



*Florence Foster (seated far left) at high level panel on 'Rights, Inequalities and Peace: navigating tensions, finding opportunities' at Geneva Peace Week 2022*

## Sustaining peace & human rights towards just, peaceful, and inclusive societies

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QUNO Geneva's Peace & Disarmament program's work on Sustaining Peace & Human Rights is rooted in the belief that **peace is more than the absence of overt violence or destructive conflict**. We believe that a sustainable peace is fundamentally linked with social and economic justice, and political participation.

QUNO works to highlight and reinforce the inextricable link between human rights and peace and to ensure that they are seen as mutually reinforcing throughout the United Nations' (UN) work at the policy and practice level, reaching out to a diverse range of stakeholders and in doing so to promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies.

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### Background—What do human rights have to do with it?

Human rights are basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world, regardless of their race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human Rights Law provides a framework for a just and equitable society. When these standards are denied or violated violent conflict and instability is more likely as people attempt to have their grievances heard.

Thus, the protection and promotion of human rights is essential for achieving sustainable peace and in turn, sustaining peace can help to promote and protect human rights and to create just and equitable societies. The way human rights are applied or denied can work to help us understand where peace is in peril, therefore potentially preventing and addressing conflict without violence.

Such a vision of peace anchored in social justice is all too often abandoned in favour of

elite bargains and relegated to post-conflict situations once a violent conflict has already erupted.

This has also set the understanding of peace as an ever present and continuous process that necessarily grounds itself in inclusion, participation, justice, and human rights.

## How do we promote this work?

QUNO works behind the scenes, building trust by bringing together people from a range of backgrounds including diplomats, UN officials, staff of non-governmental organizations, academics, experts, and practitioners. By creating space for quiet dialogue, we help shape UN and other international priorities, and we bring attention to issues that are not yet on the international agenda.

The reputation and atmosphere of our Quaker Houses allow for the emergence of more reflective and inclusive responses to difficult issues; ideas which might not be heard in more formal settings. The scale of international negotiations can feel challenging, but the trusting environment we provide, informed by Quaker methods, remains key to our work.

We bring these approaches to numerous processes, such as Human Rights Council (HRC) mechanisms in Geneva or the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture in New York – often bridging institutionalized silos together to advocate for policies and practices that support our holistic vision of sustainable peace, and to strengthen the effectiveness and coherence of an often fragmented approach to sustain peace.

This approach is also evidenced by our role in the founding and current management of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform (GPP).

## Recent QUNO Geneva achievements

*The GPP – a platform for inclusive dialogue on sustainable peace.*

The GPP is a knowledge hub that connects the critical mass of peacebuilding actors and resources, and hosts Geneva Peace Week - a leading annual forum in the international peacebuilding calendar.

QUNO, being one of the founding organizations of the GPP, has ensured that since 2020, the different editions of Geneva Peace Week feature a strong human rights component. Through this annual conference we had the opportunity to include human rights actors in the peace discourse and to highlight how human rights support sustainable peace.

We have also actively engaged in the discussions on Environment, Climate, Conflict, and Peace that aims to foster inter-institutional collaboration and dialogue, promote shared learning and innovation, and mainstream these topics across the board between the environment, climate, conservation, conflict, security, and peace sectors.

Our contribution to the flagship 'White Paper on the Future of Environmental Peacebuilding' focused on ['The case for human rights and conflict-sensitive approaches to business activities'](#).

***HRC – ensuring human rights are leveraged for peace.***

We have also engaged at the HRC and the broader human rights community to support and advocate for the important role that human rights play in peacebuilding. We have produced an extensive range of evidence-based publications with partners to harness their expertise and knowledge, particularly from beyond the UN system, and bringing these insights to the attention of policymakers, often providing it in a more accessible form.

We also highlight these lessons through expert roundtables, delivering statements and participating in shaping UN resolutions.

***Peacebuilding Architecture – ensuring that peace includes human rights.***

Every five years the UN undertakes a review of the Peacebuilding Architecture

to assess the system's progress and impact for peacebuilding. QUNO Geneva and New York collaborate to ensure key issues from our joint learning and hopes for the UN's peace work are included, notably by providing off the record spaces for diplomats to reflect and identify remaining challenges towards setting the peacebuilding priorities for the coming years.

QUNO Geneva supported consultations with relevant stakeholders in Geneva on the 'New Agenda for Peace' (NA4P) process, which was organized as a follow-up to the UN Secretary-General's 'Our Common Agenda' report to address the contemporary challenges faced by the international community. The paper will be presented at the Summit of the Future in September 2024. QUNO led the session on strengthening prevention through human rights. The discussion was aimed at ensuring that human rights actors and human rights-based approaches were considered in the NA4P.

Quaker House, Geneva



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*Florence Foster, speaking at Ireland Yearly Meeting 2023*

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*Geneva Office:*  
13 Avenue du Mervelet  
1209 Geneva, Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 748 4800  
[quno@quno.ch](mailto:quno@quno.ch)

Peace & Disarmament  
Representative

**Florence Foster**  
[ffoster@quno.ch](mailto:ffoster@quno.ch)

   @QuakerUNOoffice / [www.quno.org](http://www.quno.org)

*Authored by Sabrina Mignone and Florence Foster – Edition 2023*