



Geneva Reporter

Quaker United Nations Office Geneva

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Preventing Armed Violence: the Geneva Declaration Review Conference

On 31 October and 1 November 2011, the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development held its second Ministerial Review Conference. The Conference was significant for the level of involvement by civil society - involvement which QUNO coordinated - and for confirming the need to integrate violence reduction strategies into development policy.

QUNO was instrumental in organising five regional consultations with civil society in the build-up to the Review Conference (see [Geneva Reporter Jul-Oct 2011](#)), and the leading priority expressed in these meetings was the 'mainstreaming' of armed violence prevention and reduction initiatives into social and economic development strategies.



Comunidad Segura

This priority is shared by other important stakeholders. Most notably, the World Bank's *World Development Report 2011* explicitly recognises for the first time that addressing issues relating to armed violence is a development priority. Speakers at the Conference also noted that for armed violence to be effectively targeted, reduced and eliminated, 'multi-stakeholder coalitions' are required, a

theme identified by Sandeep Chawla of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

The next steps will require sustained work to deepen engagement, broaden coalitions, and develop and share practical expertise in this area. These concerns were reflected in the Outcome Document of the Conference, which is available at www.genevadeclaration.org.

One of the striking features of the Review Conference, and one about which QUNO is particularly pleased, was the vibrant participation of civil society. Seventy organisations from over forty countries were represented, and their experience was felt at all levels – delivering opening and closing addresses, participating in the core panel sessions, discussing their work at the parallel thematic sessions, and hosting side-events. This level of involvement was a great advance on the previous Review Conference in 2008.

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The Unknown Impacts of Seeds Policies: Exploring the Effects of UPOV

Intellectual property (IP) on seeds affects farming, scientific research, business, economic development, environmental sustainability and food security. But what exactly are the impacts of IP on these different sectors? Do some benefit while others lose out? QUNO is involved in a project that seeks to find out.

Recent advances in science have opened the way for the creation of new and improved seeds. The international seed industry has made tremendous commercial gains from these, partly as a result of strong IP rights, and is now calling for an increasingly stringent IP regime to apply to the seed sector in all countries. They argue that the public will benefit as IP fosters research and innovation. Others, however, point out that farmers have collaboratively developed new seeds for centuries without any kind of IP, that innovation in the agricultural sector continues without IP rules, and that IP rules actually undermine the types of innovation suited to the needs of most of the world's farmers.

Evidence to support both sides of the argument is lacking. This is why QUNO is involved in a new project, that will measure the impact of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) from a human rights perspective. UPOV provides a global system of IP for plants, called Plant Variety Protection (PVP).

Its mission is to 'encourage the development of new varieties of plants, for the benefit of society'.

UPOV has not defined what it means by 'for the benefit of society' but its own analysis reflects that it measures success by the number of new plant varieties that are registered for PVP, that it concerns plants for which there is a commercial market, and that it is concerned with promoting international trade – of seeds and of the fruit (or flowers) of such seeds. Critics of UPOV contend that the system it promotes favours breeders' interests over those of producers and farmers and society at large: UPOV does not consider its system's impact on the farming community, the informal seed sector or on agrobiodiversity.

The human rights impact assessment of UPOV will assess the impact of implementing UPOV-style PVP laws on human rights in three countries, with a particular focus on the right to food. It is hoped that these studies will trigger other assessments related to IP in the agricultural sector and beyond.

Preventing Armed Violence *continued from page one*

The involvement of civil society organisations is particularly important due to their on-the-ground experiences with armed violence - the regional consultations held before the Conference highlighted this through a series of newsletters, produced by QUNO and the CSO Comunidad Segura, on promising practices in armed violence reduction and prevention. To read the newsletters, see www.quno.org/disarmament/disarmamentLinks.htm.

The Conference also provided an opportunity for civil society to discuss the next steps for engagement with armed violence reduction efforts. Early measures were put in place for the creation of a Global Alliance on Armed Violence Reduction. QUNO will partner with other organisations over the coming months in an effort to get such an Alliance up and running in 2012.



News from QUNO New York

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QUNO New York's work on prevention of violent conflict focuses in part on engagement with rising centers of power at the United Nations. As part of this program the office is working to deepen the relationship and understanding between China and the UN.

