



Geneva Reporter

Exploring links between food security and peacebuilding

Also in this issue:

What is Agricultural Biodiversity?
page 2

A Negotiator's Toolkit
for supporting urgent
climate action
page 2

Recent publications
page 3

Update on the right to
conscientious objection
to military service
page 3

News in Brief
page 3

QUNO Q&A with
Tankiso Phori
page 4

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Nora Meier (left) and Florence Foster (centre) participate in a panel during Geneva Peace Week in November.

Florence Foster, our Representative for Peace & Disarmament, discusses QUNO's recent collaboration with the United Nations (UN) [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO).

How did QUNO's work with the FAO on food security and peacebuilding come about?

Encouraging a cross-cutting, holistic approach to peacebuilding within the UN system was very much a focus of my predecessor, Diane Hendrick. There is an urgent need to deepen our understanding of connections between sustaining peace and food security. Diane and FAO had preliminary conversations about these connections, and our Food & Sustainability programme also has strong collaborative partnerships with FAO. So, when they began to develop work in this area, the value of a partnership was clear to all.

What are the recent developments in this work?

A heartening development has been the continuing work on this initiative by our previous Food & Sustainability Program Assistant, Nora Meier, who is now a consultant for the FAO. Nora is preparing a publication on the potential of farmers' seed systems to sustain peace. She presented her preliminary findings at the [Committee on World Food Security](#) in October, and again during a QUNO co-sponsored panel during [Geneva Peace Week](#) in November.

Can you give some highlights of Nora's work?

Nora's research emphasizes the vital role community-based natural resources management plays in local peacebuilding efforts. The example she explores is farmer seed systems. The exchange and access to seeds within their social networks and local seed markets are essential for farmers, who deeply depend on agricultural biodiversity to maintain sustainable food production. As such, the very cooperative nature of seed exchange, contributes to fostering trust and confidence among communities. Destructive conflict can undermine such networks and cooperation, endangering seed exchanges between communities in the short term, and their livelihoods and access to resilient and biodiverse crops in the medium to long-term.

How was Nora's work received and what are the next steps?

It was exciting to see such a high level of attendance and participation at these events, which indicated broad interest in the nexus between peace, food and nutrition security. The paper points out knowledge gaps where further research and data would be helpful. We hope that the paper will catalyze research at the national level and stimulate continuing dialogue at the global level with the goal of positive policy and action in sustaining peace and food security.

Agricultural Biodiversity

Susan Bragdon, our Representative for Food & Sustainability, explains the importance of agricultural biodiversity.

What is agricultural biodiversity and why is it important?

According to the FAO, agricultural biodiversity includes the components of biological diversity that are essential for feeding human populations and improving the quality of life. It includes the variety and variability of ecosystems, animals, plants and micro-organisms, which are necessary to sustain human life as well as the key functions of ecosystems. We may look out at hectares and hectares of wheat fields or rice paddies and feel confident in our food and nutrition security. But without diversity, a species has lost its ability to adapt and is on an irreversible road to extinction. At some point, those wheat fields or rice paddies will face a new pest or disease or a change in climate to which it cannot adapt. The bottom line is while food systems require more than agricultural biodiversity to be resilient and sustainable, no food system can be sustainable without it. Agricultural biodiversity is essential to humankind's existence because without it we lose our ability to feed ourselves.

What is happening to agricultural biodiversity?

The erosion of agricultural biodiversity is occurring as traditional production systems and the cultivation of diverse farmers' varieties are replaced with more modern, industrialized production systems and the cultivation of uniform, high-yielding varieties. This trend has been called the "homogenization" of the global food supply. Today, 12 plant crops and 14 animal species provide 98% of the world's food needs, with wheat, rice and maize alone accounting for more than 50%. Diverse and genetically unique livestock species, those that are probably more resilient to emerging diseases, are also being lost at an alarming rate.

Is there anything I can do to help reverse these trends?

If you are a consumer with the means to do so, you can influence production by choosing nutritious, fresh, local and diverse foods. Ask at your grocery store where things come from and if possible, source directly from local farmers. If you eat out, choose places that also are sourcing their food locally. You can also raise your and others' awareness about the importance of agricultural biodiversity and learn about your government's policies both nationally and internationally that have an effect on agricultural biodiversity and small-scale farmers.

