

Updating Aotearoa New Zealand's Approach to International Climate Change Negotiations Consultation

Submission from

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
in Aotearoa New Zealand Te Hāhi
Tūhauwiri

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Introduction

Thank you for the invitation to engage with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade *Updating Aotearoa New Zealand's Approach to International Climate Change Negotiations Consultation*.

Quakers in Aotearoa NZ

Quakers in Aotearoa NZ (Religious Society of Friends) have been a faith community since the early days of European settlement. We have our roots in Christianity and we welcome and include people of all / no religious backgrounds and beliefs.

Our worship is based on silence and listening to the Spirit. Quakers practise truth and integrity, simplicity, and sustainability, and pursue paths leading to peace and equality. We have a strong and long history of environmental concern.

Quakers and the environment

In 2015, Quakers in Aotearoa NZ signed an international [Quaker statement on climate change](#). Among the clauses it prioritises a sustainable world:

We seek to nurture a global human society that prioritises 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.

Quakers at the United Nations

Quakers in Aotearoa NZ are represented at the United Nations by Quakers United Nations Office (QUNO) founded in 1948.

QUNO works to highlight the human perspectives of climate change, particularly rights of the poor and marginalised, and promote climate justice. They also foster enhanced trust and understanding in international negotiations relating to climate change and environmental destruction, and have been involved with the international climate change negotiations at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since 2013.

QUNO offers off-the-record [quiet diplomacy discussions](#) for climate negotiators with the aim of building [communication, understanding and trust](#). Once focused on supporting the creation of the [Paris Agreement](#), QUNO now holds space for discussions on effective and fair implementation of that Agreement.

Quakers in Aotearoa NZ and the COP Process

Quakers in Aotearoa NZ know that our future depends on effective global action brought about by international representatives working together to bring about change. We can only imagine that those processes are difficult, painful, and very tiring, but we want them to occur and to occur effectively.

We therefore offer support to those who represent our country in these difficult negotiations.

We can be contacted via our Climate Crisis Correspondent, Philippa Fletcher, correspondent@climate.quakers.nz.

Our submission

Our submission is based around some of the questions asked in the first two sections of the consultation document. Our focus is peaceful engagement and a worldview where sustainable life is possible.

General comments

We face many difficult challenges as a small nation and as a world. Aotearoa NZ can provide an example by 'owning' our own struggles in order to help find real solutions. Likely challenges for our own country include:

Cost (p.4)

Our quadrupling of support to countries most vulnerable to climate change in 2021 (p.4) sounds generous at [\\$1.3 billion over four years](#) with at least 50 percent of funding going to the Pacific, until we look at our own watershed moment provided by cyclone Gabrielle. NZ Treasury estimates the cost of asset damage from the Auckland floods and Cyclone Gabrielle at between [\\$9 billion and \\$14.5 billion](#). Support to other Pacific nations is likely to cost us much more than our initial \$1.3 billion, and even then, the assistance we can provide will be inadequate in light of the challenge faced by small Pacific countries.

Issues around new technology as a solution (p.9)

Quakers agree that renewable technologies are an important part of a sustainable future. However, more goods mean more intensive use of the Earth's precious resources. While more cars may be electric, more cars still mean more resource use, more congestion, more pollution from tyre dust, and more infrastructure including charge points and roading. More is not a panacea, however virtuous the technology.

The number of licensed cars in Aotearoa NZ has increased by almost 200,000 between 2020 and 2023. The total number of licensed vehicles has increased by over 320,000 during that period. At 889 vehicles per 1,000 people, Aotearoa NZ has one of the [highest rates of vehicle ownership in the world](#). Our negotiators need to acknowledge this and the challenge it represents to us meeting our carbon reduction target.

Issues around key industries and greenhouse gases (p.9)

Aotearoa NZ relies heavily on exports, and agriculture is a key industry. It is also one of our biggest greenhouse gas emitters.

The recent [IPCC summary report](#) commented that

in 2019, ... concentrations of methane (1866 parts per billion) and nitrous oxide (332 parts per billion)... were higher than at any time in at least 800,000 years (very high confidence) (A.1.3).

The agriculture emissions situation is urgent both here and around the world, and successive Aotearoa NZ governments have struggled to make progress. Quakers agree that Aotearoa NZ features some commendable positive examples of sustainable agriculture, but we need to acknowledge that this is another major challenge for us as our economy is built on agriculture, particularly dairying.

Specific Issues

Section 1: What do you think New Zealand should be seeking to achieve through our participation at COP?

How can New Zealand best use COP to advance effective and ambitious global action?

Provide a vision for doing things differently

Through everything we must adhere to a vision of what might be and not allow ourselves to be constrained by what is. Only in this way will we unleash the energy and purpose to start a new beginning ... Without visions we remain rudderless ...
Kevin Clements (1988), quoted in [Quaker Faith and Practice in Aotearoa NZ](#) (2003).

Following Covid 19, [Quakers in Aotearoa NZ made a call](#) for systemic change and remodelling of our nation guided by the principles of sustainability, non-violence, simplicity and equity. It can equally be applied to the wider world, and to Aotearoa New Zealand's participation at COP.

Help change hearts and minds

Effective global action will require changes of hearts and minds. It is very difficult, but we are going to have to collectively recognise the unsustainable impact of our current lifestyles and consumer values on the world and our future. Insights could

come from psychology and sociology, indigenous understandings, and religious inspirations.

Leverage participation in COP to support our own low emissions transition

Imagination is required. COP28 provides an opportunity to discuss ideas which have the potential to bring about significant change. Connections can also be made with supportive groups such as Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP), ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, agriculture, and other specialist groups.

