

Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO)

13 Avenue du Mervelet, 1209 Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 748 4800 | Fax: +41 22 748 4819
quno@quno.ch | www.quno.org



QUNO hosted participants at its convening on efforts towards global ending plastic pollution



QUNO hosts meeting of minds on plastic pollution in Bellagio

At the end of March 2024, the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) organised an influential residential workshop at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center, on Lake Como, Italy, entitled "Plastic Money: Turning off the Subsidies Tap".

QUNO's Sustainable and Just Economic Systems (SJES) programme took the lead on this event, which brought together a diverse group of 21 stakeholders. These included government representatives, inter-governmental bodies, legal scholars and social scientists, non-governmental organisations, and experts from charitable foundations. The event was strategically scheduled between the meeting of World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministers in February 2024 and the fourth meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution (INC-4) in April 2024. Its aim was to raise awareness of the urgent need, and build support, for collaborative action against plastic pollution, particularly focusing on the elimination of harmful subsidies to primary plastic production.

The inclusive participation of the Bellagio Convening was made possible through a competitive grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, which covered substantial costs including travel and accommodation for participants, especially those from least developed countries, academia, NGOs, and other critical stakeholders.

The gathering underscored the utility of a strategy that starts by building a strong foundational coalition of smaller and medium-sized countries that can gradually expand, attracting broader support for meaningful change in international policy. Through

a series of brainstorming sessions, roundtable discussions, and bilateral conversations, the event fostered an enhanced level of understanding among government negotiators and civil society experts on this issue, empowering them with tools needed for effective advocacy. One of the key outcomes was the crafting of specific draft language aimed at tackling plastic subsidies, intended for consideration by INC negotiators.

Another outcome from this event is that the producer of the Plasticsphere podcast agreed to record a podcast dedicated to the topic of subsidies to primary plastic polymer production, organized around a discussion with Andres Naranjo and Ronald Steenblik, both with the SJES programme, and Dr. Alexandra R. Harrington, a legal scholar associated with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) who also attended the Bellagio convening.

Thanks to this Bellagio convening, QUNO gained recognition for its work, setting the stage for an increased presence in ongoing initiatives. An example of that was, two weeks after the convening, QUNO was invited by the co-convenors of the WTO's Dialogue on Plastic Pollution (DPP) to present our insights on transparency and plastic-related subsidies during the DPP's pre-plenary meeting held on 12 April 2024.

QUNO, in collaboration with its partners from the IUCN and the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) is ready to deepen our advocacy. Our collective ambition is to refine the global understanding and quantification of subsidies to primary plastics production, offering strategic insights for the upcoming INC meetings and future environmental policymaking.



HICC Representative Lindsey Fielder Cook speaking on behalf of Quakers at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in Turkey in January 2024.

Human Impacts of Climate Change

In January 2024, QUNO's Human Impacts of Climate Change (HICC) programme staff attended the 60th Session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), held in Istanbul, Turkey.

This session tasked States with crucial decisions on the programme of work of the 7th Assessment Cycle, which will collate the latest climate science worldwide with hundreds of scientists working mostly voluntarily. Since 2017, QUNO has been actively engaged as the only independent faith-based observer in IPCC processes and negotiations.

As this new cycle begins, so do unique challenges, openings, and possibilities. A growing concern is observing political pressure, driven primarily by fossil fuel extraction wealthy countries, to promote reliance on 'techno fixes' as a way to 'solve' climate crises. Techno-fixes refer to unproven to scale technologies, including carbon capture storage and carbon dioxide removal (CDR), as well as solar radiation management approaches which, if implemented, introduce a widespread range of new risks to people and ecosystems, which are not well understood.

According to the IPCC 6th Assessment Report (AR6), these technologies were found to be more expensive, less efficient, less equitable, and not available to scale in comparison to what is integral for a chance at 'net zero', specifically, rapid reduction of fossil fuels, rapid increase of renewable energy, reduction and efficiency in energy use, ease of renewable energy, alongside sustainable and just economic and agriculture transformations.

At the IPCC 60th Session, fossil fuel wealthy countries encouraged the IPCC to focus its research on techno-fixes. QUNO's interventions raised that the dangerous and unhealthy reliance on techno-fixes is an ethical concern. While technology is essential to mitigate and adapt to climate change, QUNO advocated that the over-stating of and over-relying on these technologies fails to transform the root causes driving climate change and poses risks to human rights, Indigenous peoples, land tenure, biodiversity, and ecosystem health.

