



In & Around the UN

An Update from the Quaker United Nations Office

June 2010

Finding the Heart of Peacebuilding

The pace of the UN conversation around peacebuilding has accelerated in recent months, and QUNO has been active in facilitating discussion and as a contributor of ideas. This year marks the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), along with its related entities, the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and the occasion is being marked by an extensive review process led by the General Assembly. This is taking place at the same time as a broader discussion about the limitations of traditional peacekeeping operations (which are very expensive and have had uneven success) and the need to embed a peacebuilding perspective much more widely as part of peacemaking and peacekeeping activities.

Peacebuilding is, of course, a key issue for Friends, and the focused work on this topic under QUNO's new strategic plan has positioned us well to engage on this issue.

One of the major challenges for would-be peace builders is that the topic seems to include everything involved in rebuilding a society wrecked by war, from demobilizing soldiers and reintegrating refugees to building roads and jump-starting economic activity, to establishing new government

institutions and holding elections. Internal and external actors trying to come up with a strategy find themselves with long lists of potential activities and programs, all of them equally urgent.

QUNO's suggested way forward, developed over a series of conversations and presentations, is to set out to identify what it is that is unique to conflict-affected societies, and to use whatever insights this brings both to prioritize activities on the ground and to better focus the work of the UN "peacebuilding

architecture." The contention is that the more the UN as a peacebuilding actor can focus itself on certain "core" peacebuilding activities, the better able it will be to demonstrate its value-added in these situations.

QUNO's perspective on this is that

peacebuilding is largely about restoring relationships, between people, communities and the government that serves them, and that to address this requires reaching out well beyond the elites who are typically involved in negotiating peace agreements and into the communities across the country where what remains of the social fabric has endured.

QUNO's presentations at two recent peacebuilding seminars can be found on the QUNO website, www.quno.org. ❖

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Andrew Tomlinson, QUNO Director, discusses peacebuilding with Ambassador Anne Anderson, Ambassador Colin Keating, and Professor Ed Luck.

Photo/QUNO

Quaker UN Office
777 UN Plaza
5th Floor
New York, NY 10017
qunony@afsc.org
www.quno.org

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends:

One of the more extraordinary moments from the last six months came during a packed out reception at Quaker House during the first week of the Review Conference for the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty. The house was full of nuclear weapons activists from all over the world, networking and planning their time at the conference in a variety of languages. In a corner of the room, with no fanfare, some of our Japanese guests opened a carefully padded case to reveal the haunting face of the Nagasaki Madonna, recovered from the ruins of the Urakami Cathedral after the bombing in 1945.

We were honored to host such a poignant reminder of man's inhumanity to man.

This period also saw the devastating earthquake in Haiti on January 12th. The UN shared in this tragedy, which saw the biggest one-day loss of UN personnel in the organization's history. The UN acted immediately to mobilize an emergency response effort involving a wide range of UN agencies, programmes and offices, despite extraordinary logistical challenges. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the people of Haiti.

The fifth anniversary of the Peacebuilding Commission has led to a period of sustained attention from

the UN community on peacebuilding and related issues. QUNO has been actively engaging in these discussions, participating in larger sessions as a panel speaker and facilitating smaller meetings with selected participants. We are starting to see a wider acceptance of the role of civil society on the ground, and a better recognition of peacebuilding as being primarily about people and relationships.

The effects of the financial crisis continue to be felt, and QUNO continues to operate on a very tight budget. We greatly value all the support we get from individuals and organizations around the world.

Andrew Tomlinson

Haiti: Earthquake Response

Following the devastating earthquake in Haiti this past January, QUNO has been following the response, led by the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Many relief organizations, including the UN itself, were severely affected and this has impaired relief efforts. 85 UN staff members died, including the Head and Deputy of the UN country mission. It was biggest loss of UN personnel in its 65 year history.

Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon led tributes to the victims at a special ceremony, and hundreds of New Yorkers and UN staff turned out for a candlelit vigil in Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, across the street from the UN Headquarters.

QUNO has been attending meetings of the UN committee coordinating the humanitarian response, and feeding information back to staff at the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), which has been supporting emergency relief efforts on the



UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon (left), meets survivors of the Haiti earthquake in Port au Prince.

UN Photo/Sophia Paris

ground in Haiti. Now that the immediate humanitarian relief phase is over, AFSC is working to support Haitians as they recover and rebuild.

To find out more about AFSC

work in Haiti or to make a financial contribution to their Haiti Crisis Fund, visit www.afsc.org/haiti. ❖

Learning from Somali Peace Processes

One particularly challenging country situation that QUNO has been following in relation to our Prevention program is Somalia. In January, QUNO was pleased to be able to facilitate the New York launch of two reports on Somali peacemaking processes. We hosted experts from the UK think tank Conciliation Resources and Geneva-based Interpeace, who gave a series of briefings on the situation in Somalia to member states, UN staff and non-governmental organizations. Dr Ken Menkhaus, Professor of Political Science at Davidson College, NC, a leading scholar on Somalia, also joined the panel. The main lunch to launch the reports saw record numbers of people packed in to Quaker House, despite the poor weather.

