



Quaker United Nations Office

13 Avenue du Mervelet
CH-1209 Geneva
Switzerland
Tel +41 (22) 748-4800
Fax +41 (22) 748-4819
Email rbrett@quuno.ch

UN Human Rights Council
21st session
Item 3

Oral Statement by Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers), an international NGO in General Consultative Status with ECOSOC

Delivered by Ellie Roberts, Quaker UN Office, Geneva, on Wednesday 12 September 2012

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation

Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers) welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation. In particular, we are pleased to see the attention given in paragraph 75 to water and sanitation interventions as an entry point for wider social change.

This corresponds with recent research that the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) has undertaken on transboundary water-sharing agreements and their possibility for fostering cooperation between States in situations of natural resource scarcity. States tend not to go to war over water – of 1,831 events catalogued by water researchers, only 28% involved conflict in any way, most of which was verbal rather than violent. Moreover, where water-sharing agreements exist, there is, on average, significantly more cooperation than in similar situations without such agreements. These cases of cooperation also show the fallacy of assuming that scarcity automatically leads to violent conflict and that climate change will necessarily result in so-called ‘water wars’ in the future.

The Quaker United Nations Office will discuss this issue in more detail at a side event this Friday, co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Ethiopia and with the involvement of the UN Environment Programme, which will take place in room XXIV from 14.00-16.00. All are welcome.

In connection with this, we have the following question for the Special Rapporteur:

Have you considered devoting a future report to the role that access to water and sanitation can play in promoting peace and avoiding violent conflict? What information would you find useful in preparing such a report?