



# In & Around the UN

## An Update from the Quaker United Nations Office

### QUNO Co-Hosts Virtual Dialogue on Prevention with UN, Civil Society, and Member States

By Molly Burger, Program Assistant

November 2021

Letter from the Director	2
UN General Assembly 76: Forecasting the Year Ahead	3
In the Face of Complex Crises, Let Us See What Peace Can Do	4
News from QUNO Geneva	5
Committee Spotlight: Aletia Dundas	6
Staff Comings and Goings	7

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Nearly a year after concluding its 2020 Discussion Series, *Advancing UN Prevention Efforts Across Sectors and Institutions: Collective Pathways for Effective Prevention*, QUNO’s Civil Society-UN Prevention Platform hosted a virtual follow-up convening which built off the knowledge gained in the Discussion Series in order to identify opportunities for future United Nations engagement.

UN actors, civil society, and Member State participants filled the “room,” each bringing their own unique expertise and perspectives. Participants came prepared to share their unique experiences – from working to promote civil society at

the local and national levels to exploring the significance of networks in bridging the international divide. Throughout the discussion, speakers repeatedly turned to the need for reinvigorating initiatives around prevention and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a “roadmap” to addressing new global challenges. These challenges include climate change, changing migration patterns, new technologies, and the growing role

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of non-state actors.

I found this discussion to be particularly engaging and appreciated how a range of

(continued on page 2)

## Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

Greetings from New York.

When I joined QUNO in early 2008, a central aspiration for QUNO was to help embed and mainstream peacebuilding at the UN, and from that base to promote peacebuilding perspectives and tools in international standards and practices.

Over the next decade, that hope largely came to fruition. The institutional basis for peacebuilding was assured with the success of the UN peacebuilding architecture, including the UN Peacebuilding Commission, and the importance of peacebuilding within the UN system was confirmed by the re-naming of one of the central departments of the Secretariat as the 'Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.' At the same time, the commitments to foster peace, justice and inclusion in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 (including SDG16, the peace goal) embedded peace as a global development priority for the next generation, and the 2016 Sustaining Peace resolutions in the Security

Council and the General Assembly established sustaining peace as an effort that encompasses all of the pillars of the UN (development, human rights and peace and security), at all stages of conflict, and addresses long-term root causes as well as near term conflict resolution — a significant broadening and deepening of the understanding of peacebuilding at a multilateral policy level.

Now, at the end of 2021, the threats to peace that the world faces have become clearer, and the task for QUNO has grown. Eighteen months into a global pandemic, COVID-19 has shown the fragility of the world's institutions and the fault lines in international cooperation. As the peacebuilders' statement noted, "As we face the stark human-made realities of a warming planet, we must redouble our peace efforts, to help mediate and navigate the immense shifts in power and resources that will be needed to forestall further avoidable temperature rise, to prevent and resolve the conflicts that may be exacerbated or precipitated by environmental destruction; and

to prepare the path to a more sustainable, peaceful, and equitable future." For QUNO, the challenge now becomes to demonstrate the centrality of peacebuilding approaches and tools to all global efforts to transform our world and respond to the challenges we face, to work for a continuing focus on peace, justice and inclusion, not only in development, but also in crisis response and in addressing the climate emergency.

This is my last newsletter as the Director of QUNO New York. I have been immensely privileged to serve Friends in this way, and humbled by your dedicated support for the important work of the office over the years. I trust that you will welcome the new Director, Sarah Clarke, with the same warmth and encouragement that you gave to me nearly 14 years ago.

Thank you!



*Andrew Tomlinson*

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### Virtual Dialogue on Prevention (continued from page 1)

people – from those representing civil society organizations, to UN employees in the field, to members of the UN's high-ranking Executive Office of the Secretary-General – were all able to exchange ideas, despite, or perhaps even because of virtual work which can expand

participation for convenings.

The concluding remarks of the dialogue expressed that urgent action is needed by the multilateral system to meet these challenges now, so that the same system is not overwhelmed in the future.

