



# Geneva Reporter

## Special Issue: QUNO's programmes and peace

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### Quaker United Nations Office

13 Avenue du Mervelet  
1209 Geneva  
Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 748 4800  
Fax: +41 22 748 4819

quno@quno.ch  
www.quno.org

Printed on recycled paper



*Clockwise from upper left: QUNO Representatives Lindsey Fielder Cook, Laurel Townhead, Florence Foster & Joachim Monkelbaan.*

Peace is one of the testimonies—principled commitments—of Quakerism that is core to informing the work of the Quaker United Nations Office. We understand peace as not only the absence of war and violence, but as the presence of justice, well-being and equality throughout all communities. This understanding serves as the foundation of our work, not only in the obvious areas of peacebuilding and disarmament, but also in our work on human rights, climate change and sustainable economic systems. It is why we continue to raise peace and justice concerns at the UN and in other international processes.

QUNO's commitment to peace was also a catalyst for the creation in 2008 of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform (GPP), a collaborative effort with now four other lead partners to consolidate peacebuilding expertise in Geneva. Prior to this platform, few formal peacebuilding opportunities were hosted in Geneva, despite many international institutions having headquarters and offices here. The GPP sought to make Geneva, as a key part of the UN system, a more active partner in the evolving peacebuilding discourse taking place within the UN and around the world.

Today, the GPP's flagship event is Geneva Peace Week, taking place each November. Geneva Peace Week emphasizes that each and every person, actor and institution has a role to play in building peace and resolving conflict. It recognizes that peacebuilding occurs in many different contexts and cuts across disciplines and sectors. In this way, Geneva Peace Week works to break down professional silos in order to enable creative responses to violence, exclusion and insecurity.

In this issue of the Geneva Reporter, we explore some of the many ways QUNO's commitment to peace informs our work and highlight a few of our recent events held during Geneva Peace Week this past November.

## Integrating human rights and sustaining peace

We asked Florence Foster, our Representative for Peace & Disarmament, to talk through QUNO's long-standing work on the interface between human rights and peacebuilding, and why there is potential in strengthening the links between these two areas.

**Why is human rights so central to the current work of the Peace & Disarmament programme and to QUNO's understanding of peace?**

To the layperson, the link between human rights and peacebuilding may seem obvious. As the denial of human rights is both the cause and effect of destructive conflict, it seems intuitive that any attempt to both prevent violent conflict and rebuild societies in the aftermath of conflict requires a holistic approach. However, there has been a perceived divide between the two sectors, premised on an assumption that they are separated by different methods, priorities and operational approaches. These dynamics are also present in the UN and other multilateral institutions, where parallel institutional pillars of peacebuilding, development and human rights have regularly operated with limited integration. Despite increasing connections being made at the UN, policy makers and practitioners working at the intersection of these two fields often remain oblivious to, and sometimes even disdainful, of each other's work. This is problematic because when people who work on devising solutions to problems operate within insular silos, the absence of collaboration and reciprocal learning across these fields undermines the impact and effectiveness of the system.

**How you are trying to overcome these challenges?**

Our current flagship initiative started in 2016, and has involved supporting peacebuilding organizations and UN institutions to engage in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, with a view to integrating peacebuilding language and analysis. The UPR is a mechanism of the Human Rights Council, in which States review the human rights record of all other States over a 5-year cycle. Human rights abuses are potential root causes of destructive conflict, so by including peacebuilding narratives throughout the process, we hope to leverage the UPR process as a source of early warning and conflict prevention.

**Is this a novel approach for QUNO?**

QUNO has always sought to build bridges between different sectors and to find connections across thematic areas. For the Peace & Disarmament programme, this has included highlighting the links between human rights, peacebuilding and natural resource management to show that access to resources can be both a cause of undermining peace and a way to bring people together. We have also focused on demonstrating the link between economic, social and cultural rights and sustaining peace.

