

Climate Emergency Correspondent 2024, No. 1, 13 Kohitātea

Kia ora dear f/Friends from chilly Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington where I am wrapped up in a thick possum merino cardigan with my feet in sandals pretending it is summer. At Summer Gathering we pretended it was summer and went for a picnic, wrapped in our raincoats.

John was going to come home with us. But unforeseen circumstances were seen, and John was not. Weta-Visitor was seen instead; at 2.00am while one of us was getting a glass of water. Weta-Visitor was carefully reallocated to more suitable accommodation under a cozy bush outside.



Key info:

Lindsey Fielder-Cook Zoom session at Summer Gathering – provided an excellent summary of climate / environment issues for f/Friends. My summary follows the notices in this newsletter. See also Quaker United Nations Office COP 29 **side event** with Quaker Earthcare Witness, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and others – [What really makes us safe? Peace, climate finance and climate action in an existential time](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YiiLXL4VmRk) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YiiLXL4VmRk>

The Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee is calling for submissions on the [International treaty examination of the Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability](#) . - Thank you to Gray and Marilyn. Submissions close on 23 January. I am going offline for the next two weeks and won't be looking at this one. There is an article from the International Institute for Sustainable Development [here](#).

Recommended reading from f/Friends:

Thank you for:

- Jason Hickel [Less is More: How degrowth-will-save-the-world](#) (Margie-Jean Malcolm)
- Robin Wall Kimmerer, [The Serviceberry](#) and [Braiding Sweetgrass](#) (Margie-Jean Malcolm)
- Kim Stanley Robinson (2020) [The Ministry for the Future](#) (Michael Short)
- [Trouble concentrating?](#) And [Biodiversity success stories](#) in the UK (Jillian Yorke)
- [China and the world's climate future](#) – (Gray Southon)



Summer Gathering Fresk workshop (and lesson in humility):

Thank you to Marc Daalder, Senior Political Reporter at *Newsroom NZ*, for his [Fresk workshop](#) on climate change at Summer Gathering. Most of it involved fun with pictures, pooling our knowledge, and filling in gaps. A little bit of it involved a quiz where *everyone else in the room* (that is, *everyone other than the Climate Correspondent – i.e. me*) got **at least one answer right**. The humiliation. But, even getting all the answers wrong was ok, proving that 3-hour Fresk workshops are user-friendly if you want to learn about climate issues. More info [here](#).

Fun stuff - How to have a messy garden which attracts small creatures <https://predatorfreenz.org/get-involved/backyards-and-neighbourhoods/how-to-make-your-garden-safe-for-wildlife/#:~:text=Keep%20your%20garden%20messy!&text=If%20you're%20interested%20in,a%20messy%20garden%20is%20lizards.>

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou

Philippa (see attached notes from Lindsey's Summer Gathering presentation over the page)

Information summary - Lindsey Fielder Cook, Waikanae, 29 December 2024

Lindsey is interim Deputy Director and Representative for the Human Impacts of Climate Change at Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO). She joined us via zoom at Summer Gathering. A link to a transcript and recording will be shared when it becomes available. Below is my summary of some of the main points from Lindsey's presentation and the discussion time which followed. Mistakes or misrepresentations are mine.

Thank you from Lindsey

QUNO is grateful for Aotearoa New Zealand's spiritual and financial and progressive and inspiring support.

Quiet influence

Quakers have a wonderfully independent ability to conduct quiet diplomacy at the UN. QUNO is the only independent observer as a faith-based organisation at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); the body which gathers all the climate science together. QUNO is allowed to intervene during negotiations and therefore influence at a much more intense and intimate way than in many other international processes.

United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP 29)

QUNO is increasingly engaged on the wider peace and justice aspects of how we live on Earth. This means looking at environments, whether it is climate, chemical pollution, plastics, or biodiversity. The root causes are all connected.

