

Around Europe

Quaker Council for European Affairs

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Credit where credit is due

On 25 February 2010, the European Investment Bank (EIB) published its annual report for 2009; a press conference in Brussels was followed by a briefing for civil society organizations.

This briefing is becoming somewhat of a tradition in Brussels and is an opportunity for the Bank to highlight to civil society organizations what it sees as its major achievements in the preceding year and to respond to comment and questions.

The EIB is one of the lesser-known institutions of the European Union. It is based in Luxembourg and it was set up in 1958 'as a long-term lending bank to contribute towards the integration, balanced development and economic and social cohesion of the EU Member States.'¹

So why is QCEA interested in the work of the Bank? It has significant resources available to achieve its stated objectives. The Bank borrows funds and lends funds and it does so for very specific policy objectives. Some of the lending of the Bank focuses on lending for infrastructure projects relating to energy and transport (and supporting research in these areas); this is an important element of EU work in this area. For example, the EIB is likely to be one of the key funders of the Nabucco pipeline project - a project on which QCEA has published and where we intend to ensure that our proposal to ensure that Turkmenistan takes account of EU policy commitments to the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative is at least considered in the project appraisal and monitoring. The Bank lends money to projects and to small and medium-sized enterprises in countries outside of the EU.

Printer's apologies

In the last issue of *Around Europe* we published a photo of Israeli soldiers in the article *Freedom and Violence*. Due to technical problems the reference was omitted. The photo is credited to **Anne Paq/Activestills.org**. Our sincere apologies to the photographer.



This represents a small proportion of its overall lending; nonetheless, it represents a significant resource which in our view must make a significant contribution to the achievement of sustainable development and peace.

So talking to the EIB and ensuring that these views are heard are important aspects of QCEA's work.

Have we made any progress? And was this discernable at the briefing? The Bank has published a revised handbook on environmental and social standards during the year. This is a document which Bank staff use when assessing projects for which loan applications have been made. This document now contains significant references to conflict sensitivity and to human rights as a direct result of the work QCEA and other NGOs have done in the past few years.

The Bank has just been subject to a review of its lending mandate outside of the EU. A panel of 'wise people' reviewed what the Bank has been doing under this mandate and how it has been doing it. The report of the panel has just been published and so far one of the positives has been that it, too, has significant reference to conflict sensitivity and its importance as a feature of any future lending in third countries.



The Bank has indicated that it will launch a public consultation on its lending policy with regard to transport infrastructure during the early part of 2010. This, too, can be linked to work done by NGOs who have repeatedly pressed the Bank to review these policies. QCEA will ensure that it is active during the consultation phase. The Bank will be running a number of conferences on business banking and human rights. Again, an issue which was part of the discussions QCEA and others have had with the Bank in recent years and a discussion in which we will, again, raise our concerns about the specific issues relating to Turkmenistan. The Bank lends to countries in the Middle East; this includes Israel and the Palestinian Authority. QCEA will look at the information available on this and enter into discussion with the Bank about any concerns this raises.

The Bank has published its three-year business plan on its website - this is unlike any of the other international financial institutions. It is therefore more open and more transparent than is customary in this sector. We aren't saying that there is no concern regarding any of the Bank's work - in many respects the lending, following the traditional route the Bank has followed for many years - is still not as ground-breaking as we might wish. But there has been significant progress: on transparency, on openness, on willingness to take account of issues such as conflict, human rights, and environmental impact. So credit where credit is due. We see the relationship with the EIB as one where more discussion and more exchange are likely to lead to more progress.

Martina Weitsch

¹ EIB Press release, 25 February 2010

EU Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan Briefing, evaluation, and action for Quakers

A new report from the Quaker Council for European Affairs (www.quaker.org/qcea/)

Global challenges to sustainability mean that European lifestyles and consumption patterns must change. The European Commission's recent Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan (SCPAP) extends existing directives relating to the efficiency of energy-using appliances, vehicles and buildings and contains some very limited initiatives to change consumption.

This new report from QCEA evaluates the SCPAP and finds that it will not deliver sustainable consumption and production. To do so would require a radical realignment of all aspects of EU policy to make reducing energy consumption the most urgent priority. There is a basic tension between the goal of sustainability and most governments' overriding priorities of economic growth, employment and international competitiveness.

Quaker values of equality, justice, simplicity, sustainability, peace and community have long led us to advocate more frugal ways of living but most people do not believe that such a shift is desirable or possible.

Many Friends have made substantial lifestyle changes to reduce their carbon footprints 50 - 80 per cent below average levels in their country. They have found the process of change joyful, interesting and rewarding, especially when supported by a close community with shared values. There are three essential areas for change: shifting our diets away from meat and dairy towards plant-based products, reducing car and air travel, and reducing home energy use by lowering temperatures and improving insulation.

It has never been more urgent to develop our spiritual community as a basis for personal and collective change, and as a radical voice and example, sharing our experience that simpler living is not only possible but also better, and using that experience as a basis for engaging government, business and the media. The SCPAP raises many opportunities to engage with both national and EU politicians. The main steps needed in EU and Member State policies are:

1. Ensuring that existing EU energy efficiency and conservation policies are fully implemented
2. Acknowledging that existing policies are inadequate even to achieve their stated



environmental goals and that energy policies based on securing new sources of fossil fuels from vulnerable parts of the world will compromise human rights and lead to increased conflict and violence

3. Developing more effective policies to support the use of cleaner and more efficient technology and products
4. Placing much greater emphasis on demand reduction so that new fossil fuel and nuclear energy sources are not needed.