**What have you been doing recently to stimulate discussions around this topic?**

For Geneva Peace Week 2019, QUNO and Interpeace organized a roundtable on *Integrating Human Rights and Sustaining Peace*. The roundtable brought together peacebuilders to share their reflections on how to creatively traverse the disciplinary, policy and practice divides between the human rights and peacebuilding fields.

Participants discussed the need to focus on economic, social and cultural rights, *as well as* civil and political rights when intersecting with peacebuilding, the need for a broader approach to justice and human rights that transcends the narrow constraints of criminal justice, and the importance of listening to local lived experiences. Several participants commented that local actors often do not actively distinguish between human rights and peacebuilding and have a naturally more integrated way of working. There was a clear enthusiasm among the group for continued and increased collaboration.

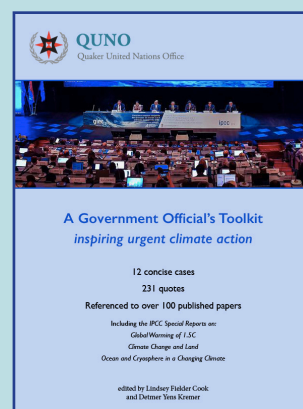
**And what is next for the project?**

As our pilot countries (Kenya, Kyrgyzstan and Sweden) are coming up for UPR review in January, we will be working with other States over the next two months to try and get prevention and peacebuilding language embedded in their recommendations to those countries. More broadly, we are continuing to engage with the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform on the role of human rights in peacebuilding and are working with QUNO New York and other organizations to better reflect the role of human rights within the 2020 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture.

### Recent publications

#### *A Government Official's Toolkit—2020 edition*

Inspiring urgent climate action with 12 concise cases. Now including references to the *IPCC Special Reports on: Global Warming of 1.5C, Climate Change and Land, and Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*. Edited by Lindsey Fielder Cook and Detmer Yens Kremer (December 2019)







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## QUNO Q & A with David Elliott



David Elliott

*In QUNO Q&A, we feature interviews with our alumni. For this issue, we spoke with David Elliott, 2014 Quaker UN Summer School (QUNSS) participant and 2014-15 Programme Assistant (PA) for Climate Change, and Food & Sustainability. Since 2015, David has lived in London, working for three years at Conciliation Resources, an international peacebuilding charity, and now as a Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist at ActionAid.*

### **Tell us about what led you to QUNO?**

I studied for a Masters in Applied Human Rights at the University of York, and my friend there, Emily Graham, had taken up the human rights PA-ship at QUNO. She couldn't sing its praises enough. My studies revolved around environmental rights and human rights defenders who were implicated in environmental struggles—specifically on agricultural systems, food sovereignty, and climate change. So, when I learned there was a PA position so closely related to my field of study, it was a no-brainer to apply. The opportunity to engage with these rights issues in the same city and in very often the same building that the rights themselves were codified was too good to pass up.

### **Looking back now, what moments stand out?**

The early days loom the largest for me. Before day one, you have two weeks of preparation in the UK, including a week in the Woodbrooke Study Centre. I hope it doesn't sound too much to say that a lot of self-discovery happened during that week at Woodbrooke. I'm not sure it could be easily quantified, but it really helped me to figure out why I was doing this and where I hoped to be by the end of the year. I can't imagine having gone to Geneva without that experience!

And then the first months in Geneva—wrapping my head around the labyrinthine UN, figuring out who the different movers and shakers were, and getting a front row seat to vital work, like the quiet diplomacy around the climate change negotiations. Through it all, I remember the constant support, advice and friendship I received from my colleagues and especially my managers.

### **What did you find challenging about the experience?**

Organizing and participating in the conferences of big thinkers in agriculture and food security, which took place in the stunning Chateau de Bossey, was a big professional milestone for me. I hadn't been given that level of responsibility in my work before and the feeling of relief and satisfaction was immense when I made it out the other side in one piece.

I also wrote a couple of policy briefs during my time, which I found to be a challenging experience. Having come from a more academic background, I had to get used to thinking much more about audience and purpose and giving people a reason to keep reading. But I was left with some pieces that I'm very proud of to this day.

