



Quakers write for peace

In brief

This is a time of great change in the European Union institutions, with new faces in Parliament and a new European Commission. Quakers have been busy over the summer writing letters and emails so that peace is not forgotten in the discussion about who should lead our European institutions. This detailed article follows the nomination of Federica Mogherini as the new EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, and how Quakers used it as an opportunity to call for non-violent responses to the security challenges facing the EU.

Many citizens from different parts of Europe have responded to a QCEA Action Alert and written to their heads of government and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). QCEA coordinated the action in advance of the nomination of the new EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy. The decision on whom to nominate was made by heads of the national governments (such as the Irish Taoiseach, the German Chancellor, and the Prime Ministers of Netherlands and the UK), who meet together as the 'European Council'. Some Quakers also wrote to their MEPs before the Parliament started its process of scrutinising and approving the nomination.

Does EU foreign and security policy matter?

The European Union (EU) has a significant impact on peace in several parts of the world, particularly in central and northern Africa and eastern Europe.

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Quakers have a record of promoting peace in Europe. Representatives travelled repeatedly through the Berlin Wall in the 1960s and 70s to support voices of détente on both sides. Today, as citizens of the EU, we should look for opportunities to promote civilian peacebuilding as an alternative to militarism in Europe.

The EU was founded as a [peace project](#) and in many ways has successfully demonstrated the utility of [soft power and international cooperation](#). Its civilian peacebuilding missions have helped to promote human rights and principles that underpin fairer societies.

However, at the European Council meeting in [December 2013](#), the heads of government of EU Member States (the Prime Ministers, or equivalent, for the 28 countries) agreed a set of priorities that do not reflect this peaceful purpose. [These priorities included the development of armed drones and air-to-air refuelling technology that will support air strikes](#). The European Council also agreed that the EU would support the arms industry as a source of economic growth.

Why is the High Representative role important?

The High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy is [responsible for all aspects of the EU's foreign and security policy](#). Since 2009 the position has been held by Catherine Ashton, who has gained a high-profile, particularly through her work with Iran and Kosovo. The High Representative oversees the large [European External Action Service](#) and the European Defence Agency, organisations which together develop and implement EU civilian and military policy.

The role is an opportunity to ensure that the EU's foreign policy furthers the EU's stated commitment to



*We cannot say anything of value if we do not act as humane persons.
(Hilario Quispe, Bolivia YM, Faith in Action 1991).*

human rights and peace. The position also influences human rights in non-EU countries through meetings with leaders and diplomats. The High Representative role could be very damaging if she focuses on EU military policy at the expense of civilian peacebuilding. However, there are many limitations to the role as Member States guard their different national interests fiercely.

What did Quakers say?

The letters and emails from QCEA supporters to their heads of government and MEPs varied depending on the particular interests of the writer. An overarching concern was that EU budgets prioritise funding for non-violent civilian peacebuilding, rather than supporting militarism. Most letter-writers also highlighted specific concerns regarding armed drones and about ensuring the full inclusion of women in peacebuilding. Some participants also chose to ask how the High Representative would ensure that the EU's other policies (such as energy, trade, or development) would be designed in a way that helped to prevent rather than fuel violent conflict. QCEA has been working on ensuring conflict sensitivity in EU funding for some time with our partner organisations, for example with regard to the European Investment Bank.

The new Commission

The High Representative is one of 28 Commissioners, and [one of seven who are Vice-Presidents](#) of the Commission. Increasing the number of Vice-Presidents from one to seven is designed to provide greater coordination and focus to the work of the Commission's many departments. [QCEA is concerned that the increased focus of the Commission on a number of over-arching priorities, such as economic growth, will be at the cost of social and environmental programmes.](#)

Responses to the letters

Some QCEA supporters who wrote letters have shared the replies they received with QCEA. Many MEPs did not express their views clearly. One MEP representing Ireland said he agreed that it was important to get the right person for the job, but without commenting on any of the specific issues raised in the letter. Similarly, a Dutch MEP's office simply replied, 'We've

read your email. Thanks for your suggestions'. By contrast an MEP from southern England said she agreed that the EU should prioritise peacebuilding, and that she would raise the issues of drones and the role of women with her political group in advance of the hearing.