We need to engage politicians more personally in the agenda for change, so that they lead by example as

individuals and work for more sustainable consumption practices in government institutions. An effective EU strategy would be comprehensive, including measures to encourage sustainable consumption by all groups in society, recognising that people vary considerably in their motivations and the kinds of influence they respond to. It is not fruitful to argue about the relative effectiveness of, say, taxes versus regulations. When the urgency of the sustainability challenge is fully recognised, governments and the people who vote for them will want to do everything possible to respond to it.

Laurie Michaelis

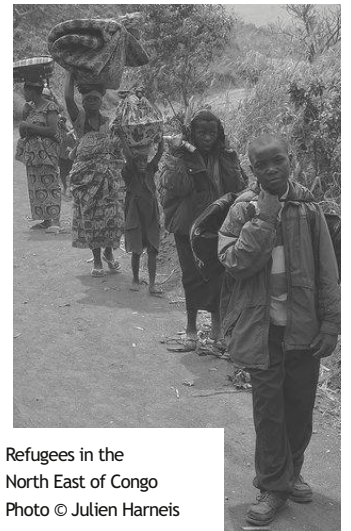
Ten years of Resolution 1325 - time to celebrate?

Recently the European Parliament issued invitations to a series of events dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. Celebrating a UN resolution in the European Parliament might seem a little odd at first sight. But the EU has developed the strong aspiration to act on the international stage as a global political power as well as a global economic power so that a close cooperation with the UN is a prerequisite.

Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council is an important landmark for human rights. It is the first time that rape in conflict countries has been recognised and classified as a weapon of war. It is the first time that the gender perspective in peace and security is given credit. With 1325 it has been acknowledged that conflict affects men and women differently and it has been recognised that this should always be kept in mind when talking about peace-keeping, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Colombia, Afghanistan, Nepal and Sudan are only some of the countries where gender and warfare are heavily entwined.

Take the example of the DRC where currently 2.1 million people are refugees in their own country according to estimates of the UN, the majority being women and children. Some major drivers of the ongoing conflict in the DRC are the fight over minerals and natural resources (e.g. for mobile phones and computers but also newly discovered oil fields), the fight for tillable land and ethnic or group rivalry which spilled over from neighbouring Rwanda and Burundi after the Second Congo War which officially ended in 2003. A deficit in the legitimacy of exclusive governments and mutual destabilization are doing their part to hinder improvement.

In order to force the local population away from attractive territory, terror massacres and mass rape are being used systematically and with extreme cruelty. Sharp objects or guns are being used in order to damage human bodies most effectively. The objective behind the mass rape is to destroy the child-bearing ability of whole communities, thus committing a decelerated mass murder without it being immediately visible. In addition it gives soldiers the satisfaction they derive from humiliating others and from demonstrating their understanding of power and masculinity.



Refugees in the North East of Congo
Photo © Julien Harnais

With rape in conflict countries being recognised and classified as a weapon of war this means in practice that those responsible can be tried for war crimes before the International Court of Justice - at least if the victim is a citizen of a state that has ratified the Rome Statute. This can act as a deterrent to the armed groups involved; it also suggests the possibility of better redress for victims.

Resolution 1325 and its follow-up Resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1889 acknowledge that women are affected by all phases of a conflict and should therefore also be involved in the conflict resolution and the peacebuilding processes. An appropriate response to the trauma they have lived through



must be complemented by the possibility of taking an active role in finding solutions, e.g. within civil society organizations.

But then again: why is the EU celebrating this? There are more connections than former EU commissioner Margot Wallström who has recently been appointed as UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Rape as a weapon of war has also been present in Europe, not only during and in the aftermath of WW2 but much more recently in the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The Bosnian government estimated that the number of rape victims during the conflict was between 20,000 and 50,000. So this is not something that happens far far away or a long time

ago; it has happened recently and on the doorstep of the European Union.

The EU has learned from its failures in the past. And it is reiterating its commitment to the political responsibilities which derive from its economic power. One part of the picture is honouring and celebrating ten years of Resolution 1325 and raising awareness about the systematization of rape as a weapon of war. The other part of the picture is what is done concretely on the ground in order to give the best support possible. But that is another story... coming soon in *Around Europe*.

Sonja Schindelbeck

WORKING FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

What can Quakers do?

The QCEA/QPSW Conference in Brussels, 29-31 October 2010

An opportunity to come together with Friends from across Europe and reflect on what Quakers can do -at home, at EU level, and in the region- to work for peace in the Middle East. Using a variety of approaches and techniques, including drama and music workshops, participants will discuss, debate, and reflect on some of the key issues facing the region and the role the EU is playing there. We will consider together what we, as European Quakers, can do to help peacebuilding efforts.

Ute Caspers (a member of German Yearly Meeting with extensive experience and travel in the region) is already confirmed as a keynote speaker to reflect on the questions we need to address.

A second keynote speaker (from the European Institutions) has been invited.

APPLY NOW!

More information and booking forms are available on our website: www.quaker.org/qcea

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