Throughout my time at QUNO, particularly while working on the conflict prevention program, I have come to understand the value of

not just addressing the root causes of conflict, but also bolstering systems of peace. This conversation, like many others co-facilitated by QUNO, cemented a strong sense of the need to capitalize on the momentum for meaningful inclusivity and to advance the upstream prevention of violent conflict at the UN. ❖

# UN General Assembly 76: Forecasting the Year Ahead

By Kavita Desai, Quaker UN Representative



The giant fresco made by artist Saype represents peace and youth participation. © Valentin Flauraud for Saype

Shortly before world leaders arrived in New York for the hybrid opening of the 76th UN General Assembly, Secretary General Guterres unveiled a giant eco-friendly artwork entitled “Work in Progress II” across the UN lawn. The piece can also be seen as a metaphor for the UN, reflecting on an organization that has fallen short during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, for climate change, and the many prolonged conflicts around the world, but remains the forum with potential to solve the big crises facing our world, if it can adapt ... a work in progress.

The UN's 75th anniversary year was meant to reaffirm and reassert the importance of multilateralism and of the UN as the universal body for global governance. However, the pandemic and subsequent vaccine

hoarding by developed countries call into question the ability of the UN to actively shape a more equitable, sustainable world. The Secretary General recently launched the Our Common Agenda report and proposed reforms to respond to the current global landscape and revitalize the UN. Against this backdrop of increasingly complex global challenges, all requiring unified global responses the set theme for the general debate was Hope.

The President of the General Assembly, Mr. Abdullah Shahid of the Maldives is bringing his national perspective to the forefront. The outlook of a country on the front lines of climate change at three meters above sea level, and one that was questioned before being granted UN membership – could a small country

meaningfully contribute to world affairs? His “presidency of hope” brings a commitment echoed by many developing or small countries to make the UN relevant and functional for the future.

The Prime Minister of Barbados Ms. Mia Mottley stated that the UN hears the same speeches from leaders year after year and yet, “we have not moved the needle!” Given the myriad of challenges facing the international community and the recent failures of international cooperation there is a need for a renewed multilateralism, committed to tackling inequalities, and a UN able to address the challenges of tomorrow. Barbados will support the Secretary General's proposed reforms and will propose

*(continued on page 8)*

# In the Face of Complex Crises, Let Us See What Peace Can Do

By Hannah Patterson, Program Assistant



In 1981, the United Nations General Assembly designated 21 September as the International Day of Peace in order to highlight the importance of fostering an international commitment towards peace and non-violence. For the past six years, QUNO has facilitated the creation and distribution of a statement supported by peacebuilding organizations across the world to mark the day and engage diplomats and other UN stakeholders on issues related to peace before the start of the annual UN General Assembly session.

In my capacity as a Programme Assistant last year, I was able to support QUNO in the release of the 2020 statement and it has been incredibly rewarding to see the process come full circle through my involvement in the drafting, consultation and release of the [2021 statement](#). This year we took time to carefully consider how to articulate the contribution of peacebuilding approaches to addressing the climate emergency, along with the other compounding crises that

have only become more visible over the last year. Throughout the drafting process, which was enriched by an extensive consultative process with peacebuilding organizations around the world, as well as diplomats and other UN officials, we also felt particularly moved to emphasize that 18 months into the COVID-19 crisis, as we face its socioeconomic, political and health consequences and a pandemic response that threatens to exclude the most vulnerable, peace must be central to crisis response.