The UK government's responses came from a civil servant in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who responded to each point raised. As the UK is one of the more militaristic governments in the EU, there were many areas of disagreement with the points advocating peacebuilding, such as whether it is right that the EU support the arms trade.



Catherine Ashton and Federica Mogherini . Image Credit: EEAS

Political process:

Nomination for High Representative

The High Representative's foreign policy portfolio is seen as so important that heads of government agree precisely who will be appointed to this role. Federica Mogherini was nominated by EU heads of government in a meeting on 30 August 2014. She had been put forward by the Italian government for whom she was then Minister for Foreign Affairs. Prior to being a minister, [Federica Mogherini served on the defence and foreign affairs committees of the Italian Parliament, and she represented Italy in the NATO parliamentary assembly, later becoming its president.](#) Whilst she has experience in the military dimensions of her role, it will be important for her to remember that the EU still has far more civilian peacebuilding operations than military missions.

The route to approval as High Representative

As a 'Commissioner-designate', Federica Mogherini appeared before a confirmation hearing for the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee on 6 October.



The Foreign Affairs Committee then met in private to evaluate the candidate's expertise and performance and sent their findings to the President of the Parliament. On previous occasions candidates have withdrawn at this stage if the Parliament is very critical of them. However, most MEPs appeared to rate Federica Mogherini's performance very highly. The Foreign Affairs Committee were satisfied and will support her formal approval later in October.

The Commission's President-elect will soon present the names of all [proposed Commissioners](#) (including the Commission President and the High Representative) for approval in a vote of consent by Parliament on 21 October. The final stage will be for the entire Commission to be approved by another meeting of the 28 heads of government on 23 October.

Peace and politics

Our advocacy on the appointment of the new High Representative has been an opportunity to highlight to the candidate High Representative that there are peace-minded European citizens who can be a counterweight to the pressure she will receive from defence industries and those Member States which pursue militaristic agendas. It is vital that peace-minded citizens find ways to engage with EU foreign policy, either directly or through their political representatives and governments. If you would like to take part in future Action Alerts please email us at office@qcea.org. In the email please include your name, country of nationality and residence, and which topics you would like to receive action alerts about (choose from Sustainability, Peace, Middle East, Criminal Justice, and Economic Justice.)

Andrew Lane

The good and.... Questions asked by your MEPs at the hearing with Federica Mogherini

Of the 37 questions asked during the Foreign Affairs Committee hearing, six specifically advocated military solutions to European security challenges. For example, Latvian MEP Sandra Kalniete asked about 'declining or low defence budgets' in EU Member States. Mogherini replied that this is not an issue over which the EU has influence. Mogherini may not have been aware of the way the European Defence Agency, for which she would be responsible, is a cheerleader for the arms trade. For example, in July 2014 the Agency published [a report advocating the macroeconomic benefits of government spending on arms](#), rather than on civilian public spending.

Three encouraging questions on peace issues came from three German MEPs:

Barbara Lochbihler asked about the legal framework relating to the EU's development of armed drones. Mogherini replied that she had read the [Parliament's motion of February 2014 which expressed concern about EU drones](#). She explained her view that it is not the drones that matter, but how they are used.

Sabine Lösing raised the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Mogherini told MEPs that this was an issue of particular personal interest to her and that she would attend the next round of international Non-Proliferation Treaty talks in Spring 2015 in New York.

Reinhard Bütikofer asked about the EU's [Instrument for Stability](#). This is a crisis-management mechanism, which includes support for mediation and transitional justice. It is a vital part of the EU's peacebuilding activities, addressing issues such as the role of natural resources in conflict. Bütikofer expressed concern that some of these activities were now under threat due to reduced and delayed funding from Member States. Mogherini said she had already spoken about this to the Commissioner-nominee who is expected to become responsible for the European Commission's budget.

Beyond militarism, Mogherini was asked specific questions about the EU's relations with different parts of the world, especially Russia and the Middle East. Whilst Mogherini was clear that there is no military solution to the violence in Ukraine, she did not discount a role for deterrence in her 'hoping for the best, preparing for the worst' approach.



As our life becomes one of service, we are transformed into patterns and examples and become known by our actions, not our words. (Ben Pink Dandelion, Open for Transformation, 2014).