### **Did your QUNO experience have much impact on your current work?**

I very much doubt that I would have landed my job at Conciliation Resources without my QUNO experience. The sheer variety of the work was invaluable at the application stage, and not just in terms of ticking boxes. It helped me demonstrate having developed a practical, problem-solving approach to overcoming real challenges.

### **Have you kept in contact with anyone?**

I've stayed in touch with several Summer School participants. In fact I met my current partner there. Also, last month, another QUNSS participant came to stay with us for a weekend from her home in Paris. And I see Emily plenty, as she also lives in London. One of the many nice things about the summer school is that it brings together kindred spirits!

### **How was it experiencing QUNSS as a participant and then as a PA?**

I don't think I was aware before arriving at QUNO as PA just how big of a deal the summer school was—how much of an institution it has been for so long and for so many people. It felt like a big responsibility, stepping into the shoes of PAs who had led it before. I wanted it to be as successful as the one I had participated in!

### **Is there anything else we didn't cover that you would like to share about your time at QUNO?**

I feel I haven't given enough love to Geneva as a city yet—it's absolutely one of my favourite places. I miss evenings near my flat in the Paquis. If you find yourself at a loose end, you could do much worse than a kebab at Parfums de Beyrouth and a drink at Cafe Art's.



## Creating a future for all: Climate justice and peacebuilding

QUNO views climate change as an urgent peace and justice concern that places greater stress on already limited natural resources upon which our lives and livelihoods depend. With that in mind, for the past two years we have worked to explore connections between peacebuilding and environment and climate change during Geneva Peace Week. This year, together with the students from the Geneva Graduate Institute's Environmental Committee, we co-hosted *Creating a Future for All: Climate Justice and Peacebuilding*, an event that offered a powerful range of perspectives, including QUNO, the UN and a highly vulnerable State.

Didier Georges, a diplomat of the Permanent Mission of Haiti to the UN in Geneva, shared how in 2016, after Hurricane Matthew wreaked havoc on Haiti, over 100,000 people fled to Chile, which at the time had an open-border policy. After the mass arrival of Haitians, Chilean migration policy changed. The country closed borders and enforced stricter regulation regarding entry. Transnational situations like this one illustrate how climate change can impact the stability of communities by exacerbating pre-existing inequality and affecting vulnerable groups such as women, Indigenous Peoples, and disabled people more than others. Here, it is important to note that the vulnerable are not innately disadvantaged, but rather live in societies where their vulnerability is constructed.

During the event, QUNO's Representative for Climate Change Lindsey Fielder Cook highlighted the role of rights-based approaches as a peacebuilding method to help reduce

the potential for violent conflict over increasing natural resource stress. Rights-based approaches include public participation in decision making, which better enables marginalized and disproportionately affected communities to be heard, contribute to, and benefit from solutions. The integration of climate justice and rights-based approaches helps communities address pre-existing inequalities and construct more inclusive and sustainable systems.

A recent natural resource management and conflict resolution project in Al-Rahad, Sudan, presented by UN Environment Programme Officer Silja Halle, demonstrated the potential for this kind of approach. The project prioritized local involvement of traditionally neglected community members, such as women, in improving education and sustainable farming practices, and helped create a more inclusive and resilient way of life for a community already experiencing the consequences of a changing climate. It is important that communities like those in Sudan and Haiti become more climate resilient before far reaching climate change makes their land uninhabitable. That these vulnerable communities contributed negligibly to the current climate crisis highlights the need for a climate justice focus. There is a need for paradigm shifts in the social, political and economic systems driving anthropogenic climate change, ocean acidification, land degradation, chemical pollution and species extinction. Climate justice understands climate change as a symptom of a greater challenge—how to live sustainably, peacefully, and justly on earth.

## Trade for peace

More than 1.6 billion people currently live in countries affected by fragility and conflict. Beyond the untold human suffering, the global economic cost of violence now exceeds 14 trillion USD per year. By 2030, most of the world's poor are expected to live in fragile and conflict-affected countries, with pressures such as climate change, and water and food shortages fueling further conflict.

