



# In & Around the UN An Update from the Quaker United Nations Office

March 2020

## Fifteen Years of Building Peace – the UN’s Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture

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Peacebuilding Commission meets on 2020 Review of Peacebuilding Architecture.

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Fifteen years ago, the United Nations (UN) took unprecedented action to strengthen its capacity to support countries in their pursuit of building peace. This was done by creating what is referred

to in the UN system as the “Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA),” which includes: the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC—a body in the UN that brings together

Member States to partner with countries in identifying and implementing peacebuilding initiatives); the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF – the fund of first resort for the UN Secretary-General that enables him to finance critical peace projects); and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO – the

office within the system responsible for supporting the PBC, overseeing the PBF, and engaging across the UN to support a peace lens in its work).

As a peace organization, QUNO saw the establishment of this Architecture as a monumental shift by the UN in recognizing the importance of working with countries to

support peacebuilding policy and practice. We then saw the PBA as a valuable entry point to work with UN stakeholders in their peace endeavors, including to help the system become more effective in

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**Throughout the Forum, Member States, civil society and practitioners stressed the critical importance of ‘leaving no one behind’ in the pursuit of peace.**

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## Bridging the Gap between Peace and Human Rights



Beautiful grounds of Wilton Park.

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“Perhaps the best prevention tool we have is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—and the treaties that derive from it. The rights set out in it identify many of the root causes of conflict, but equally they provide real world solutions through real change on the ground.” These were the words of Secretary-General António Guterres in 2017 when describing the important linkages between the UN frameworks supporting human rights on the one hand and peace and security on the other.

Last month, was a great opportunity for UN Representative Rachel Madenyika, who leads QUNO’s conflict prevention program, to travel to the United Kingdom to participate in a meeting entitled: *“Human rights, peace and security: strengthening the links”*. Fifty-five people from all over the world, including policy makers

from New York and Geneva, human rights defenders and advocates, field practitioners, and representatives from the business field and international and regional bodies, gathered in Wilton Park’s Wiston House, a sixteenth century castle surrounded by over 6,000 acres of parkland.

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**Key takeaways from this meeting confirmed that, first, human rights and conflict prevention are complementary rather than mutually exclusive, which creates both sustainable peace and development.**

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The day and a half meeting aimed to identify practical ways in which to integrate human rights discourse into conflict prevention and mediation; enhance understanding of how human rights frameworks can contribute to sustainable peace and strengthen links among key

agencies and actors, particularly across a spectrum of policymakers, civil society, and frontline practitioners.

Aside from being able to network with a wide range of experts, Rachel was invited to facilitate a breakout session that focused on how to improve responding to human rights violations in conflict.

Key takeaways from this meeting confirmed that, first, human rights and conflict prevention are complementary rather than mutually exclusive, which creates both sustainable peace and development. This can be achieved by combining the normative demands of the human rights work with the operative work of peace and security; while assessing where opportunities and challenges lie. Second, a ‘universal declaration’ cannot be developed by a tiny minority of well-meaning experts on behalf of

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## Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

Greetings from New York!

2020 is a year of anniversaries.

Firstly, 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the final year of the second world war. Looking back to 1945, we will remember the liberation of the concentration camps and the nuclear bombings in Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the formal end to hostilities in Europe and Asia, and the sowing of the seeds of future conflict in Korea and Yugoslavia and beyond. And we will also remember 1945 as the year of the United Nations, with the charter signed in San Francisco in June and the formal opening on October 24, as nations came together in the hope, once and for all, of ending the 'scourge of war'.

And there are other anniversaries, ones that also remind us of the opportunities that the United Nations opened up for 'we, the peoples'.

In 1960, 60 years ago, 19 African countries gained independence and became Member States of the United Nations, in what became known as the year of Africa. For countries that are not the 'great powers', the UN remains one of the few forums where they still have a place and a voice.

In 1995, the Beijing Women's Conference was a landmark in the history of women's empowerment, followed swiftly in 2000 by the signing of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security.

More recently, the UN World Summit of 2005 saw the establishment of the UN

Peacebuilding Commission in New York and the Human Rights Council in Geneva. And we only look back one year to the reshaping of what became the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, as a central pillar of the Secretariat.

Through 73 of these 75 years, the Quaker UN Offices have been a part of the growth of this unique organization, encouraging, supporting, and fostering the growth of constituencies for sustainable and people-centred strategies for peace.

Thank you for your encouragement and support.



*Andrew Tomlinson*

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## Civil-Society UN Prevention Platform Launches a Discussion Series

In February, QUNO was pleased to co-host the launch of the Civil Society-UN Prevention Platform's discussion series on prevention. The Platform's timely discussions aim to support and contribute to building the collective capacity of the UN community in New York and beyond to advance prevention particularly as it relates to the Secretary-General's vision for prevention.

During the series launch discussion held at Quaker House, civil society, UN colleagues, and member states took stock of the overall field of prevention, collectively considering emerging trends and opportunities for advancing the prevention agenda. The discussion provided reflections on the evolution of the conceptualization and operationalization - the 'what' and the

'how' - of prevention from the UN Charter's signing in 1945 through today. In addition to highlighting the key role of civil society, speakers addressed several important UN tools and mechanisms for promoting prevention, such as the role of peace and development advisors (PDAs) in country settings, Regional Monthly Reviews at headquarters, human rights mechanisms, coordinating work of the Peacebuilding Commission, the role of regional organizations, and the impact of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Civil Society-UN Prevention Platform aims to support the UN's prevention agenda through strengthening coordination and

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National flags of the member states outside the United Nations Secretariat building.