Support the Pacific

He waka eke noa. We are all in this together. Cyclone Gabrielle may have been the moment when we in Aotearoa NZ realised we are similar to other Pacific nations.

We agree with then Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Hon. Nanaia Mahuta's statement made when supporting Vanuatu's successful bid to the [International Court of Justice](#) to consider countries' international legal obligations on climate change:

Amplifying the Pacific voice and the impact of climate change on Pacific peoples is a key priority for New Zealand.

[Vulnerable countries and communities are already experiencing loss and damage](#) from unavoidable climate change impacts and urgently need finance to support recovery, protect human rights and development gains, and prepare for future displacement and livelihood losses. Aotearoa NZ can usefully highlight their plight and call for increased mitigation funding / assistance, as we are able to do a limited amount on our own.

This situation here is urgent. [Mass \[ocean\] mortality events](#) have already been recorded, and, as [Aotearoa NZ faith leaders](#) have stated:

Already in our closest geographic region the disastrous consequences of a near 1.2°C rise in average global surface temperature are threatening the viability of more and more low-lying Pacific Island nations.

Commit to indigenous leadership

Our negotiators can make sure indigenous people are involved at every stage and that their voices are heard. In Aotearoa NZ, for example, Māori face many climate associated issues well beyond land as a place to live. Spiritual connection, whakapapa, transmission of culture, access to economic resources and livelihood, are all impacted.

At the same time, indigenous knowledge can be a powerful tool in helping us all respond to our current situation, whether that knowledge is about values consistent with sustainable living, or knowledge helpful for dealing with crises when they occur (e.g. the first responders during Cyclone Gabrielle).

Indigenous peoples from Tuvalu, and Kiribati face not just loss of land, but possible loss of country.

Encourage reporting of all carbon emissions

Aotearoa NZ could encourage reporting of military emissions which is currently voluntary. We understand such emissions are estimated to account for around [five per cent of total emissions](#), and their non-inclusion could mean modelling and projections could be compromised (see [QUNO](#), 2022).

Section 2: How should New Zealand engage at COP?

What role do you think New Zealand should aim to play at COP? E.g. should we seek to be seen as a constructive bridge-builder, or be more prepared to be an outlier? Why?

Play to our strengths

Humans and the rest of the natural world are collectively in a difficult situation. Aotearoa NZ should play to our strengths and acknowledge that our strengths may be different in different circumstances during the COP process. Quakers have been practising peace building for a long time. We would certainly support Aotearoa NZ being a constructive facilitator of bridge-building, but this should not preclude being bold with 'outlier' suggestions worthy of consideration.

Model good leadership

We need our government to lead with integrity, share information, make decisions based on evidence, and engage with communities prior to decision-making. Quakers oppose violence or coercion at every level and look to practices that bring peaceful dialogue and non-violent management of conflict. We are sure our representatives at COP would wish to do the same, despite many temptations to act differently.

Take action which can bring hope

As QUNO recorded in its [Interventions made during the 58th meeting of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC), *the people of the world urgently need*

hope, so we encourage any reasonable action in this area. The recent IPCC summary report indicated:

Deep, rapid and sustained mitigation and accelerated implementation of adaptation actions in this decade would reduce projected losses and damages for humans and ecosystems (very high confidence), and deliver many co-benefits, especially for air quality and health (high confidence) (C.2).

We encourage our government to take this action to bring hope now.

Promote climate justice

Aotearoa NZ, as a Pacific nation, is well placed to promote climate justice. As [QUNO](#) has already recognised, adaptation and mitigation actions that prioritise equity, social justice and inclusivity, lead to more sustainable outcomes, reduce trade-offs, support transformative change and advance climate resilient development.

Supporting people most affected, but least responsible for climate change, is a moral call to action. It is particularly relevant to people in the Pacific. We welcome the decision at the COP27 to adopt the funding arrangements for responding to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.

Aotearoa NZ could push for greater contributions from wealthier countries through such funding arrangements. Ideas for possible funding arrangements are set out in a recent QUNO document, [Innovative and Fair Sources of Finance for a New Loss and Damage Funding Arrangement](#) (2023).

Consent to release submission

Quakers (Religious Society of Friends) in Aotearoa NZ Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri consent to our submission being released.

Conclusion

Quakers see the challenge of climate change as a spiritual challenge. It speaks to our human meaning in life and our relationships, especially with nature and future generations.

Modern life's short-term focus, individualism, consumerism, exploitation of nature, and dumping of waste is undermining our ability to live well in our world. Quakers value simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and sustainability. We wholly support our representatives in bringing these values to their deliberations.

We strongly support climate justice, and are particularly concerned about Pacific peoples who already experience loss and damage; who urgently need finance and other assistance to support recovery, protect human rights, maintain development gains, and deal with displacement and livelihood losses. Aotearoa NZ can usefully highlight these issues and call for increased mitigation funding / assistance from wealthier nations. We are limited in what our country can do on its own.

Lastly, we know this is strenuous work. We also know that our future depends on effective global action brought about by international representatives working together to bring about change. We can only imagine that those processes are onerous, painful, and very tiring, but the situation is urgent, and the work is vital.

We encourage and uphold Aotearoa New Zealand representatives in finding ways to help facilitate successful change. We therefore offer support to those who represent our country in these difficult negotiations.

Tūngia te ururua kia tupu whakaritorito te tupu o te harakeke.

Clear the overgrowth so that the new flax shoots will grow.

Western Bay of Plenty PHO (2020)