See QUNO's COP 29 **side event** with Quaker Earthcare Witness, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and some others – *What really makes us safe? Peace, climate finance and climate action in an existential time* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YiiLXL4VmRk>

COP 29 good news:

- Greater awareness of climate, biodiversity and chemical pollution interconnections.
- Colombia which has announced a cap on fossil fuels at great cost to themselves as a fossil fuels producer.
- The election in the UK meant that the UK has announced a cap on giving licences to oil and gas.

COP Challenges

- Struggles with denial and lack of political will
- Militarism and military emissions which are estimated at 5% of total emissions but are not recorded. Military spending was US\$2.4 trillion last year.
- Difficult political environment as evidenced by a painful UN Summit for the Future back in September; failure to secure funding at the Biodiversity COP; failure to reach agreement on a Treaty for the Plastics Pollution.

COP achievements

- This COP was basically about financial commitments - raising more funds to help developing countries as promised in the Paris Agreement. What happened instead were last minute walkouts, major eruptions, and documents that came within 10 minutes before they were being asked to be looked at.
- Agreement was reached, but with developing countries saying that the amount committed was far from what was needed. There was a great deal of mistrust, promises to act by 2035 (11 years

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away), and money being offered via loans rather than grants and therefore worsening indebtedness.

There was also no accounting for inflation. Nothing about many things which could have been done - polluter pays, climate damages, a luxury aviation tax, a wealth tax, a financial transaction tax, a redirection of fossil fuel subsidies, a shifting of military spending. 10% of the most well-off people represent 45% of emissions.

- The global goal for adaptation was strengthened, but again, without the financing needed.
- There was a decision on carbon markets, what is called Article 6.2 and 6.4. It is a piece of the Paris Agreement which has been devoid of agreement on how to implement it [ANZ Climate Change Minister, Simon Watts was involved]. But, these carbon markets are essentially carbon offsetting, and they fail to sufficiently reduce emissions at source.

The hardest thing for me was sitting in a room having everybody talking about reducing emissions when every single fossil fuel wealthy country in that room except Colombia, and in this case, the UK, to a certain extent, was increasing their plans to extract oil and gas.

Lindsey's responses to our briefing on Aotearoa NZ concerns

- **Kay Harrison, the climate ambassador** for New Zealand who spoke to Aotearoa NZ Yearly Meeting [in April 2024] has left her position. She is an independent consultant now and Lindsey met her at the COP. Kay sends us her very best wishes and wants to focus on being independent and supporting the Pacific.
- **Technical fixes** - There is an international refusal to look at fossil fuel reduction. But a real push for technical fix - carbon capture storage, carbon dioxide removal, pumping the emissions into the ground, all using technological measures to try to maintain the fossil fuel infrastructure and to therefore invest in more fossil fuel infrastructure. The IPCC says these types of solutions only make sense for emissions which are hard to abate.
- **Reducing government expenditure** and looking at technological solutions, makes no sense because technological solutions often cost more.
- **Technological solutions avoid important issues such as:**
 - How do you build community?
 - How do you build resilience in community?
 - Are you supporting, for example, grants to the poorest to have renewable energies?
 - Are you supporting community renewable energies?
 - Are you doing everything you can to foster renewable energies where they can be effective?
 - Are you talking about reducing energy use?
 - Are you supporting farmers in developing sustainable agriculture practices?
 - Are you looking at consumption and are you looking at economic growth, (particularly when the IPCC has identified economic growth based on fossil fuel use as the main driver of climate change)?
 - Are you taxing your wealth at a fair level?

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- **The local / regional level is very important** - The state of New York has just passed a law which will hold fossil fuel companies responsible for the consequences of their emissions. Things are shifting and they're starting to shift locally regionally, because mostly the national governments are too slow. Never underestimate the effect of the piece of the puzzle you work on.
- **People being overwhelmed** – People in the South are overwhelmed often because they cannot grow their food because of the droughts, or other effects on their land use. People in the North face an existential situation because they are where we're so used to a certain way of living.
- **Reduced Government support for public transport** - public transport is one of the top issues that the IPCC would say we can do. People need a strong public service for transport, a really strong service for public health, and for public education.
- **Regenerating nature** – This should mean genuinely regenerating nature not governments putting money into building forests or just doing it to reduce emissions and avoiding regeneration.

