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QUNO Geneva director Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge with Dr Mariazel Maqueda Lopez, head of PeaceTech Division at EPFL.

May Hope Lead the Way

As we write this issue of Geneva Reporter, we are deeply saddened by the ongoing war in Israel/Palestine.

The Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) has joined calls from Quakers and the global community for a humanitarian ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. This call had been ignored while journalists, healthcare workers and those providing food, medicines and other necessities for life have been killed.

While other wars – including those in Ukraine and Africa – the climate crisis and deepening global insecurity have left us feeling overwhelmed and helpless, I encountered a spark of hope at a meeting in November this year, convened as part of EssentialTalk at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (EPFL) in Switzerland.

The meeting was one in a series of workshops towards a roadmap for the next 10 years. The big question in the room was: how do we address sustainable development, humanitarian crises and peace promotion as interrelated issues, working together across academic disciplines and across communities?

EPFL has over the last 10 years already led innovative projects, such as partnering with various African countries to provide health technology and infrastructure.

Being a Quaker voice in a space where innovation and technology can be used for humanitarian action and peace is vital. It felt exciting to be part of a group of people gathering for solutions to some of our world's most heartbreaking issues.

Quakers globally are also looking at what we should be doing at this time. Guided by our testimonies to peace, justice, equality, truth, simplicity, community and stewardship of the earth, Quakers have a long tradition of transforming conflict.

There exists an impressive timeline of Quaker actions in the Middle East. Swiss Quakers have joined in these global discussions led by our Switzerland Yearly Meeting's Peace Not War Social Action Group, which has been meeting fortnightly online under the theme: Get It Done.

During these online meetings, a Quaker from southern Africa visiting Geneva Monthly Meeting reflected that Quakers "can be bold or less tentative in believing and proclaiming our inherited and experienced wisdom and love as the real way to build peace and freedom from fear and deprivation".

As we enter the festive season, let us be reminded of hope. And let it carry us into the New Year and beyond.

Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge
Director: QUNO Geneva



QUNO publishes guides on science and climate change

QUNO’s Human Impacts of Climate Change (HICC) programme recently updated [‘A Government Official’s Toolkit’](#) and [‘How To Be a Hero for All Our Children’](#). Both publications integrate the latest scientific findings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) 6th Assessment Cycle and will be available in English, Spanish and Arabic. QUNO believes that all people should have easy access to this information, and is motivated by the urgent message from the IPCC, that we have “a brief and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all”.

The Government Official Toolkit to Urgent Climate Action connects policymakers and climate advocates with the latest IPCC findings on urgent, healthy, equitable and available-at-scale climate action. *How To Be a Hero* is a personal and political guide to climate action and includes IPCC findings, lifestyle changes and questions to ask government officials. Both focus on the main drivers of climate change in energy, economic and agriculture systems. Protecting and promoting urgent messages from scientific communities informs QUNO’s work as the only active faith-based accredited observer at IPCC approval sessions. There, QUNO regularly intervenes to protect important findings from being weakened or removed from summary reports. QUNO has often been called the “ethical voice” in the room.

Recognising insufficient political will to act on these urgent climate messages, QUNO uses publications to make this science accessible and available to all people and to connect the latest science with political decision-making. HICC facilitated a meeting at Quaker House to inspire ways to overcome such challenges with IPCC scientists and other civil society organisation, United Nations (UN) and faith-based colleagues. HICC also uses the latest science to ground its submissions to UN bodies, urging urgent, equitable, and available-at-scale climate action and highlighting the risks of “business-as-usual”.

Urgent, feasible, and equitable near-term options are already available at scale to address climate change and improve human well-being and planetary health. It is QUNO’s hope that these publications will help empower people and strengthen political will to act in time to protect the most vulnerable now, all future generations, and all species on earth.



QUNO and UN share a 75-year history of human rights work

This year, 2023, marks the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, setting out fundamental human rights to be protected for all people in all nations. This declaration remains a guiding light for collective action to ensure that every person is treated with humanity, dignity and respect. It resonates deeply with the Quaker belief in the dignity and worth of all, which QUNO was established — also 75 year ago — to work for. Despite achievements in human rights protection, the Declaration’s anniversary serves as a stark reminder of the impact of not seeing some people as fully human, including because of the borders they have crossed – a focus for QUNO’s Human Rights and Refugees (HRR) programme.

QUNO is not alone in this concern and seeks collaborative approaches to address it. Sharing a common vision on ending the deadly impact of dehumanisation of migrants, QUNO and over 200 civil society organisations called on the UN’s Human Rights Council (HRC) to establish an investigative mechanism on deaths, torture and other grave human rights violations at international borders.

Although the HRC has not yet established this mechanism, it did adopt a resolution which emphasised the critical importance of prevention and accountability for human rights violations in transit. QUNO’s work continues to draw on lived experiences of migrants. QUNO collaborated with FES to organise an inclusive dialogue on meaningful migrant participation for safe migration, gathering diplomats and migrants to enable honest conversations on migration that centre migrants’ expertise. Proactively engaging with migrants is critical in ensuring implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) which calls for countries to develop national implementation plans and commit to people-centred migration governance.

Regional GCM Reviews begin in 2024 and QUNO is actively engaged in this process and other actions to implement the GCM, including the crucial objective to save lives. Never forgetting that we are all human beings, born equal in dignity and rights, QUNO remains determined and steadfast to ensure the full enjoyment of all people’s human rights as set out by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 75 years ago.



