

We are a Quaker presence at the United Nations
Friends World Gathering, Johannesburg, South Africa
August 9, 2024

Introducing Quaker work at the UN



Ambassadors for the UK (left) and the US (centre) veto a UN Security Council resolution calling for a cease-fire in Gaza.

Work at the United Nations (UN) over the last few years has been difficult. Many countries, including those with great power and influence, have ignored the basic principles of international law, and they have not lived up to their commitments under the UN Charter. As a global community, we face serious challenges - from climate change to the ongoing impact of COVID-19, to food insecurity and massive inequalities. There are now wars taking place on almost every continent in

the world. These crises all demand UN attention, but as an institution the UN has found itself blocked on many topics by deep divisions and competition between major powers.

In this context, the staff of QUNO in New York and Geneva work with the UN to uphold the dignity and worth of every person so that peace can flourish. Our job is to always listen and push so that the UN can overcome the divisions and countries will respect and uphold the original vision of the UN. This is how QUNO strives every day to make a more just and peaceful world as a Quaker presence at the UN. And this has been our work for over 75 years



Programme Assistants at the UN in New York during the early 1970s.



QUNO New York, Representative, Kavita Desai (right) shares coffee with diplomats and UN staff on the terrace at Quaker House.

QUNO Geneva and QUNO New York

Quakers have been present at the UN with offices in Geneva and New York since 1948. We were one of the first religious non-governmental organizations to gain observer status at the UN. This allows us to take part in formal meetings at the UN and make statements on behalf of the worldwide community of Quakers. In Geneva and New York, QUNO works across the UN's three pillars: peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights. Both of our offices represent the worldwide community of Quakers at the



QUNO Geneva Acting, Associate Director, Lindsey Fielder-Cook makes a statement to the UN on behalf of FWCC.

United Nations on behalf of the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), and we are seen as a trusted presence among diplomats and UN staff.

What does Quaker Work Look Like in New York and Geneva?

Whether in New York or Geneva there are key aspects of what Quakers do at the UN that are distinct from other civil society organisations. We offer a space apart from formal UN meetings where members of the UN community can share, make personal connections, hear perspectives and analysis they might not otherwise hear. In our work we strive to bring diverse concerns, views, and perspectives before UN decision-makers, particularly those informed by the work of Quaker service agencies and Quaker communities.

Quaker UN Office, New York

In New York, all our work is focused on increasing the global commitment to the UN's role in promoting lasting peace. And we know that the UN will only fulfill that role when its peace initiatives truly respond to community needs. To do this work, we make statements at formal UN meetings and use Quaker House as a space to bring members of the UN community together. We advocate on topics such as:

- Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16, which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies
- Youth, Peace, and Inclusion
- Seeking Peace in the Israel-Palestine Conflict
- Engagement for Peace on the Korean Peninsula
- Voices for Peace in Myanmar



QUNO New York Director, Sarah Clarke (centre), meets with peace practitioners from Myanmar at Quaker House.

These have been our main areas of focus during 2024. However, we expect to be taking on new work during the coming year. This will include new efforts to focus on conflict and peacebuilding in the Greater Horn of Africa. Also, we will be developing new work that lifts up the connection between climate justice and peace.

Quaker UN Office, Geneva

In Geneva, work takes place through four programmes that are all connected, including through a human rights approach.

- Sustainable and Just Economic Systems: QUNO strives to foster economic systems that deliver prosperity for all through improved livelihoods, strengthened resilience, and just transitions to sustainability for all.
- Peace and Disarmament: QUNO encourages a holistic and integrated approach to building peace at the international and local level, seeing the denial of human rights as both a cause and an effect of destructive conflict
- Human Rights and Refugees: QUNO is motivated by a foundational belief in the inherent worth of each person. We work to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights through the UN system, including addressing dehumanization of migrants.
- Human Impacts of Climate Change: QUNO views climate change as an environmental, political and economic challenge that interconnects with its work on peace and justice issues.



QUNO Geneva, Programme Associate, Andrés Naranjo meets with Quakers in Kenya while attending meetings at the UN Environment Programme in Nairobi.



QUNO Geneva, Acting Director, Laurel Townhead, addresses the UN on issues related to the human rights of migrants.

Governance and the Role of FWCC



Members of the Quaker UN Committee, Geneva, meet at Bossey, Switzerland

Both our New York and Geneva offices represent the worldwide community of Quakers at the United Nations on behalf of the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC). Priorities for each office are set by a committee that includes representatives appointed by FWCC.

In Geneva, FWCC appoints 5 of 10 committee members, so that all FWCC sections and the World Office are represented. The other 5 members are appointed by Britain Yearly Meeting. Likewise, in New York, FWCC appoints 5 of 10

committee members, while the other half of committee members are appointed by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).

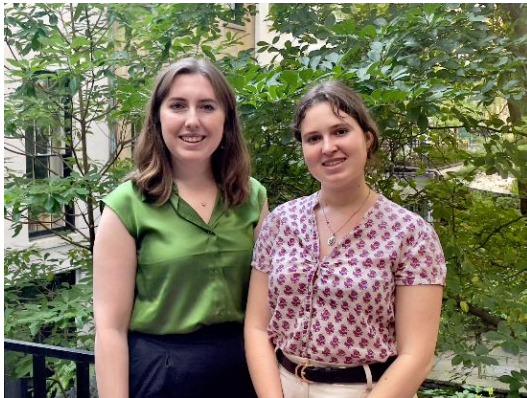
To identify representatives to the QUNO committees in Geneva and New York, the International Nominating Committee conducts an independent search and presents nominations to FWCC's Central Executive Committee. Also, FWCC's Justice and Peace Secretary supports the newly appointed nominees with onboarding.

The work of both offices is made possible through generous support and collaboration between FWCC, AFSC, as well as Britain Yearly Meeting. We also depend on the gifts of many individuals, and Quaker Meetings.



Members of the Quaker UN Committee, New York and staff visit Friends Center in Philadelphia.

Developing Quaker Leadership for the Future And How to Become Involved



Programme Assistants in New York

Each year QUNO hires Programme Assistants to support the work of its offices both in New York and in Geneva. This year-long programme is intended for recent graduates who are passionate about international affairs and who are committed to Quaker values and testimonies. The role allows Programme Assistants to gain experience working at the UN, engaging across a range of programme areas under the guidance of Quaker UN Representatives. In Geneva, an annual summer school also takes place.

If you want to stay connected and know more about QUNO's work, be sure to [sign-up](#) to receive our monthly e-newsletter and follow us on [Facebook](#), [X](#), and [LinkedIn](#).



Participants in the July 2024 Summer School in Geneva.