QUNO raised concerns that CDR relies on ecosystems that are at risk of collapse with higher temperature rise and continued fossil fuel use. Instead, QUNO pushed the IPCC to prioritise collating research on urgent, effective, equitable and available-at-scale options.

As the IPCC 7th Assessment Cycle continues, QUNO will remain engaged and active in our advocacy to protect the integrity of the science from political pressures and influence and push for the ethical considerations of mitigation choices.



Maria Kamenias from the HRR programme delivers a QUNO statement during the online intersessional meeting.

Human Rights & Refugees

Grounded in the inherent worth of every individual, QUNO's Human Rights and Refugees (HRR) programme works to end the deadly impact of dehumanisation of migrants.

As a result of collaborative advocacy, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on preventing human rights violations in transit in June 2023. That resolution asked for an intersessional panel discussion which took place in May 2024.

Despite language in the resolution calling for meaningful participation, United Nations (UN) resource limitations led to a format which severely restricted engagement from migrants and their families in the discussion. In an effort to counter these limitations and centre migrants' experiences and expertise, QUNO facilitated a closed, hybrid and multilingual discussion at Quaker House enabling those in Geneva to hear directly from people with experience of pushbacks and immigration detention.

Intentional and meaningful migrant participation is essential in ensuring the human rights and dignity of all people. This is essential for the successful implementation of the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) that calls on countries to commit to migration governance that centres human rights. The second round of the Regional GCM Reviews will be taking place throughout 2024 and into 2025 which commenced with the UNECE Regional Review that took place in March 2024. In an effort to amplify and centre the voices of those most impacted, HRR ensured that its contributions as a panelist during the UNECE Multistakeholder Hearing was based on inputs made from migrant representatives it works closely with.

QUNO continues its call for new UN mechanisms and processes for accountability and to engage the political will needed to end lethal disregard for people on the move. This year, 2024, presents a year filled with critical opportunities to translate rhetoric and pledges into tangible action within the migration sphere. QUNO's HRR programme remains steadfast in its commitment to ensuring every individual is treated with dignity and respect. Acknowledging the disparity between the present reality and where we want to be, the call for meaningful action resonates now more urgently than ever. QUNO's engagement is ongoing to its work to foster participatory processes that enable genuine migrant involvement, serving as a pathway to guaranteeing the full enjoyment of human rights for everyone, regardless of migration status.



Florence Foster (second from left) at a conference in Washington D.C. in March 2024.

Peace & Disarmament

QUNO's work on Peace & Disarmament (P&D) is rooted in Quaker resistance to all wars and preparations for war, and an understanding that peace is fundamentally linked with human rights, social and economic justice, and political participation.

This is reflected in the way P&D creatively engages in and bridges United Nations (UN) processes and mechanisms to prevent conflict and arms-related harm to people. QUNO continues engaging on overcoming the governance gaps regarding arms control and the arms sector. Building on the achievements of the inclusion of normative language on corporate responsibility and human rights standards in the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) 9th Conference of State Parties (CSP) in 2023, P&D has been working on carrying over this momentum into the 10th ATT cycle. QUNO participated in a roundtable discussion in Bucharest and in an event at Wilton Park (UK) and emphasised the need for a strengthened understanding of these independent and corresponding responsibilities of states and businesses aimed at preventing human rights harms. Working together with like-minded stakeholders, QUNO seeks to ensure that discussions on responsible business conduct within the arms trade have a sustained place within the CSP cycles.

In its work on sustaining peace, P&D also finalised a project undertaken with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on how Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council could better integrate human rights and sustaining peace in their work and enhance prevention of both conflict and human rights violations across all pillars of the UN. This project is grounded in QUNO's understanding of the inextricable link between human rights and peace. P&D also engages in other topics, including private military companies and the arms sector, as well as the impact of new technologies on warfare when a strong voice for the promotion of human rights and mitigation of harm is needed. To continue reaching a wide audience, P&D published two introductory booklets to bring its work on arms control, human rights, and corporate responsibility and on sustaining peace and human rights closer to people.



QUNO bids farewell to Florence Foster

Florence Foster has led QUNO Geneva's Peace & Disarmament programme for the last six years. Her energy and unwavering commitment to human rights and peace in processes and discussions that seem all too technical, militaristic, and securitised, will be missed. QUNO wishes her all the best for her next adventure.

For queries about the P&D programme contact cshumacher@quno.ch

Recent Publications

QUNO Review

A review of QUNO's work at our Geneva and New York offices during 2023.