Open to public participation?

In brief

The governance of the EU is enhanced with active, meaningful, inclusive, and transparent participation of civil society - it is up to those in power to hear what is being said.

Restricting participation

The current hearings for the new proposed European Commissioners have brought to the fore some questions about who governs the EU, and whether they are acting in the public interest. Some of the problems coming to the fore are conflicts of interest and freedom of the public to participate in discourse.

Self-interest or not?

It is essential in a democracy that people deciding policies are free from outside influences. The rule of law, which QCEA supports, means laws being applied objectively. This is why corruption is a particular concern. The influence of the threats of legal action by large corporations on democratic governance is one of the main factors behind the huge outpouring of public unease in relation to the Investor State Dispute Settlement mechanisms in TTIP and CETA recently. It is also why [the nomination of Miguel Arias Cañete is of concern to many people in civil society](#). As a person with close family connections with petroleum companies, there seems to be a potential for conflict of interest - for a public official to be influenced by



Photo Credit: La Moncloa Gobierno de España (Flickr)

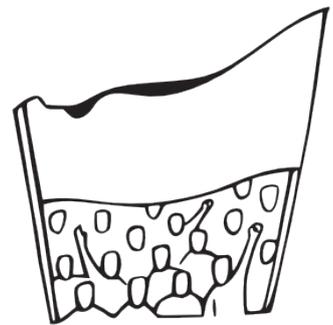
the possibility for personal gain, especially financial, rather than the public good. It doesn't seem to be the right background for someone proposed to have responsibility for climate as well as energy.

It is not only the direct links of having owned shares in

oil companies that should concern us as citizens. We should also explore the nominee's openness to promoting stated EU policy positions and values: how easy is it for someone to whom profit from the exploitation of oil reserves is natural, to hear and understand the views of the public on sustainability and climate change? How natural is it for a person who is oriented towards profiting from the exploitation of fossil fuels to tackle the urgent need for all of us living on the planet, to reduce our energy consumption and our emissions of greenhouse gases?

Civil society

Taking the views of the public into account, is an essential part of good democratic governance. What are the rights of ordinary people in steering their country? Quakers believe in a fundamental equality of people, based on the concept that there is



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that of God in everyone, and QCEA is one of several organisations concerned about the increasing restrictions on civil society. This includes a narrowing of the freedoms of opinion, expression, association and assembly: that is the freedoms to develop one's own opinion, to share it, to be part of a network or group of like-minded people, and to gather in demonstrations. Some of the restrictions take the form of legal action designed to inspire fear or to discourage other actions. [A recent example is the case dismissed against a Belgian peace organization](#) claiming damage for a non-violent action pouring false and water-soluble fake blood on the Ministry of Defense front step. Five years of public prosecutor time was used to develop the case for the Minister of Defense, although only 200 euro in damages was claimed. And eventually the public prosecutor requested a dismissal as the case for the state was too weak to prosecute. (Clearly, the utility of spending so much staff time and the time of the court on this case was not because of the damages.) Returning to our Commissioner for climate and energy,



Think about it: what a changed world this would be if lying were impossible. (Heather C Moir 2003)

Cañete was recently approved by the Energy Committee despite a petition, signed by nearly 600,000 people, calling for him to be rejected.

QCEA is part of the Human Rights and Democracy Network which [has recently published a statement](#) on the threats to public participation in governance, citing 'a disturbing trend towards an increasingly restricted space for independent civil society as well as outright threats to individuals and organisations.' Although some readers might be tempted to assume that this is primarily a problem in countries outside the EU, HRDN calls on the EU to monitor the laws within its own Member States. The importance of this was highlighted as issues around civil society reared their head in the Commissioner-designate hearings. The Hungarian nominee, Tibor Navracsis, was allocated to the Education, Culture,

Youth and Citizenship portfolio, despite his association with a Hungarian government that taxed independent media punitively and withdrew the tax status of left-wing NGOs. MEPs voted to reject him from his original portfolio, but he was accepted for another Commission role.

HRDN has also called for the EU to 'commit to active, meaningful, inclusive, and transparent participation of civil society in all processes.... Put in place means of systematic, timely and well-informed consultation processes.' We must be mindful of desires to restrict public participation, not only abroad but also at home.