Somalia, located in the eastern Horn of Africa, has been without an effective government for almost two decades. More than three million people were in urgent need of humanitarian assistance at the end of 2009, out of a total population of nine million. A Transitional Federal Government was formed in January 2005, and though supported by most of the international community and an African Union peacekeeping force, it is only able to control a few blocks of the capital, Mogadishu. Somalia has recently seen the rise of a number of competing armed groups, including the al-Shabaab Islamic insurgent group, a self-proclaimed affiliate of al-Qaeda, which threaten the government's slim hold on power.

For these reasons, Somalia is often labeled a "failed state," but the panel highlighted that although national peacemaking efforts have been unsuccessful, at the local level Somalis



Experts from Conciliation Resources and Interpeace address a meeting on Somalia at Quaker House.

have used traditional consensus-based approaches to re-establish security and governance in their communities. Autonomous governments have established themselves in Somaliland in the northwest and Puntland in the northeast, and they have succeeded in establishing a comparative degree of peace and stability. Somali entrepreneurship and diaspora links have also created a strong private sector in some areas, which outperforms those of many other African countries.

Countering a popular misconception, the panel stressed that Somalis are not opposed to a central government per se, nor are they universally supportive of al-Shabaab's Islamist ideology. However, after years of fighting they are suspicious of the motives of a powerful state and may choose to back insurgent groups because they are able to provide basic services and security. In order to counter this, the transitional government must demonstrate its ability to deliver basic public services, and reach out more effectively to other political actors in the country.

Panelists argued that lessons learnt from successful local peacemaking initiatives could inform national peace processes; that Somalis can achieve durable political structures when they are built on established, homegrown reconciliation, that accountability is a key factor and that acknowledgement of responsibility by aggressors is

critical. They also argued that processes of national reconciliation must come before attempts at state building, to ensure a strong foundation on which to establish political institutions.

The launch events were timed to coincide with the UN Security Council's renewal of the mandate for the African Union peacekeeping force in Somalia, which led to good turnouts and a particularly receptive audience. Attendees engaged in thoughtful discussions with the panelists and it provided valuable exposure for experts who did not have prior links with the UN community in New York. QUNO is planning to host further events with Conciliation Resources in the near future.

The two reports can be downloaded from the Interpeace and Conciliation Resources websites:

Whose peace is it anyway? Connecting Somali and international peacemaking at www.c-r.org.

Report of the Peace Mapping Study at www.interpeace.org. ❖

China's Changing Role at the UN

Few countries have undergone as much change as China in recent years. This has been true in terms of political change, urbanization and economic growth. It has also been true of China's engagement in multilateral efforts, and the past twenty years have seen major changes in China's participation and support for UN initiatives, including UN peacekeeping.

In 1971, when China took over its seat on the UN Security Council from Taiwan, it rejected concepts such as peacekeeping, due to an emphasis on non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries. China's recent contribution of an emergency rescue team and US\$4.41 million of aid in response to the earthquake in Haiti is just one example of how far the country has moved from its previous tendency towards isolation. This increased engagement with the world continues to be balanced with an ongoing emphasis on non-intervention, but, as the country itself changes, it encounters new motivations that have led it to increase its participation in UN affairs.

As part of recent meetings in China with AFSC's Asia region, QUNO staff had the opportunity to meet with academics and experts who follow Chinese foreign policy. These scholars shared insights into the shifting motivations around China's engagement on the international stage. Many

are based on commercial interests, but other concerns such as domestic political considerations, need to balance US influence, and the desire to be seen as being a "responsible power" also play a part.

One area where these shifting motivations have produced a change in engagement has been in the area of UN peacekeeping. While its contribution to the UN's peacekeeping budget

ers, engineering battalions, medical units and civilian police. This emphasis on supporting civilian operations reflects China's own constraints and reluctance to engage on the military side of peacekeeping operations. It also represents a contribution that fills a major capacity gap within UN peacekeeping missions.

The special role that this civilian support plays can be seen in the area



Chinese Engineers working for the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) stand to attention upon arrival at their duty station.

UN Photo

remains small compared to some member states, the past decade has seen a tremendous growth in China's contribution of peacekeeping personnel. In 2009, out of all the Permanent 5 members of the UN Security Council, China was the second highest troop contributing country after France.

