



Quaker United Nations Office

LETTER OF GREETING TO FRIENDS: MAY 2011

Dear Friends,

The Quaker United Nations Offices in Geneva and New York send warm greetings to Friends everywhere.

Over six decades, the Quaker UN Offices 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.

In Geneva, QUNO-GVA is preparing for its annual UN Summer School, an important item on our annual calendar for nearly 50 years, which brings 25 young people to experience the life of the UN in Geneva. Major features of the Disarmament and Peace programme this year include efforts to deepen civil society engagement with issues around the relationship between armed violence and development, and continuing work in the area of small arms. QUNO-GVA also continues an active involvement in the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform. The Human Rights and Refugees programme continues work on prison reform issues (particularly in relation to the treatment of female prisoners and children of prisoners), and the right of conscientious objection to military service. Food security is a key focus of the Global Economic Issues programme, particularly regarding intellectual property protection on seeds. QUNO-GVA is also examining what kind of contribution it might be able to make on the global concern of climate change: early programme activities have focused on the relationship between climate change and migration.

New York's core programs are on peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict. QUNO-NY has worked with diplomats and UN staffers in establishing priorities for UN peacebuilding on the ground, upholding the need to restore relationships at all levels in war-torn societies, emphasizing reconciliation and dialogue, and supporting the inclusion of voices from across all of society. This has involved collaboration with the American Friends Service Committee and Friends' organizations on the ground in places such as Burundi. In the Prevention program, QUNO has worked on issues such as the prevention of election-related violence (including coordination with the Friends Church Peace Teams in Kenya as they prepare for the elections in 2012), and at a policy level QUNO-NY has been emphasizing the importance of local level peacemaking and the need to include all relevant stakeholders. QUNO-NY has also been working on the issue of changing global leadership, for example recently co-hosting a visit of Chinese scholars to Central Africa to experience UN peacebuilding and peacekeeping first hand.

This year will see a change in leadership at QUNO-GVA. Our heartfelt thanks go to David Atwood, who is retiring after sixteen years of service, and we welcome Jonathan Woolley, a British Friend with extensive development experience, who is coming in as the new Director.

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

In Friendship,

David Atwood,
Director and Representative, Geneva

Andrew Tomlinson,
Director and Representative, New York