Alexandra Bosbeer

You can see the HRDN statement on the shrinking space for civil society at www.hrdn.eu

QUAKER HOUSE NEWS

2-9 August: Alexandra and Andrew made several presentations at Britain Yearly Meeting's Gathering in Bath, UK. We were grateful for the support of QCEA British Committee members, who organised workshops on what it means to be a Quaker living our values in Europe.

28 August: The Brussels Interfaith Forum met at Quaker House to discuss reviving an interfaith platform

2-3 September: Andrew worked with US peace activists from 'Code Pink' on their visit to the European institutions, including a meeting with German MEP Sabine Lösing about militarism.

7 September: Alexandra spoke about the European Union and the work of QCEA with the older children of Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting.

8 September: Alexandra joined a large crowd at an event exploring the role of businesses in advising the European Commission.

9 September: Alexandra participated in two meetings on the role of EU businesses and NGOs in Israel and Palestine.

10 September: Alexandra met with European Investment Bank staff at a consultation meeting on

their new transparency policy. QCEA submitted comments on the new policy on 25 September.

18 September: Andrew attended the European Criminal Justice Platform, which includes the European Forum for Restorative Justice. Discussion focused on alternatives to prison, particularly pre-trial detention.

19 September: Sevasti uploaded the redesigned [QCEA website and our new logo!](#)

22 September: Andrew joined other members of the Human Rights and Democracy Network at a meeting with the Italian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

22 September: The QCEA Finance Committee gathered at Quaker House.

24 September: George and Alexandra collaborated on George's first blog post on the new Commission.

In August and September, Alexandra also made submissions on behalf of QCEA to the European Commission on corporate social responsibility, on stakeholder consultation guidelines, and on the EU's internal impact assessment procedures.

Staff at Quaker House: Alexandra Bosbeer, Sevasti Christoforou, Tim Harman, Andrew Lane, Gordon Matthews, George Thurley.



Greed for land, an unwillingness to share, is worse than a lust for money because it deprives others of a living. (Nicholas Gillett in Quakerism, a Way of Life, Norwegian Quaker Press 1982).

Facing the challenge of climate change: A shared statement by Quaker groups

In brief

Climate change affects us all, and the EU is engaging in international climate negotiations as a Union. QCEA recently joined with other Quaker organisations in promoting a Quaker vision of addressing the effects of climate change on human society and the planet that supports us.

In September, climate change was back in the news, as UN Member States gathered in New York for a 'Climate Summit'. Although QCEA is active only at the level of affecting policy in the European Union and the Council of Europe, we were interested for two reasons: climate change affects us all, and the EU is engaging in international climate negotiations, including the climate summit, as a Union.

Thus, when we were invited by our sister Quaker organisations to sign a statement of a Quaker vision, QCEA was happy to add our name.

Alexandra Bosbeer

As Quakers, we are called to work for the peaceable Kingdom of God on the whole Earth, in right sharing with all peoples. We recognize a moral duty to cherish creation for future generations.

As we gather at events surrounding the UN Climate Summit, we call on our leaders to make the radical decisions needed to create a fair, sufficient and effective international climate change agreement.

As Quakers, we understand anthropogenic (due to human activities) climate change to be a symptom of a greater challenge: how to live sustainably and justly on this Earth. We recognize that current and unprecedented rates of greenhouse gas emissions, if left unchecked, will likely lead to global mean temperature rises of extreme detriment to human beings.

We recognize that catastrophic anthropogenic climate change is not inevitable if we choose to act. We recognize a personal and collective responsibility to ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable peoples now, and all our future generations, do not suffer as a

"It would go a long way to caution and direct people in their use of the world, that they were better studied and knowing in the Creation of it. For how could [they] find the confidence to abuse it, while they should see the great Creator stare them in the face, in all and every part of it?" William Penn, 1693

consequence of our actions. We see this as a call to conscience.

We recognize the connections between climate change and global economic injustice as well as unprecedented levels of consumption, and question assumptions of unlimited economic growth on a planet with limited natural resources.

