



Quaker United Nations Office

May 2009

Dear Friends,

The Quaker United Nations Office in New York sends warm greetings to Friends everywhere.

2008 marked the 60th anniversary of Quaker accreditation at the United Nations. Over six decades, the Quaker UN offices in New York and Geneva have steadily worked to represent Friends' principles and values, as the world of the UN has changed significantly around us.

Our aims are as they always have been: to provide a space away from the microphones for quieter and more reflective discussions on the challenges that face the international community, a place for Rufus Jones' "quiet processes and small circles" in which he hoped that "vital and transforming events" would have an opportunity to flower; to represent voices that are insufficiently heard in the corridors of power; and to work quietly to foster approaches to international problems that are informed by Quaker insights.

As befits an anniversary year, 2008 saw a re-affirmation of purpose. The office is fully staffed for the first time in several years, and we have undertaken a strategic planning process which has taken us back to re-examining the roots of our work in Friends' spiritual practices and social action. Together with our engaged and knowledgeable committee, and the support and advice of AFSC, FWCC, QUNO Geneva and other stakeholders, we have confirmed our focus on the UN's role in peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict, and are in the process of aligning our program work accordingly. In addition we continue to act in support of Quaker agencies in their work at the UN, and to reach out to Friends everywhere.

Our peacebuilding work includes engagement with the UN Peacebuilding Commission, in particular in its work in Burundi, where our links with the local Friends church and the AFSC country office enable us to forge linkages between in-country activity on reconciliation, trauma healing and the consolidation of peace and the intergovernmental work of the Commission in New York.. This area of work also leads us to engage more broadly with the discussion at the UN on how best to foster sustainable peace in societies in and emerging from violent conflict.

Our other programs include work on the Responsibility to Protect, which is to be debated in the General Assembly later this year. Our position is to emphasize prevention and non-violent response, with recent events including a presentation and discussion on the important contribution of civil society in containing the outbreak of violence in Kenya at the end of 2007. We are also initiating a program on the UN's use of political engagement and preventive diplomacy, with the objective of supporting such processes as mediation before resorting to coercive or violent methods.

We thank Friends for their faithful support of our work, and ask you to pray for us in the year to come.

In Friendship,

Andrew Tomlinson, Director and Representative, Quaker United Nations Office