From Lindsey - *I wanted to say, bless you, you're not alone ... It's about telling the story of what these transitions can do. The transitions from fossil fuels can increase air quality. ... Do we talk about what it's like to have solar on our roofs so that suddenly we are using less energy because we are aware of what we're using and want to do it and you want to be part of this transition? ... Are we building community resilience and supporting our farmers? And supporting local agriculture and what that means to community? I think resilience is one of the critical things we need to help all our communities, North and South, because changes are happening regardless.*

... our Quaker testimonies are actually so profoundly grounded on the transformations we need to do. ... because this is a spiritual challenge. What is our relationship with the earth?

... [I]n the UK, for example, we've been supporting a 77-year-old grandmother Quaker who's back in prison for stopping traffic for one hour under the Just Stop Oil protest and received 20 months in prison. ... The UK stands out amongst every country in Europe for being the most draconian on environmental defenders. But it's almost awakened the Quaker Suffering Meeting because suddenly people are being imprisoned at rates for insane reasons to actually show the insanity of what's happening. ...

So, I leave you by saying how do we tell that story? About better healthcare, better public transport, public education, public support for birth control, for educating girls, public support for getting communities that are poorer to be to be empowered with renewable energies where they can be. These are actually transformations and they're called equity. So there's a whole economic shift going on.

Questions, Answers, and Discussion (and I hope I have not misrepresented anyone)

- **Green initiatives from central banks** can happen, as they are independent of government. [However, the NZ Government does appoint the Governor of the Reserve Bank]. When a government changes it can bring huge changes. Peer pressure works, and banks need to feel the pressure from what people want.
- **The Plastics Treaty** – 170 nations recently met in Busan, South Korea to try to reach agreement on waste management and the production and design of plastics. No agreement was reached, but Lindsey does not think it is all over. There are issues about recycling versus looking at the primal cause – how we actually produce, how much we produce and what we regulate and allow. *The*

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international spaces do bring states together, but it is painful, and it is slow. That is why QUNO is remarkable, because it does stick with it. And it sticks with it year in and year out. But underneath we see change happening within. ... We are not going to give up yet.

- **Fatigue is a problem** – *And that is why it is good to ask ‘are we telling the right story?’ What we’re seeing politically is very predictable within the climate space, because the drivers of greenhouse gas emissions that are pushing the climate crisis are lucrative activities. ... Some people make a lot of money on this. So the shift is not going to be easy. ... And yet we’re seeing changes. We’re seeing them in the community. We’re seeing them in, in regions and in national policies. They may not be as much as we want, but things are shifting. ... We need to tell an inspiring story. ... We can look at history; at how those voices that really inspired and kept going.*
- **Inspiration from the anti-apartheid movement** – Things can be almost impossible and almost impossible to do without violence. And then, just keeping going brings a way forward, a path. Nothing is a perfect path; but the despair [about apartheid] brought the needed energy.
- **Using litigation** - Litigation is a very powerful and its use is increasing. ... Even if a court case is pushed down, it does raise awareness. It does take money and time. Protest is important too.
- **Concerns about our Pacific neighbours and climate justice** – Climate change is a gigantic threat to the life, and the existence of many of the small Pacific Island countries. Lindsey explained how one of the most moving visions for her in the last couple of years was how the New Zealand negotiating team under Kay Harrison, supported Pacific countries. Aotearoa NZ is part of the Umbrella Group of nations formed after the Kyoto Protocol. Membership can be fluid, but it usually consists of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Kazakhstan, Norway, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the US. The group are mostly fossil fuel wealthy extractive countries with a very powerful voice in the negotiations. New Zealand played a fascinating role of questioning issues such as talking about historical responsibility for emissions production.