Visit www.quno.org/resources/food-&-sustainability for further reading, including two recent QUNO publications, *Foundations of Food Security* and *The Evolution of Rights and Responsibilities over Agricultural Biodiversity*.

A Negotiator's Toolkit

QUNO's Lindsey Fielder Cook shares the inspiration behind our most recent publication supporting urgent climate action.

A Negotiator's Toolkit was inspired by two experiences I could not shake. The first was in May 2014, when the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) released its [5th Assessment Report](#), over three thousand pages of complex words, graphs and images. A poster had been prepared at the climate conference to highlight ten critical messages from this massive report, and I watched as negotiators stood before it, intently taking notes.

The second experience was hearing a climate negotiator's despair over the job she faced back home, convincing decision makers that urgent climate action was essential for the long-term stability of her country.

This call for urgent action remains fundamental, with the Paris Agreement adopted, greenhouse gas emissions still rising, and the ever clearer existential consequences of global land and sea temperatures and sea acidification rising at rates unprecedented in our human history. Most climate negotiators know the consequences of inaction better than their government Ministers, but how to reach them through competing priorities and limited time?

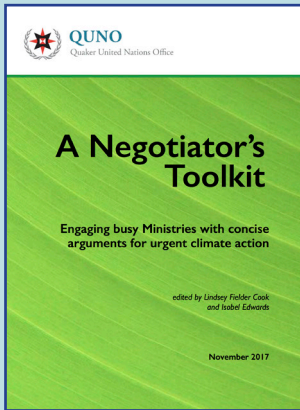
This publication began with a side event in May 2017, bringing together climate experts in the sectors of climate science, economics, food security, human rights, peace and conflict, civil society engagement, ethics, and seasoned negotiator experiences. We worked to articulate 10 to 15 critical messages from each presentation, supported by detailed references.

The call is not only for urgent, but also for rights-based approaches, incorporating human rights in climate policies and actions. Rights-based approaches help create local, national and international climate policies that are more coherent, legitimate and sustainable.

The result is a thin booklet called *The Negotiator's Toolkit: Engaging busy Ministries with concise arguments for urgent climate action*. In November, we handed out 200 copies at the international climate negotiations taking place in Bonn, Germany, with negotiators still asking for more.

If funding allows, we plan a revised edition for citizens, encouraging us and our decision makers to act urgently and justly in transforming the human activities at the root cause of anthropogenic climate change. In the meantime, this current booklet is accessible and available to anyone seeking to better understand why urgent, rights-based climate action is needed now.

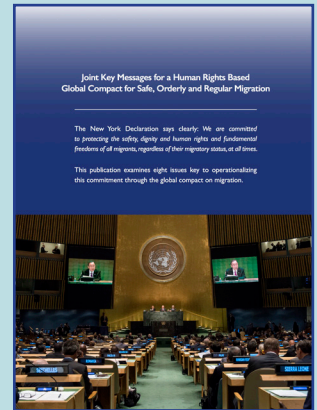
Recent publications



A Negotiator's Toolkit

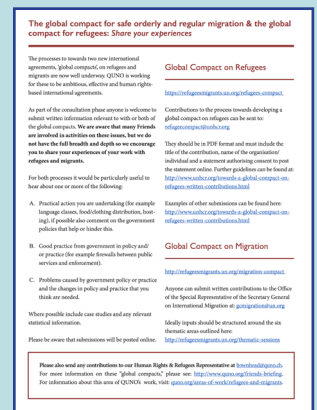
Engaging busy Ministries with concise arguments for urgent climate action. *Edited by Lindsey Fielder Cook and Isobel Edwards (October 2017)*

Key Messages for a Human Rights Based Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
Developed by an informal NGO working group on migration, convened by QUNO (November 2017)



Reinvigorating the Public Sector
The Case of Food Security, Small-Scale Farmers, Trade and Intellectual Property Rules
Susan H. Bragdon (July 2017)

Friends Briefing on Migration: Share your experiences
How to submit relevant experience and information to the "global compacts" on refugees and migration.
QUNO (July 2017)



All publications are available at: quno.org/recent-publications.