Of particular interest to Quakers will be the type of support that China makes to peacekeeping operations: at the moment, China provides no combat troops; instead, its contributions come in the form of military observ-

of policing: peacekeeping missions around the world have seen a tremendous increase in the demand for police units as the tasks facing peacekeepers have shifted towards rebuilding and reconstructing communities, and protecting civilians. These activities do not always require

heavily armed combat troops and often police are better able to meet the needs of post-conflict communities.

Since 2002, Chinese police units have been dispatched in East Timor, Bosnia Herzegovina, Liberia, Afghanistan, Haiti, and Sudan. Their primary task is to work with and train local police in a range of policing responsibilities including maintenance of law and order, reconstruction of local legal systems, law enforcement, protection of civilians, and provision of humani-

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Preventing Election Violence in Burundi



A Burundian woman goes to the polls with her child.

UN Photo/Martine Perret

Burundi, located in the Great Lakes Region of Central Africa, is fast approaching its second election since the signing of the Arusha Accords Peace Agreement in 1993. The elections start in May and will run through September, with local, parliamentary and presidential candidates being chosen. Despite significant steps toward implementation of the peace process, Burundi still faces many hurdles on its path to sustainable peace. As a country on the agenda of the Peace Building Commission, Burundi has received strong international support in the preparation and financing of the upcoming elections.

As part of QUNO's work on prevention of violent conflict, the office has been in close contact with groups on the ground who are working on community based approaches to prevent election related violence. Lessons learned from these efforts will be especially relevant to many East African nations and countries worldwide with approaching elections who are seeking new ways to prepare their communities for a peaceful process.

A number of Quaker organizations are involved in projects that establish early warning systems to prevent elec-

tion violence. These organizations have selected hundreds of respected individuals from across Burundi to be trained as citizen reporters. As members of their local communities, these individuals are on the ground throughout the elections and will remain a presence, monitoring the rise of election related tensions, even after the last round of voting in September. They will be using text messaging on cell phones to report on a variety of indicators including violent incidents, rising tensions and increased activity among militant groups. Messages will be sent to central offices in the capitol and used to compile reports and track warning signs of potential violence. These reports will be recorded using the Ushahidi web platform, an innovative new form of incident mapping. After thorough analysis of the incident reports, the information will be shared with relevant regional, national, and international partners in an effort to ensure that violence does not escalate.

In support of these efforts on the ground, QUNO serves as a link to the UN system in New York. QUNO connections will provide a channel at the international level through which information and updates on the immediate

situation on the ground in Burundi can be passed.

These innovative efforts to prevent election related violence offer a new avenue for engagement at the community, regional, national, and international levels. The efforts of Quakers and others working around the upcoming elections in Burundi offer a potential model of community based early warning networks with applications for other upcoming elections in the East African region and beyond. ❖

How to Support QUNO

QUNO welcomes donations to help cover the cost of its work. We are happy to accept contributions towards two areas of our work:

The Fund for Quaker House: the endowment supports the maintenance and operation of Quaker House.

QUNO Operating and Program Expenses: contributions can be made toward the cost of our annual budget.

Please make your check payable to "QUNO." If you'd like your gift to go towards Quaker House, please write "Quaker House" in the memo portion of the check. For credit card gifts, call toll free 1 888 588 2372 ext. 1, or click the "Donations" button on our web site and follow the instructions provided.

Please send checks to:
Quaker UN Office
777 United Nations Plaza, 5th Fl.
New York, NY 10017

Gifts made to QUNO within the United States are deductible for federal income tax purposes.

Healing and Reconciliation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

In May QUNO was honored to host Zawadi Nikuze, National Coordinator of the African Great Lakes Initiative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Zawadi, who was on a seven week speaking tour crisscrossing the continental United States, works with communities to provide trauma healing, conflict resolution, and mediation training. Following requests from women survivors of rape, her efforts also include separate workshops, creating safe spaces in which the women can share their experiences with one another.

During Zawadi's visit, QUNO hosted a meeting of the Central African Policy Forum titled "Community reconciliation efforts with home communities, returning IDPs [Internally Displaced Persons] and refugees." Zawadi and Camilla Olson, from Refugees International, spoke on a panel to an audience of diplomats and Non Government Organizations (NGOs). The event served to share research regarding recent flows of refugees into the eastern Congo and to highlight important community-level efforts to promote reconciliation between returnees and host communities. Zawadi's presentation focused on current Quaker supported work taking place

in Masisi, North Kivu province. As part of this work, facilitators run three day workshops with a gender and ethnically balanced group of participants. The workshops provide training in trauma healing, mediation and conflict resolution. Zawadi's presentation focused on the need for local ownership of community based peacebuilding. She offered insights into how outside actors can support a community in its efforts to articulate what it needs to create lasting peace, and to pursue these needs on its own.