In late 2011, QUNO New York partnered with American Friends Service Committee to host a delegation of four UN experts from China. Through a variety of meetings, including a large public event and several small, informal conversations, the academics had the opportunity to build relationships with UN actors. While peacekeeping is a popular topic of study for the scholars, the exchange allowed the academics to learn more about UN efforts in the areas of peacemaking and peacebuilding. The visit also provided UN staff, diplomats, and NGOs the ability to gain a greater understanding of Chinese perspectives.

One delegate reflected at the conclusion of the visit, 'I was very sad to learn that so many parts of the UN have no engagement with China. I am very glad that Quaker[s] have taken an interest in increasing dialogue, and am very pleased to work with you'.



photo by Jason Tower

Watching the Climate Negotiations

December saw the annual UN Climate Change Conference, also known as COP17, held in Durban, South Africa. Negotiators and Ministers from around the world gathered to discuss the future of the climate regime after the expiry of the Kyoto Protocol at the end of 2012, and QUNO followed the talks from afar. The Conference was contentious at times, with disagreements particularly over the issue of equity – what responsibility different countries have to cut emissions, and what support wealthier, higher-emitting countries should give to others. There was cooperation among the EU, the Least Developed Countries and the Small Island States, who united behind a call for a new Protocol to begin in 2020; but also disappointment at the refusal of Japan, Russia and Canada to be bound by an extension to the Kyoto Protocol.

The Conference closed with an agreement to continue the Protocol until at least 2017, with only a handful of States (including the European ones) adhering to it. At the same time, discussions will start on a 'Durban Platform' to 'develop a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force' that applies to all parties, including developing countries. It is likely that in the coming negotiations, different countries will interpret those words in different ways, and one challenge will be to ensure that all opportunities are taken to achieve a fair, equitable and cooperative outcome which achieves serious emissions cuts.

QUNO will continue to follow negotiations in the coming months and has prepared a more detailed summary of proceedings and reactions to COP17, available on request from quno3@quno.ch.



News in Brief

Rachel Brett, QUNO Representative for Human Rights and Refugees, will deliver this year's **Swarthmore Lecture**. Rachel will speak about Quaker processes and ways of working and how they have been applied to the United Nations sphere, with particular reference to QUNO's work on human rights. The lecture will be on 26 May 2012 in London, and an accompanying book will be published. To read more, see www.nayler.org/?p=483

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Former QUNO Director David Atwood delivered the 2012 **James Backhouse Lecture** at Australia Yearly Meeting, in Perth on 9 January 2012. The title of his lecture was 'From the Inside Out: Observations on Quaker Work at the United Nations'. The lecture has been published by Australian Yearly Meeting. To order copies, see www.quakers.org.au.

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Diane Hendrick joined QUNO in January as our new Programme Officer in Peace and Disarmament. Diane worked for 16 years as a freelance consultant, trainer and researcher in conflict transformation and has worked on peace-related projects in Sri Lanka, the Middle East, Albania and Indonesia. Diane has an MPhil in Development Studies from Sussex University and a PhD in Conflict Resolution from Bradford University. Diane is a member of Manchester and Warrington Area Quaker Meeting in the UK.

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QUNO invites applications for its **Geneva Summer School 2012**, which will take place from 1-13 July. The Summer School provides a unique insight into the work of the UN and other international agencies in Geneva. To read more about the Summer School and how to apply, see www.quno.org/getInvolved/IntlSummerSchool-Geneva.htm

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The application packs for the **Programme Assistant positions** at QUNO Geneva will be available in March. To download these, or to learn more about the roles of the Programme Assistants, see www.quno.org.

Jardins Ouverts

Geneva's Quaker House garden will be open to the public on 16 June 2012 for the annual *Jardins Ouverts* (Open Garden) event, raising funds for Geneva's Centre Social Protestant, which provides support and services for people with difficulties. QUNO is participating in this event together with Geneva Quakers and our neighbours in the historic Mervelet district, and will take this opportunity to present its work on food and seeds to the general public, hosting other groups concerned with maintaining a diverse, non-commercial seed sector: Kokopelli, Semences et PI, and Pro Specie Rara. To read more about the event, please visit www.jardinsouverts.ch

Recent Publications

International Standards on Conscientious Objection to Military Service, Rachel Brett, December 2011, available in English, Spanish and French from www.quno.org

Summary of COP17 Climate Negotiations, Steven Heywood, December 2011, available on request from quno3@quno.ch