In theory, there should be less armed conflict between countries that have stable economic and trade relations. Properly regulated trade can benefit everyone by contributing to well-being and by strengthening relationships and understanding between different countries and cultures. But important questions arise around the negative impact of trade on peace.

For example, unequal trade relationships, trade of non-renewable resources and military intervention connected to trade relationships are among factors suggesting that trade can turn into a source of conflict. Unregulated and illegitimate free

trade (for example, when parliaments are kept out of secret trade negotiations) can contribute to structural violence. And trade in weapons is unethical and often unregulated.

Despite clear links between trade and peace, this connection has only recently become a topic of lively discussion among experts and policy makers. In terms of policy making, there are at least three areas that illustrate common ground between the trade and peacebuilding field. These include:

- A shared focus on rule-based systems to control power-driven relationships and enhance conflict resolution;
- A shared understanding that relationships and connectedness enhance peacefulness or, in other words, that market integration and interdependence can prevent conflict (e.g. by increasing understanding among societies); and

*(continued on page 6)*

## Sixty years of QUNO supporting those who refuse military service

QUNO works for the full recognition of the right to conscientious objection to military service as an expression of commitment to the 1660 Quaker peace testimony: *We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretence whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world.*

Commitment to this conviction led to the persecution of Quakers for their refusal to fight. Today, few Quaker conscientious objectors are persecuted, but QUNO's commitment to ensuring protection of those who refuse to bear arms remains strong. We have worked since the 1950s to use international law and the international human rights system to secure protection for those who refuse to fight. In this time there has been significant progress in the recognition of the right to conscientious objection to military service at the UN. But recognition at this level is just part of securing space for people to act on their convictions against war.

We currently focus on how international recognition of the right can be translated into full implementation. This includes working with conscientious objectors and those supporting them at the national level to share information and guidance on international standards. In 2018 for instance, in a case for which we submitted a joint amicus brief, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Korea found that the failure to provide an alternative to military service is unconstitutional. This has halted the incarceration of hundreds of young men and led to a process to introduce alternative service.

While recognition of conscientious objection in national law is a huge step towards ending violations of the rights of those who refuse to fight, human rights based processes need to be in place to ensure that the right can be exercised in practice. On this basis the Human Rights Council mandated a report from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, delivered this past June, that examines barriers to the right to conscientious objection and provides a checklist of recommendations for States when implementing policy. (QUNO's submission to the report can be found here: [quino.org/resource/2019/6/co-ohchr](https://quino.org/resource/2019/6/co-ohchr)).

The report is major contribution to helping States design or improve their processes and is a useful tool conscientious objectors and their advocates can use to show the measures that need to be in place to fully uphold the right. Steps to ensuring safety and ending stigma for those who challenge war are steps towards peace and steps on a path the peace testimony has led Quakers on for over 300 years.

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## Trade for peace (continued)

- The use of consensus seeking processes that manage disagreements or conflict through dialogue and negotiation.

Currently, more than half of the 22 countries that are in the process of joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) are considered fragile conflict-affected States. They face specific challenges in building their economic foundation and integrating into the global economy. Some countries negotiating to join the WTO have used the process to overcome their fragile and conflict-affected situations by putting in place legal, economic and institutional frameworks based on WTO principles and rules. Such frameworks could complement and consolidate their reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts. However, there is so far no systematic analysis of peacebuilding perspectives on WTO accession processes.

This is why “trade for peace” is one of the topics of work being explored by Joachim Monkelbaan, our Representative for Sustainable & Just Economic Systems. During Geneva Peace Week in November, we organized a side event on this topic and the role of the private sector in different aspects of conflict resolution and sustaining peace, which require the combined effort of many different groups, agencies and sectors. We plan to host future meetings to explore ways in which trade can foster peace. Such a multi-stakeholder approach can help bring together the resources, knowledge, perspectives, skills and constituencies that can lead to the political will, collective capacities and sense of ownership needed to prevent conflict and sustain peace.