Integrating Human Rights and Sustaining Peace: Exploring Special Procedures

This report is based on a joint project by QUNO Geneva and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in collaboration with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs' Peacebuilding Support Office (DPPA/PBSO). The project sought to pilot activities to explore how special procedures of the Human Rights Council could better integrate human rights and sustaining peace in their work.

Arms Control, Human Rights, and Corporate Responsibility Towards Just, Peaceful and Inclusive Societies

This booklet outlines QUNO Geneva's work on highlighting the arms-related risks to human rights and tackling the challenges in addressing these risks by building effective arms controls at the international level.

Sustaining Peace and Human Rights Towards Just, Peaceful, and Inclusive Societies

This booklet outlines QUNO Geneva's work that highlights and reinforces the inextricable link between human rights and peace and to ensure that they are seen as mutually reinforcing throughout the United Nations' work at a policy and practice level.

Grounding Meaningful Engagement with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities with the Latest Scientific Findings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (AR6)

Submission by The Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) as part of ongoing efforts towards QUNO's work on climate change.

A Fair COP?

QUNO's Lindsey Fielder Cook reflects on last year's climate change conference in Dubai.

QUNO Debrief of the 60th Session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

An update on QUNO's Human Impacts of Climate Change programme, which has been actively engaged in the IPCC process since 2017.

Intervention 1 on IPCC Options of Programme of Work for 7th Assessment Cycle

QUNO's submission at the 60th Session of the IPCC meeting held in Istanbul from 16-19 January 2024

Migration Justice: A Practical Guide for Migrants and Other Stakeholders Using the Upcoming Regional Reviews to Safeguard Human Rights

This guide is designed to simplify and enhance the accessibility of the Regional Reviews in an effort to promote engagement from all stakeholders, particularly migrants.

Towards More Ambitious Goals: Reflections on the First International Migration Review Forum

Co-authored by Kate Sheill and QUNO Human Rights and Refugees Representative Laurel Townhead, this report published by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung looks at challenges and successes of the first International Migration Review Forum from a civil society and human rights perspective.

QUNO welcomes new committee members who have joined recently. We have invited them to tell us a bit more about themselves.



**Ruth
Harvey**

Q: What led you to joining the committee?

A: I was appointed as a representative of Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee, on which I serve.

Q: What has your involvement been with Quakers or similar work?

A: I have been an attender/member of the Society of Friends for over 30 years. Alongside this, I am a member of the Iona Community, an ecumenical global movement of Christians committed to living out the Gospel commitment to justice and

peace in and through community. I am currently employed as the Leader of this Community. I am a trained mediator and facilitator, and have an ongoing commitment to working for peace and reconciliation through group facilitation.

Q: How do you envision contributing to help QUNO grow?

A: My hope is that some of my experience in the field of faith-based mediation and leading a global ecumenical community might be relevant to the work of QUNO.

Q: What led you to joining the committee?

A: The Nominations Committee was looking for someone who could immediately take on the role of Co-Clerk. I was delighted to return and offer my previous knowledge and experience.

Q: What has your involvement been with Quakers or similar work?

A: I am a lifelong Quaker and I worked for three years at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham, followed by about 35 years at Friends

House, the central offices of Britain Yearly Meeting. I am an active member of Sutton Meeting, in South London, where I currently serve as Elder and Clerk.

Q: How do you envision contributing to help QUNO grow?

A: I hope that as one of the Co-Clerks I can help the discernment processes which enable the work to be deeply grounded in Quaker testimony and focussed on where we can make the most difference.



**Helen
Drewery**



**Ronis
Lesley Chapman**

Q: What led you to joining the committee?

A: I have always admired the work of QUNO and when asked if my name could be put forward as the Asia West Pacific Section (AWPS) of the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) representative I was humbled and excited.

Q: What has your involvement been with Quakers or similar work?

A: I have been a Quaker for 40 years. My home meeting is in Canberra, Australia. Currently I am living in Whanganui. I have served my local

meeting and Yearly Meeting in numerous roles over the years. I am a member of the Australian Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee. I served as Secretary to the AWPS of FWCC for eight years and worked to build a sense of community among Quakers in our region.

Q: How do you envision contributing to help QUNO grow?

A: I hope to be able to strengthen the links between QUNO and Friends (Quakers) in my part of the world.



Quaker United Nations Committee (QUNC) Geneva recently met for its annual meeting. Among them are our new committee members featured in the Q&A section on this page.