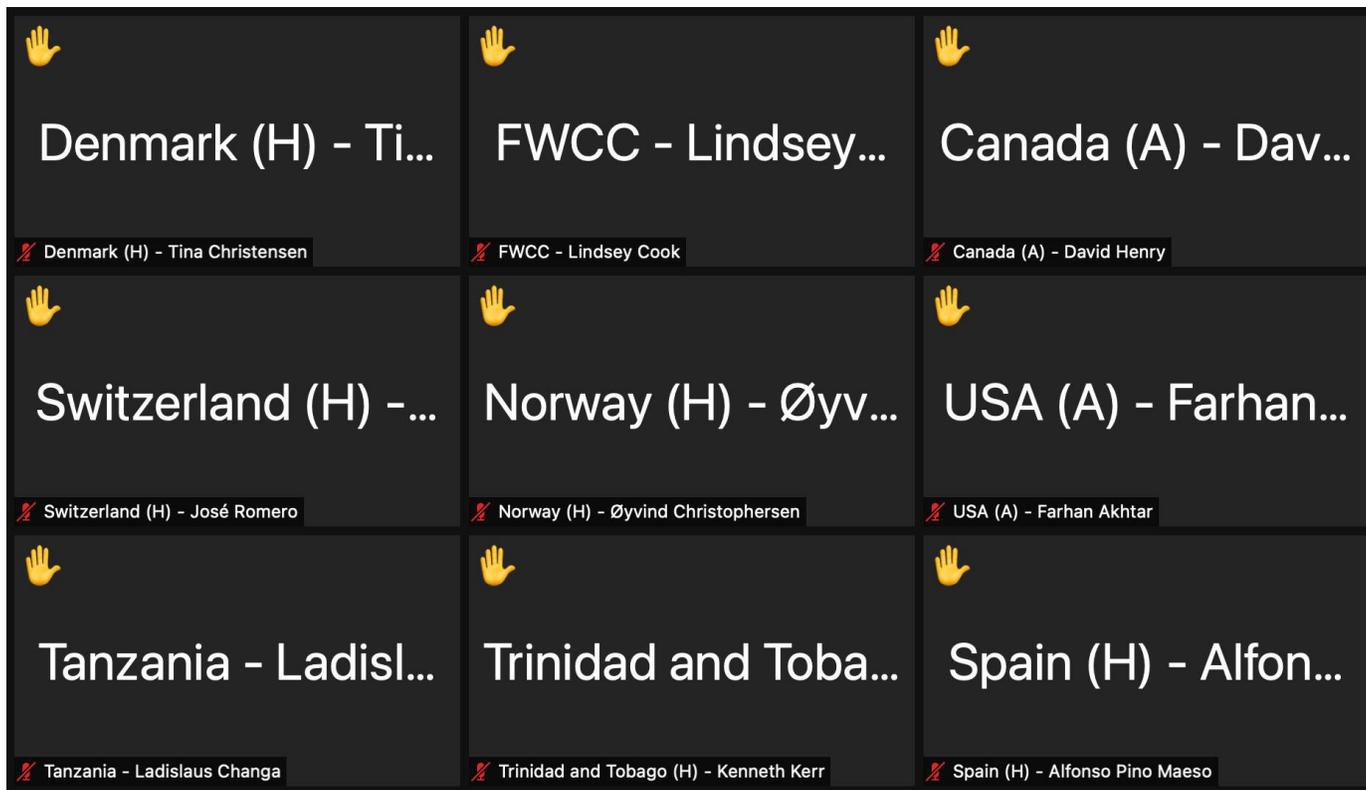
This year's statement was signed by over 200 organizations, and calls on the international community to acknowledge that "without peace, development will falter; without justice, hope will wither; and without inclusion, we will all be left behind." Building on this assertion, the statement urged governments to place peace at the center of international cooperation by refocusing on equity, justice and inclusion. After receiving the statement, a UN senior official noted that the language in the statement

"captured the essence of peacebuilding and the essence of the times we are living in" and that they are "looking forward to continuing to work closely with QUNO in order to pursue a more inclusive, just and peaceful world."

In light of the 20th anniversary of 9/11, the statement also called on the international community to step away from securitized responses in the face of crisis. Signatories acknowledged that the subsequent preoccupation with counterterrorism has not left the world any safer, but has rather engendered "international relations determined more by the perceived security needs of a few, rather than the right to peace and sustainable development of the many." Throughout the statement, the message that violence is never the answer and that peace is the way, resounded.

Working with Andrew, QUNO NY's Director, and Kavita, our newest Quaker UN Representative, to reflect on emerging themes related to building peace at the UN, in order to develop prescient messages that would resonate with UN stakeholders as they enter the 76th General Assembly Session, was a deeply enriching process. One that at its core represents many of the unique strengths of Quaker working methods, allowing for a simultaneously reflective and forward-looking approach, which is bolstered by the recognition of the importance of elevating the voices of peacebuilders throughout the world to the international policy space. QUNO would not be able to facilitate the release of a yearly statement without the steadfast support of partners also engaging with UN peacebuilding. For their feedback and support we continue to be grateful. ❖

## News from QUNO Geneva



QUNO Geneva Rep Lindsey represents Quakers at the IPCC negotiations.

This August, QUNO Geneva was present at the latest meeting of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Since 1988, the IPCC has collated scientific findings on climate change to inform governments on the latest planetary situation, and options to reduce human activities driving global temperature rise. In 2007, the IPCC received the Nobel Peace Prize (shared with Al Gore); its reports are invaluable in bringing science to the international climate change negotiations, a reminder that nature is not waiting for us. IPCC reports are considered the most authoritative and are increasingly used in court cases worldwide to challenge insufficient action to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions which threaten our long-term existence on Earth.

