

Quaker Peace & Legislation Committee



WATCHING BRIEF 24-7: BUILDING GLOBAL PEACE – AUSTRALIA’S ROLE

As Quakers we seek a world without war. We seek a sustainable and just community. We have a vision of an Australia that upholds human rights and builds peace internationally, with particular focus on our region. In our approach to government, we will promote the importance of dialogue, of listening and of seeking that of God in every person. We aim to work for justice and to take away the occasion for war.

November 2024

This Brief outlines global moves to strengthen the institutions of peace and how Australia can contribute.

Summit of the Future

On 20 and 21 September, 4000 individuals from around the world attended the Summit at the United Nations. As a result, world leaders (on 22 September 2024) adopted a **Pact for the Future** that includes a **Global Digital Compact** and a **Declaration on Future Generations**. The Pact aims to ensure that international institutions can deliver in the face of a world that has changed since they were created. As Antonio Guterres (UN Sec-Gen) said, “We cannot create a future for our grandchildren with a system built by our grandparents”. The vision is of an international system that can deliver on its promises, is more representative of today’s world, and draws on the energy and expertise of governments, civil society and other key partners. The Pact covers these areas:

- The most progressive and concrete commitment to Security Council reform, especially the under-representation of Africa.
- The first multilateral commitment to total nuclear disarmament in more than a decade.
- Clear commitment to prevent an arms race in outer space.
- Prevention of misuse of technologies such as lethal autonomous weapons.
- Additional pressure to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Reform of the international financial structure to better serve developing countries.
- Accelerating measures to address climate change to keep temperature rise of 1.5% above pre-industrial levels.
- Design technology for the benefit of all, more open accessible data in safe on-line space.
- More emphasis on taking account of future generations in decision-making.
- Stronger engagement of all stakeholders in global governance.

To see the full Pact (56 action items) go to

www.documents.un.org/doc/undoc/td/n24/252/89/pdf/n2425289.pdf

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Quaker United Nations Office Response

The Summit process was difficult and ambitious. The text adopted includes a range of commitments on issues such as sustainable development; international peace and security; science, technology and the safe use of artificial intelligence; youth and future generations; and global governance. However, deep divisions among UN member states produced a final Pact in which commitments are voluntary and lack ambition. The ability of civil society organizations to shape the Pact was highly restricted. The following points were noted by QUNO staff:

- (a) Language that would have strengthened Sustainable Development Goal 16 by focusing on reducing violent deaths was eliminated in negotiations; and the Pact does not offer actionable measures to reduce the use of plastics.
- (b) There are no concrete steps for reform of the global financial system to be more inclusive and equitable. There were no new measures of progress in human rights, peace, and ecological wellbeing.
- (c) The ideals outlined by the UN Secretary-General in *Our Common Future* in 2021 were intended to lead to a Summit with a reforming zeal, but events in Ukraine and Gaza diverted attention to the challenges of genocide and humanitarian aid. The outcomes of the Summit will depend more than ever on effective action by member states.
- (d) QUNO will continue to bring Quaker witness and testimonies to engagement with UN diplomats, UN officials and civil society partners, working for a peaceful, just and sustainable world where all can flourish.

For fuller QUNO information, contact www.quno.org

Lowy Institute Response (Clare Beaton-Wells).

The adoption of the UN Pact for the Future affirms the UN's enduring worth as a forum for inter-governmental cooperation. But member states have not kept up with their commitments under earlier agreements – the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals. The stakes are higher now and multilateralism is the only practical solution. The ability to back up the ambitious 56 recommendations rests on the shoulders of domestic policy makers. Fortunately, however, there is growing evidence, in Australia at least, to suggest conditions favouring long-term policies that prioritise intergenerational equity have begun to germinate. A [recent EveryGen survey](#) revealed that 97% of Australians believe in the importance of policies considering the interests of future generations, while 81% feel that Australian politicians focus too much on short-term decisions.

Strong foundations exist for Australia to contribute to strengthening the UN for the next era. Our ability to do so will depend on reconciling our approach with our rich Indigenous heritage and fostering intergenerational collaboration through national frameworks like “Measuring What Matters”. The common denominator here is leaning into long-term thinking for better policy.

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Peacebuilding Commission

This was set up in 2005 as *an intergovernmental body tasked with establishing mechanisms to help countries sustainably recover and rebuild from conflicts*. Since then the Peacebuilding Fund has financed projects in over 70 countries, in partnership with national institutions, the UN system, civil society and others. Issues addressed include conflict resolution, community reconciliation, justice, human rights, socioeconomic empowerment and gender equality. To prevent conflict and war, the Fund also has a focus on poverty, inequality, discrimination, and injustice. The Global Peace Index estimates that wars cost the world \$US23 trillion in 2023 (over 13% of GDP). The Peacebuilding Commission budgeted for \$1.5 billion for 2020-24 to assist at least 40 countries, but is not confident it will reach that target. Meanwhile global military spending has reached \$2.4 trillion a year.

See www.un.org/peacebuilding/commission

Australia's role

Penny Wong's speech to the UN General Assembly (28 September 2024)

Differences should be managed through dialogue not force. Reform of the Security Council is needed to give greater representation to Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia/Pacific regions. In our term on the UN Peacebuilding Commission, we will support prevention and ensure the Secretariat has the necessary resources. We support the Women, Peace and Security agenda and gender equality. We want multilateral development banks to be more responsive to global shocks, and we are committed to the Asian Development Fund. Pacific concerns are important for us, and we will seek to share the hosting of COP31 on climate change in a partnership.

On 16 October 2024 the Australian Government launched a Humanitarian Policy in an environment of greater conflict and signs of disregard for international humanitarian law. The policy has three strands:

- Being ready to anticipate shocks and work with international partners to lessen their impact.
- Responding to crises by delivering support for the needs of affected populations.
- Reinforcing the international humanitarian system and taking practical steps towards adherence to humanitarian law.

Australia becomes a member of the Peacebuilding Commission from 1 January 2025 for two years. Australia's priorities include (a) improving the peace building architecture globally, (b) conflict prevention, (c) increasing the links between our region and wider UN work, (d) inclusion with special attention to gender diversity and first nations, and (e) protection of civilians and humanitarian workers.

A significant opportunity exists for civil society to contribute to the work of the Commission. In Australia's case, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) will invite NGOs (including Quakers) to take part in consultative gatherings to keep in touch with what Australia is doing.

Australian Peace and Security Forum (APSF)

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This is a new Australian initiative. Its vision - An Australia where all people enjoy peace and security throughout their lives. It was launched on 24 September 2024.

Its mission – To strengthen peace and security for all Australians by providing information, analysis and opportunities for dialogue with Government and the public; to increase understanding of the interlinked nature of the following key security challenges, and the measures necessary to address them through the adoption of a comprehensive national peace and security strategy. Key challenges include:

- Climate security: halting and then reversing climate breakdown and biodiversity loss;
- Diplomatic and Global security: avoiding conflict and increasing peacebuilding initiatives; ensuring cost-effective security forces, and preventing nuclear war;
- Human security: improving pandemics preparation and equal access to good health and education services; and
- Economic security: strengthening social cohesion and wellbeing, reducing social inequality, regulating AI and avoiding cyber attacks.

Website www.austpeaceandsecurityforum.org.au

Action

Friends are encouraged to inform themselves about these developments, and to take up with MPs and Senators their concerns on peace building. QPLC will take up the opportunity to participate in meetings with other NGOs and DFAT in January 2025 in connection with the Peacebuilding Commission, and report back to Friends.

Canberra

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