Raising the awareness of the profound vulnerability of your neighbours [those living in the Pacific Islands] also helps raise awareness that New Zealand is not immune. Lindsey suggests getting back in touch with Kay Harrison because Kay wants to focus on supporting Pacific islands. ANZ Friends could ask - What is a helpful way politically for a group such as the Religious Society of Friends, to be more vocal on? Also, there is the International Court of Justice where New Zealand was very much part of the supporting Vanuatu’s initial call. How do we keep the new Government holding to the previous Government’s commitment? New Zealand has more resources than Vanuatu. How do we then support them?

At QUNO, representatives from the poorest countries get to sit next to the most wealthy and powerful countries at a dinner where everyone has an equal voice.

- **Getting diverse groups of people together** - there is the Umbrella group (see above); the developing nations / poor nations group; BRICS - Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa etc; the fossil fuel industry; the European Union, Environmental Integrity Group - Switzerland, South Korea, Mexico, Lichenstein, Georgia; Like-minded developing countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Ecuador? Then there is India, and, China. Countries keep switching in and out of groups. The Latin American countries tend to be more progressive.

It took me [Lindsey] two years to get every negotiating group around the table. We try to get one country from each of these groups. People keep showing up and the feedback we get is that the space is still special for them because it’s very personal. It is off the record. Strictly off the record.

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[Negotiators who are destructive tend not to be invited back]. Otherwise, once you get people in the room, you can facilitate it in a way that's quite personal for them.

Being funded by Quakers, including New Zealand, helps take away the political fear. The interfaith voice is increasingly heard in the negotiations, and that is really special because it's across countries and it is about making moral calls.

- **Tech industries** - 8 out of 10 highest market capitalisation companies of the world are tech companies rather than fossil fuel companies and nearly all of them are USA. In the IPCC, the biggest fight right now is the silencing of criticism of fossil fuels, and a push for these technical fixes or techno fixes for carbon capture storage carbon dioxide removal. The US tech industry is pushing for solar radiation modification or management (SRM) which involves technology reflecting the sun's rays. It does not reduce emissions, face root causes, or transform root causes. It is about technological fixes which just make things worse and possibly helps feed the military.

People need to see the benefits of change. In Germany, a policy which got solar panels to poor people and others resulted in a major increase in support for renewables because people were benefiting. Government stepped in to make the regulations, and the industries had to adjust to them. It does take courage, though.

Carbon capture storage as a solution is being normalised when it is not available at scale. Countries are concerned to keep their fossil fuel industries going.

One of the things that we don't talk about so much in our societies, but I think we could talk a lot more about as Quakers, is peace. The fossil fuels have been linked to many wars. Imagine if you decentralise your energy sources and your communities are more empowered to create their own energies. ... We don't always talk about fossil fuels in terms of how they feed conflict. I think these issues are increasingly coming up.

Capitalism doesn't put a cost on an environmental damage. How do we include the cost of environmental damage as a cost in what we see in our in our economic system? We want to hear more about this.

We need to be tenacious, and we need to be loving because it's a painful space and a lot of people are scared and, as much as I might struggle with certain fossil fuel country wealth, we need to recognise fear. Country negotiators I take time to sit with [come from places where] their entire economy is based on social fuel extraction and they're scared. I might not approve of how they spend their money. ... they need support too.

- **Stocktake** - the stocktake was stronger in many ways than expected. Now some countries do not want the next one to be as strong. Developed countries are pushing for more mitigation while increasing their oil and gas. So, there is a lot of hypocrisy in that room. The next one is in five years. [Lindsey suggests using the global stocktake evidence and sending it to government. Ask government 'this is the evidence – what are you doing?']

Sincere thanks to Lindsey, Ann, John, Jan, Val, Ian, Marion, Anne, Alistair, Linley, Michael, Rebecca, Gray, Esther, Jonathan and anyone else involved for making this session possible.

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