual to an exemption from compulsory military service if this cannot be reconciled with that individual's religion or beliefs.' (*Min-Kyu Jeong et al v Republic of Korea*) Previously, the Committee had identified the protection of conscientious objection as a manifestation of religion or belief, which might, therefore, be subject to some restrictions.

The World Council of Churches has also been giving attention to

conscientious objection to military service. At its International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, in Kingston, Jamaica, in May 2011, the final Message stated, 'At every level churches play a role in supporting and protecting the right of conscientious objection, and in assuring asylum for those who oppose and resist militarism and armed conflicts.' QUNO ran a workshop on these issues at the Convocation together with Connection e.V. and the Eritrean Antimilitarist Initiative.



Decade to Overcome Violence

Long-planned as the culmination of the World Council of Churches 'Decade to Overcome Violence', the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) was held in Kingston, Jamaica (17 – 25 May 2011). This major gathering brought together nearly 1000 participants from more than 100 countries for reflection and recommitment around the unifying themes of 'Peace in the community', 'Peace with the Earth', 'Peace in the marketplace', and 'Peace among the peoples'.

Representatives of the so-called 'historic peace churches' - Mennonites, Quakers, and Brethren -

helped in shaping calls to action by the churches around these themes and emphasizing the importance of non-violence and the exercise of conscience as vital catalysts for change. The Quaker United Nations Office was represented at this historic event by David Atwood and Rachel Brett from Geneva and Andrew Tomlinson from New York.

The final message of the IEPC included the following significant passage: 'History, especially in the witness of the historic peace churches, reminds us of the fact that violence is contrary to the will of God and can never resolve conflicts.

It is for this reason that we are moving beyond the doctrine of just war towards a commitment to Just Peace. It requires moving from exclusive concepts of national security to safety for all. This includes a day-to-day responsibility to prevent, that is, to avoid violence at its root.'

For a report of the IEPC, including the full text of its concluding message, see www.overcomingviolence.org/en/resources-dov/wcc-resources/documents/presentations-speeches-messages/iepc-message.html

Message from Incoming Director Jonathan Woolley

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I look forward to leading the QUNO Geneva team and to building on the work that David

Atwood has done. While my own professional experience is in the development community, especially in agriculture, water and environment, I commit to

involvement in all QUNO's programs and ask for the guidance and support of all those who hold QUNO dear.

Staff Update

In March we welcomed Paulin Regnard as the Programme Officer for Disarmament & Peace. His extensive experience in peacebuilding with the United Nations in Kosovo, Haiti and Sudan will no doubt bring the programme in new and exciting directions.

Former QUNO Programme Assistant Jennifer Rosenberg was recently shortlisted for the Howard League for Penal Reform's Inaugural Research Medal Award in the publication she wrote for QUNO, entitled 'Children Need Dads Too: Children with Fathers in prison'.

Two new Programme Assistants will shortly be joining QUNO Geneva. Helen Kearney and Lynn Finnegan will begin working with the Human Rights and Refugees and the Global Economic Issues Programmes respectively on 1st September 2011.

Recent QUNO Publications

Paths Toward Peace: Best Practices in Violence Reduction and Development in South and Southeast Asia, Comunidad Segura, June 2011

Food, Biological Diversity and Intellectual Property – The Role of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants, by Graham Dutfield, February 2011

Briefing on the UN Rules for the treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders - Bangkok Rules, QUNO & Penal Reform International, February 2011

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