QUNO's peace and disarmament team continues to challenge the arms trade

QUNO resists all war and preparations for war and believes the deliberate killing of others denies their humanity. While keeping that radicalism close to heart, QUNO creatively navigates the realities of United Nations (UN) multilateralism and geopolitics.

QUNO continues engaging in raising awareness of the negative impacts and risks to people and communities where arms are present. At the Human Rights Council (HRC), QUNO supported the resolution on 'Impact of arms transfers on human rights'. This resolution focuses on the access of information and requests a report as well as an intersessional seminar for taking stock on arms transfers and human rights in 2024. Access to information is a key aspect of good governance, inclusive decision-making, and access to justice – a critical set of issues when talking of the arms trade. QUNO has continued engaging on overcoming the governance gaps regarding arms control and the arms sector. In preparation for the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) 9th Conference of States Parties (CSP9) that took place in August 2023 on the topic of 'industry engagement', QUNO helped ensure that normative language was included in the final outcome report. Some of the highlights of the report include the reference to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the encouragement for further engagement on the role of the industry in responsible international arms transfers and on human rights due diligence processes. QUNO also highlighted in a statement during the 54th session of the HRC the arms industry's tactics in avoiding human rights responsibility and supported the Commissioner's recommendations for robust human rights due diligence requirements for arms industry.

Geneva Peace Week meanwhile celebrated its 10th anniversary edition under the banner of 'Building Trust, Building Peace: An Agenda for the Future' in November. As one of the founding and partner organisations of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform – the structure behind Geneva Peace Week – QUNO was proud to support the team in organising this special edition.

Over 60 panel discussions, networking events, and artistic contributions focused on peace in relation to climate security, inclusive societies, and new technologies.



Bhawna Solanki from India (on the left) and Julia Azevedo Sapucaia from Brazil (on the right) are two students from the University of Bradford in the United Kingdom who did an internship with QUNO.

Championing a fair trade system with integrity

QUNO's Sustainable and Just Economic Systems (SJES) programme is dedicated to addressing the dual crises of environmental degradation and social inequity rooted in our current economic structures.

SJES work targets the systemic issues at the heart of these challenges, focusing on the following key areas:

1. Reimagining economic models to tackle the root causes of inequality and environmental harm.
2. Exploring the nexus between trade policies, plastic pollution, and waste reduction for effective policy responses.
3. Advocating for the elimination of environmentally damaging subsidies, with a particular emphasis on those related to plastics.
4. Seeking reparative justice by addressing historical economic systems based on exploitation.

In its engagement with the World Trade Organisation (WTO), QUNO champions a trade system that harmonises the imperatives of environmental integrity and social fairness.

With the WTO's 13th ministerial conference on the horizon in February 2024, QUNO's work is increasingly focused on promoting trade policies that support environmental goals, especially in the context of tackling plastic pollution.

Parallel to the WTO engagement, the SJES programme is actively shaping discussions around the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee's (INC) development of an international legally binding instrument to combat plastic pollution.

QUNO's vision, as shared in its closing statement at INC-2, emphasises comprehensive measures to address the crisis, highlighting the need for strong regulations, sustainable alternatives, and awareness of plastic pollution's uneven impact on communities and ecosystems.

From May to November 2023, the SJES programme leveraged the insights of four interns from the University of Bradford, in the United Kingdom, enriching its work. The interns' research, which spanned from rethinking economic paradigms to interlinking trade with circular economy principles, fed directly into SJES policy advocacy.

QUNO honours deceased committee member



QUNO staff in Geneva sent condolences to the family of William Knox, who served for two years on their governance committee until his passing in early October at his adopted home in Penang, Malaysia.

In a letter to the Knox family,

QUNO Geneva staff wrote that “even from the Zoom meetings he brought with him his deep humanity, expertise and humour”.

“Once we could meet again in-person, our meetings were brightened by his kindness and his appreciation for our QUNO work. He often spoke of his family in the United Kingdom, his life journey, of his home in Malaysia and his draw to Quakerism.”

Holiday vibes at Quaker House

With the holidays approaching, QUNO staff got busy in the kitchen and baked some cookies. Geneva staff wish everybody a happy holiday!



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The Quaker United Nations Summer School 2024 programme will take place from 1 to 12 July 2024. It’s an opportunity for young people to come together to learn more about Quaker work at an international level, and to witness the United Nations in action.

Follow this link to find out more and apply: <https://www.quno.org/quaker-United-nations-summer-school>

Recent Publications

[A Government Official’s Toolkit Inspiring Urgent, Real, and Equitable Climate Action](#)

Aims to empower policymakers and climate advocates with the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s findings on root causes and urgent, effective, equitable and near-term options available at scale to address climate change.

[How to be a Hero For All Our Children](#)

Written for a wide audience, whether already active or new to climate concerns. It aims to connect people with the most recent climate science and suggests personal actions and questions for politicians.

[QUNO Briefing Paper on Meaningful Migrant Participation](#)

Serves as a call to action for all stakeholders to enhance meaningful participation of migrants and emphasises the inherent diversity among migrants, highlighting that no single entity can universally articulate the experiences of such a varied group.

[Trade and Plastics — Fostering Sustainable Development in South East Asia](#)

Focuses on plastic pollution in Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam and highlights the pressing need for systemic changes. Also exposes the intricate interplay between trade policies and sustainable waste management practices.