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# QUNO Brings Together Civil Society for a Discussion on the Future of the Peacebuilding Fund

By Stephen Murray, Programme Assistant



QUNO staff and participants at Quaker House.

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In January of this year—and with the Christmas tree still up in Quaker House—QUNO, partnering with the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), brought together civil society from across the globe for a discussion with UN colleagues on the UN Secretary-General’s Peacebuilding Fund’s (PBF) upcoming investment plan for 2020-2024.

The PBF is the United Nations’ financing tool and investor of first resort in countries emerging from or at risk of descending into violent conflict. The PBF plays a crucial role in supporting countries as they implement peacebuilding activities and provides rapid resources when support may not yet be available from other funding

mechanisms.

As the Programme Assistant supporting QUNO’s peacebuilding programming, it was my job to help support the development and

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convening of this discussion. The unique nature of this event, bringing together organizations from around the world and the openness of the discussion, was intensely fascinating to me. I was able to see firsthand the impact of QUNO’s convening power

and use of Quaker House to create spaces for frank and constructive conversation on the UN’s capacities to build peace.

In my short time with QUNO I have had the opportunity to see how off the record discussions at Quaker House complement the more formal UN environment. In providing a comfortable setting away from the often-frantic pace of the UN, QUNO can help facilitate discussions in a unique way.

I found participating in the meeting to be a rewarding experience. As this civil society consultation was the only one of its kind, it was especially interesting to listen to and learn from the insights,

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## Staff Comings and Goings



Rosemary Ventura, Programme Assistant.

This January, we welcomed Rosemary Ventura to our QUNO New York team. Originally from Madison, Wisconsin, Rosemary just returned from two years in Guinea, West Africa, working in public health with US Peace Corps. Her work focused primarily on strengthening maternal and child health systems by building capacity of local health practitioners. She holds a BA in International Relations and Spanish with an Economics minor from Haverford College. Her thesis examined the cultural, ethical, and economic implications of contemporary practices of short-term transnational volunteerism. Prior to Peace Corps, she also worked in Nicaragua, Chile, and Brazil.

At QUNO, she works most closely with Rachel Madenyika

on the conflict prevention program. She is particularly interested in exploring how grassroots perspectives can be elevated and amplified throughout the UN system to impact policy decisions. What mechanisms can amplify voices without jeopardizing the original messages through the process of representation? What tools are needed to ensure these voices are heard and easily translated into action by the UN? Additionally, drawing on her experiences

working in a Guinean community that had recently experienced a prolonged refugee crisis and the 2014-2016 Ebola virus, she is also interested in how complex crisis response policies can be shaped to proactively contribute towards building longer-term peaceful and inclusive societies.

Having grown up Quaker in Wisconsin as a member of Northern Yearly Meeting, she is looking forward to opportunities in which Quaker values can be applied to international politics, particularly in prevention of violent conflicts and resolution of complex crises. Outside of QUNO, Rosemary loves playing ultimate frisbee and struggling through the inevitable hurdles of urban gardening. ❖



### 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.

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## UN Peacebuilding Architecture (continued from page 1)

accompanying the efforts of local communities and governments in building peace.

QUNO has been at the forefront of supporting the work of the Peacebuilding Architecture since its creation through a range of partnerships and projects centered on developing the knowledge and capacities needed to implement sustainable and people centered peace programming. This has included research publications, *Filling the Gap* and *Building Sustainable Peace*, that explored and assessed issues like how the UN works at the headquarters and country levels to create policies informed by civil society knowledge and experience.

Our work has also included a range of convenings at Quaker House to provide off the record

spaces for UN and Member State colleagues to explore timely peace issues and the role of the PBA in addressing them. For example, in 2019 QUNO welcomed colleagues from our partner, Camp for Peace Liberia, and together we held timely and strategic meetings at the UN focusing on peacebuilding during times of transition, drawing from the

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Liberian experience which includes the closure of the long-standing UN peacekeeping operation, and the holding of national elections.

This year marks a major milestone for peacebuilding at the UN – the fifteen-year anniversary of the PBA. A review process is underway at the UN

to reflect on progress that has been made to build sustainable peace, and how this body and its membership can work to address remaining challenges.

QUNO will continue our active engagement with the PBA and broader UN to support the system as it reviews the UN's contributions to peacebuilding. Our work will include

continuing our strategic use of Quaker House's convening power to bring together UN colleagues to reflect on what's at the heart of building peace. We will also collate QUNO's peace knowledge and experience to produce

policy messages to support our UN partners as they carry out this review process. QUNO looks forward to contributing to the UN's reflective exercise and supporting this body as it identifies its peacebuilding priorities going forward. ❖

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## Bridging the Gap between Peace and Human Rights (continued from page 2)

an extremely diverse, disenfranchised, and divided global community, therefore meaningful inclusion of all relevant stakeholders from the onset is important. Lastly, there is a need to find a common language to discuss these issues with positive connotations for both the human rights and peacebuilding communities.

QUNO is excited to continue scoping in this area of work and looks forward to collaborating with those who attended this meeting. ❖

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## Discussion Series (continued from page 3)

information sharing between civil society organizations (CSOs) and the UN at all levels. As co-facilitator of the Platform, QUNO looks forward to the future discussions in this series, which will include topics such as analyzing prevention through the inclusion of youth and women, mediation efforts, and upstream prevention. ❖

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## UN Peacebuilding Fund (continued from page 4)

priorities and suggestions of our global partners. The feedback from this meeting will filter directly into the final version of the investment plan and ensure that civil society is at the heart of peacebuilding.

Seeing QUNO's principles and commitment towards 'quiet diplomacy' applied in a practical way was invaluable and I personally look forward to being a part of QUNO's work as it continues to inform peacebuilding efforts at the UN. ❖