Zawadi's presence in New York coincided with discussions at the UN regarding the upcoming mandate renewal of the UN Peacekeeping forces in the Congo. As the UN considers a



Zawadi Nikuze

shift in its role on the ground, Zawadi's presentation provided a valuable first hand account of locally-based efforts to build long-term peace. ❖

China (continued from page 4)

tarian assistance. Within the peacekeeping world, Chinese police units have a reputation for being highly professional. Their preparation is taken very seriously and the Chinese government has established two training centers for police units that are to be dispatched in peacekeeping opera-

tions.

Increased engagement brings the potential of practical benefits and increased influence and standing in UN affairs. It also comes with an increase in potential risks and demands. China experienced a painful reminder of this in January when UN personnel killed in Haiti's earthquake included 8 Chinese police officers. Also, while China

has increased its contribution to peacekeeping personnel, it has come under pressure to increase its funding to UN peacekeeping efforts. Over the coming years, China will need to continue its efforts to balance the motivations that push it towards non-intervention and isolation, and those that pull it towards greater engagement on the international stage. ❖

QUNO Staff Changes



Left to right: Sarah Clarke, Molly Mitchell-Olds, Francesca Riddy-O'Dowd, Andrew Tomlinson, Cathy Thomas and Joe Thwaites.

Photo/Jim Keen

The past few months have seen several staff changes in the QUNO NY Office. In September, our Program Assistant (PA) Emily Higgs returned to her former college, Haverford, to work as the Quaker Affairs Program Coordinator. We were very grateful that the other Program Assistant, Eleanor Andrews, agreed to stay on as a Program Associate until November, providing us with valuable support and continuity. She is now teaching at Westtown Quaker School in Pennsylvania.

Our new Program Assistants began in September 2009. Molly Mitchell-Olds comes to QUNO having studied Political Science at Earlham College, with a particular focus on migration and international law. Growing up in Germany, she worked with both Amnesty International and local NGOs to provide legal, cultural and economic

assistance to refugees and asylum seekers. During a year in India, Molly conducted independent research on the effect of recent economic reforms on the prevalence of child labor practices. At QUNO, Molly is focusing on peacebuilding.

Joe Thwaites has a BA in Politics from the University of York, UK, and comes with a background in environmental and development studies. He participated in the 2008 UN climate change conference in Poland and spent time as a social policy researcher at Citizens Advice Bureau. Joe is a former editor of *Young Quaker*, the magazine of Young Friends General Meeting in Britain. At QUNO, he is focusing on prevention of violent conflict. Both PAs will be with us until summer 2010.

In the area of administration, Cathy Thomas has assumed the posi-

tion of Coordinator for Finance and Administration, in addition to her prior role maintaining the website. Her hard work, patience and institutional knowledge ensure QUNO keeps running smoothly.

For personal reasons, Associate Representative Francesca Riddy-O'Dowd left QUNO at the end of March. We are indebted to her for the work she has done over the last 18 months, and she leaves us with a well developed peacebuilding program. She has returned to her former position at the UN Liaison Office of the Council of the European Union, and while we are sad at losing a staff member, we have gained a useful partner in the UN community. Recruitment for the Associate Representative position is currently underway and we expect a new staff member to join the team later in the year. ❖

Nuclear Review Conference

In May, delegates from 189 countries met in New York for the eighth review conference of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The Quaker United Nations Office followed the proceedings.

Created in 1968, the NPT rests on three pillars: recognized nuclear states (China, France, Russia, the UK and US) committed to “pursue negotiations in good faith” towards disarmament of their arsenals, whilst states without nuclear weapons agreed not to seek them. In return, all countries are guaranteed the right to peaceful use of nuclear technology.

In a speech to an international gathering of over 800 peace activists in advance of the conference, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon set out his hopes for successful talks, warning that “Failure is not an option.” Thanking those assembled for their work and dedication towards “this most noble human aspiration,”

the Secretary General said “We know that nuclear disarmament is not a distant, unattainable dream. It is an urgent necessity, here and now. We are determined to achieve it.”

The current mayor of Hiroshima and survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki also addressed the meeting, held at the Riverside Church in Manhattan. The following day, almost 15,000 activists marched from Times Square to the UN Headquarters, calling for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Leaders of national peace movements later delivered a petition of seven million signatures calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons to the President of the Review Conference, Ambassador Libran Cabactulan of the Philippines.

QUNO also hosted a reception of global peace organizations at Quaker House that included a number of Friends from as far away as New



The Madonna of Nagasaki, that survived the Nagasaki atomic bombing.

Photo/Yasuhiko Sata

Zealand. One of the Japanese attendees brought the famous Madonna of Nagasaki statue that was salvaged from the rubble of Urakami Cathedral.

There is an ongoing campaign for the inclusion of the small statue on the UNESCO World Heritage List. ❖

Friends World Committee for Consultation Quaker United Nations Office

777 United Nations Plaza, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10017

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