We recognize that most greenhouse gas emissions are created by fossil fuel combustion. We recognize that our increasing population continues to pursue fossil fuel-dependent economic growth. We recognize that the Earth holds more fossil fuel reserves than are safe to burn, and that the vast majority of proven fossil fuel reserves must remain in the ground if we are to prevent the catastrophic consequences of climate change. We therefore question profoundly the continued investment in, and subsidizing of, fossil fuel extraction.



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We seek to nurture a global human society that prioritizes the well-being of people over profit, and lives in right relationship with our Earth; a peaceful world with fulfilling employment, clean air and water, renewable energy, and healthy thriving communities and ecosystems.



This week, we join the People's Climate March as members of this beautiful human family, seeking meaningful commitments from our leaders and ourselves, to address climate change for our shared future, the Earth, and the generations to come.

We see this Earth as a stunning gift that supports life. It is our only home. Let us care for it together.

Signed by QCEA as well as Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW), Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC), American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Princeton Friends Meeting, New Jersey, and Westtown Monthly, Pennsylvania, USA, Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, UK, FWCC- Asia West Pacific Section, Memphis Friends Meeting, Quakers in Britain, and Living Witness.

Announcing the QCEA Study Tour 2015 Join us in Brussels and Strasbourg 18 - 25 April 2015

Come and learn, discuss, and reflect on what Europe, the European Union and Council of Europe mean to you.

We plan to visit the institutions of the European Union, the European Court of Human Rights, and the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, as well as meeting with officials, MEPs, and NGOs. "It helped us understand something of the way the EU works and how it is changing, and also that the EU Institutions are open to the public and willing to listen to it and groups that represent it." said one recent participant.

People who are over 18 and who can handle a fair amount of walking are welcome to join. The price will depend on whether you prefer to stay in hostel dorms or in hotels.

For more information, contact studytour@qcea.org.



Introducing our new Programme Assistants



My name is Tim Harman, I am a British Quaker (in membership since 2010), and I have just started work as a Programme Assistant on QCEA's peace programme. This is the first job of my second career – I have a legal background, and in my previous career I spent several years doing legal work in the administrative offices of a university. Although I had a secure, well-paid job, I had a strong sense that there was something missing from my life. After a long process of inward searching – well supported by my

local Quaker community – I realized that I had a sense of being called to work for peace. So I left my job, and went to Trinity College Dublin to study for a master's degree in peace studies. My studies were successful – I graduated with distinction, and won a college prize for my dissertation on the politics of Northern Ireland. Now I am working for QCEA, where my new job will involve researching and analysing peace issues at a European level, keeping Quakers informed about those issues, and working with European policy-makers to help to develop policies that promote peace.

Tim Harman



I have been going to Quaker meeting in Britain with my family for as long as I can remember, and I became a member of Sussex East Area Meeting in the south of England following my experiences on the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage in 2010. On the pilgrimage, 28 young Quakers explored different traditions of Quakerism - including conservative and evangelical - as well as examining our own. This experience really confirmed that Quakerism made sense to me personally and that I wanted to be part of the Quaker community, and to promote Quaker values.



Since then I've volunteered in a number of capacities for Friends, particularly working with young Quakers in southern England. I completed a BA in History at the University of York in 2014, writing my dissertation on writings of the early Quaker, George Bishop. After completing my degree, I wanted to have a job in line with my Quaker values, where I could make a difference, and do something worthwhile. For me, history was about making an argument, and questioning assumptions. These skills transfer very well, despite the differing content, to working with the European Union, so I am very happy to be learning about advocacy and non-governmental work with QCEA. It is especially interesting to be working on sustainability, a principle I think should now underlie all political decisions. Sustainability is something that Friends, with our testimony to simplicity, can affect considerably. Sustainability is also an area which is excitingly current, particularly so at the European level. This allows me to explore these issues more deeply, while advocating for a more sustainable society.

George Thurley

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*European Parliament hearings with the nominated Commissioners
Changes in the leadership of European institutions
Trade and injustice
Trade and people*

Receive our blog posts direct into your e-mail inbox by clicking the grey 'follow' button on the lower right-hand corner of our blog.



Around Europe

Quaker Council for European affairs
Square Ambiorix 50, B-1000, Brussels, Belgium

Editeur responsable: Alexandra Bosbeer
No. entreprise 0420.346.728
www.qcea.org
qceablog.wordpress.com