During the meeting in August,

governments approved the first section of the upcoming Sixth Assessment Report (AR6). The second and third sections will be finalized in 2022, completing the publication of the AR6. Each Assessment Report takes some seven years to complete, and involves hundreds of scientists worldwide, most voluntarily, to gather and assess thousands of peer-reviewed scientific findings. The findings are summarized in three sections: the physical science (Working Group I), the human impact (Working Group II), and options for mitigation of human activities driving climate change (Working Group III). In August, governments gathered to hear, and approve, a Summary for Policy Makers (SPM) of the latest physical science.

The August approval meeting involved over 300 delegates

working at least 12 hours a day for two weeks to approve the SPM line by line. Governments cannot request changes in wording that compromise the integrity of the science, but their suggestions can influence, either positively to clarify, or negatively to weaken, the communication of the science findings. QUNO Geneva, representing the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC, see photo), has been an accredited observer of the IPCC since 2016. Observers are invited to speak after States discuss the content of each paragraph; Lindsey Fielder Cook, QUNO's Representative for Climate Change, spoke 10 times during the negotiations. In addition, QUNO is an expert reviewer of IPCC draft

*(continued on page 8)*

## Committee Spotlight: Aletia Dundas

By Molly Burger, Program Assistant

*QUNO is governed by a Committee of Friends appointed by the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). We're excited to spotlight the insights and experiences of a Committee member with each newsletter. In this edition we are delighted to share reflections from Aletia Dundas. Aletia Dundas is a Quaker from Australia, currently living in Sydney. Aletia works for UnitingWorld, the overseas aid agency of the Uniting Church in Australia, with a focus on programs in the Pacific. Aletia was a QUNO Program Assistant at the Geneva office in 2006-7.*

As a Program Assistant at QUNO, I have been able to get to know and learn from our QUNC board members throughout this past year. I recently had the pleasure of getting to know one board member, Aletia Dundas, a bit more in depth through an interview with her.

Throughout the interview ran the theme of “letting her life speak,” as she put it, which meant demonstrating to others what she believes in through the way she leads her daily life. She articulated examples of how she lives out each of the Quaker testimonies day to day. The testimony of peace led her to work that addresses poverty, inequality, and injustice; integrity leads her to ethical decision making; community influences her desire to live in community with others; simplicity reminds her to live within her means and protect the environment; and peace is kept in mind through her social interactions.

Hearing from her prompted me to reflect on my own experiences. In the Quaker co-living house in Manhattan where I reside, we have the testimonies (“SPICES”) written on the wall. I had always thought of these as important values, but hearing the intentionality behind the way Aletia lives her life gave me a new perspective



Aletia visits the QUNO office in New York.

on connecting faith and practice.

Just as she aligns the Quaker faith to practice in her daily life, Aletia makes connections between Quakerism and UN practices. She explained how Quakers have a lot to offer to the work of building peace globally, and how she appreciates QUNO for offering a voice to civil society so that diplomats can better take the lived experiences of those directly impacted by policies into account.

Connecting faith to practice is something she expanded on later in

the interview. While working as a Program Assistant at QUNO Geneva in the Peace and Disarmament Program, Aletia thought that “faith and work life were as aligned as they’d ever be.” While this wasn’t wrong, connecting her faith to daily life when not working for a Quaker organization has led to a deliberateness as she asks herself in various scenarios “What would QUNO do?” Since rejoining QUNO as a committee member, she is once again experiencing a strong alignment between faith and practice. ❖

## Staff Comings and Goings



From left to right: Molly Burger; Kavita Desai; Cecile Adrian.

In July, QUNO welcomed Kavita Desai as a new Quaker Representative at the UN, filling in the position left by Rachel Madenyika in March. More recently in September, we welcomed new Program Assistant (PA), Cecile Adrian and said goodbye to outgoing PA Molly Burger.

Kavita joined QUNO from the United Nations (UN) Foundation's Global Policy Team where she supported UN processes around sustainable development and led engagement at the regional and global level across development and human rights issues.

Prior to that she was Adviser to the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste to the United Nations, from 2010 to 2016, where she negotiated the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, advocating for the adoption of SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies.

Kavita holds a BA from Rutgers University College where she double majored in political science and art history, and a Juris Doctorate (JD) from Pace University Law School with certificates in environmental and international law.

Cecile joins QUNO after a year of childcare work and mutual aid organizing with Tubman House, a group fighting food apartheid by building food sovereignty in Sandtown, Baltimore. She graduated from Goucher College in 2020 where she majored in Peace Studies and minored in Africana and Religious Studies.