From paper to practice: Conscientious objection to military service

In September, the HRC passed [resolution 36/18](#), which reaffirms the recognition of the right to conscientious objection and requests that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) prepare a report on application procedures that States have in place for obtaining status as a conscientious objector. When introducing the resolution, the Croatian ambassador explained that its focus on application procedures is “key to the translation of the recognition of this right on paper to its realization in practice.”

We welcome the resolution’s request for such a report, as we believe information on best practices and continuing challenges will be useful to States seeking to introduce processes to recognize conscientious objectors to military service. It will also be useful to States where there is already a process in place but where this process does not uphold human rights standards. We also believe it will help bring attention to the rights violations being committed in countries where conscientious objection is recognized in law, but hard to access in practice.

There is a good amount of time for States and others that have relevant information on this issue to collate, analyze

and prepare it for submission to OHCHR (most likely in early 2019). If you would like to know more about what information would be useful to gather, please contact Laurel Townhead, our Representative for Human Rights & Refugees at ltownhead@quno.ch.

News in Brief

QUNO welcomed three new members to our team in September. **Florence Foster** was appointed Representative, Peace & Disarmament, while **Stephen Browne** joined as Programme Assistant (PA), Human Rights & Refugees, and **Isobel Edwards** joined as PA, Climate Change and Peace. We extend a warm welcome to Isobel, Stephen and Florence—their biographies are available on our [website](#).

In August, we bid a fond farewell to **Diane Hendrick**, who led our Peace & Disarmament work since January 2012, maintaining its core values and taking it in new directions. Diane decided to return to her homebase in Austria, but we are fortunate that she arranged a smooth hand-over to Florence.

QUNO Q & A with Tankiso Phori



In QUNO Q&A, we feature interviews with alumni about their perspectives and experiences as Programme Assistants (PAs) or Geneva Summer School (GSS) participants. For this issue, we spoke with 2006 GSS participant Tankiso Phori. Phori is involved in child rights advocacy work in Lesotho, his home country in southern Africa, where he works with a number of civil society organizations through the Letsema Child Rights Network and his company, [Vision Research Consultants](#).

What first interested you in QUNO's GSS program?

I have had a general interest in the UN's work since 1999, when I was working with Save the Children Fund in Lesotho as a young writer primarily collecting and publishing stories and experiences of children who lived on the streets. So, I developed a lot of interest in child rights and the work done by various agencies, such as UNICEF. When I heard about the summer school organized by QUNO, I thought it could be an opportunity for me to learn more and understand the UN systems and agencies better.

What do you recall the most about your experience at GSS?

I must say that the whole experience of participating in the GSS was amazing, eye opening and educative. However, getting to understand how agencies such as the World Trade Organization and UN Human Rights Commission work was very important to me, especially given my growing interest in human rights at the time and now.

I also recall vividly, sitting in one of the conference halls where world leaders convene and trying on the earphones and microphone. That was quite fun. GSS also provided many opportunities to meet new people, make new friends, and exchange ideas of what to do next with the experience gained. The reflection meetings we used to have after different parts of the GSS program were also very important to me.

Were any of your experiences at GSS useful to your current work?

In part, because of the experience that I had at the summer school, I have been able to engage in and clearly articulate issues related to child rights instruments, such as the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC) and its related protocols.

I am now one of the people training civil society and non-governmental organizations on the CRC and other instruments, so that they can understand the importance of supporting the Lesotho government in fully implementing child rights and reporting to the [UN Committee on the Rights of the Child](#).

Why would you recommend GSS?

I would recommend the summer school to young people because it helps

to understand how the UN functions, and also the commitments that our governments are making through the treaties or conventions that are signed or ratified. This can enable or empower us to hold our leaders and ourselves accountable to such agreements and to implement them to improve the quality of life for our people.

Have you kept in contact with anyone from GSS?

I am still in contact with some of the 2006 participants (often thanks to social media platforms), though we do not talk often. We have been talking about the possibility of a reunion of some sort. I think it would be great if we could come together and share our experiences since 2006.

Beyond that, I think it would also be good to bring other former GSS participants together to come up with ideas for local or regional projects to complement the work that QUNO's programmes are doing. In this way, the impact of the Geneva Summer School could be felt in our communities.

QUNO depends upon support from individuals, Quaker Meetings and others.

Visit quno.org/donate and help us continue working to promote peace and justice at the UN and other institutions.