In 2019 she studied abroad in Durban, South Africa where she interned at Asiye eTafuleni, a civil society group advocating for self-employed/informal workers' rights, conducting research on gender and work precarity.

As a Peer Educator at Goucher's Title IX office she worked on gender-based violence prevention

on her college campus. Cecile's four years at a Quaker school sparked her interest in religion and its role in social movements. She is looking forward to learning about the UN system and QUNO's Quaker working methods.

We are grateful for Molly's hard work and valuable contributions this past year. Over the course of her time at QUNO, Molly gained insight into the advantages of Quaker working methods and how they can be leveraged in dynamic spheres such as the United Nations.

As the conflict prevention Program Assistant, she was able to learn about methods for addressing the root causes of conflict and the value of dialogue in building sustainable and inclusive partnerships for peace. Molly now works in government relations and plans to apply for graduate school. We wish her all the best on her journey ahead at her new job and future studies. ❖

a resolution to that end, also supporting the need for a new UN Charter for the future, one that is not aimed at simply preventing WW3 but relevant to the problems of today and tomorrow.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to be front and center during leader's week, where COVID protocols continue to exclude in person civil society participation in UN meetings. Even when not directly discussed the pandemic was visible, some leaders spoke via pre-recorded video, and some that were in person wore masks – highlighting the current wave in their home country or to speak out against vaccine inequity and the millions being left behind. Access to the vaccine, medical supplies, and aid as a matter of life and death for people, communities, and economies is the most pressing issue for most of the world right now. Many developed countries used UNGA to announce new support for the UNs COVAX mechanism and

other vaccine distribution pledges acknowledging that access to the vaccine is paramount to ending the pandemic.

Climate change took high priority during leader's week with the IPCCs recent report and issuance of a 'code red for humanity' receiving a lot of attention, including during a thematic debate in the Security Council and in the lead up to COP26 in Glasgow.

The Secretary General convened a Food Systems Summit focused on the management of global food production systems, addressing the impact of climate change, food security and nutrition, and ending hunger and malnutrition with pledges and commitments being announced during the Summit. However, the Summit was boycotted by many civil society, indigenous, and scientific groups citing a focus on agribusiness and commercial farming that did not adequately reflect the concerns and perspectives of others.

A high-level meeting marking the 20th anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of

Action was held and highlighted the recent establishment of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent. Speakers addressed recent events causing a resurgence of racism, xenophobia, structural discrimination, and injustice as well as a rise in anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim bigotry. Many called for reparations for people of African descent and for serious efforts to be undertaken to address the legacy of colonialism and slavery.

The UN also hosted an annual event to commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. The discussion featured testimonies from leaders in the Pacific whose island countries were ground zero for nuclear bomb testing and whose people still face the lasting impacts of those detonations. Many others spoke about the threat of nuclear warfare, the lack of transparency, the commitment of many to a nuclear free world, and the untold number of resources spent. ❖

reports, and advocates for sustainable and just (human rights-based) transformation of root causes driving current rates of climate change. During the negotiations, QUNO interventions focused on the integrity of IPCC draft language highlighting urgency and the need for sustainable, healthy and just transformation of human activities. QUNO is amongst the most active, and the only known faith based accredited observer in these negotiations.

This latest summary of physical science was a stark reminder that our human chance to healthily

stabilize global temperature rise is limited. The SPM stated that human influence on the planet is unequivocal and has led to widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere. Atmospheric concentrations for carbon dioxide (CO2) have reached an average of 410 ppm, higher than at any time in at least 2 million years. Global temperature rise has increased approximately 1.1C since pre-industrial times, and despite unavoidable 'locked-in' warming, there is still a chance with urgent, healthy and transformative action to stabilize global temperature rise at a safer 1.5C limit. Our action now could protect the most

vulnerable people and ecosystems now, all future generations and the planet from catastrophic climate change driven by fossil fuel use, industrial agriculture, deforestation, unsustainable and unjust economic systems and individual consumption (in wealthier countries). It is important to remember that every degree fraction of warming counts; the time to act is now. As one IPCC author explained, the difference between a 1.5C global temperature rise above pre-industrial levels, and the predicted 4-5C by 2100 rise under current GHG emission rates, is the difference 'between the manageable and the unmanageable, the unimaginable.' ❖