

Dear Friends,

I suspect it's a rather clichéd way to start your final journal letter, but I genuinely can't believe that the year has gone so fast. As I write this, I only have four days left at QUNO, which seems far too short, especially given the number of things I still have left to do! It's been a fantastic year, however, and although it's sad that it is coming to an end, I've had no end of new and exciting experiences, and learnt a huge amount, in the last 11 months.

In terms of exciting experiences, the recent Summer School must rank highly. QUNO runs this every year, welcoming 25 people from all over the world, mostly in their early twenties, for two intense weeks of talks, seminars and attending UN meetings. Co-organising all of this – with Jenny, the other programme assistant – was a fantastic, but rather terrifying, experience. There were last minute visa crises, with one participant having to pick his up whilst *en route* to the airport. There were midnight medical emergencies – including my own, with a severe and inconveniently timed stomach bug laying me low in the first week. There were elusive speakers, late speakers, and the last minute inability to get a speaker at all for one session. There was interminable UN bureaucracy, in particular the rather byzantine maze lying between us and the successful acquisition of security badges. And there was the constant pressure of getting 25 people from place to place in time for things, when a) they didn't know their way around; b) they only seemed to have two speeds – a casual saunter, and a high speed 'oh-no-that's-our-bus' run; and c) they were all so interested in everything and everyone that tearing them away to get to the next location was rather challenging.

However, none of that detracted from the huge pleasure of spending two weeks with a fun, interesting group of people, all really engaged in various fascinating international issues, and all - most importantly - lovely individuals. The late night lake swims, the singing on the mountain walk, and the conversations – serious, interesting, and hilarious - more than outweigh the various stresses I mentioned above. Add to this hearing the different viewpoints of participants from varied countries and backgrounds, including some very moving stories, and you have two weeks whose intensity is a measure of their richness and enjoyment.

Another significant experience this year has been to see what I hope is the beginning of a real sea change in nuclear disarmament. In my last journal letter (which I just re-read, hoping for inspiration), I was rather pessimistic and depressed about the state of multilateral diplomacy, and specifically the Conference on Disarmament, which I noted had been deadlocked for over a decade. However, after a powerful nuclear disarmament speech in Prague from Barack Obama, and a positive Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty meeting in New York, the deadlock was finally broken. I applauded with the rest of the room 29th May, as the Conference agreed a programme of work for the first time in 10 years, opening up the path to concrete work, including the negotiation of a new treaty to ban the production of fissile material (the nuclear bit in a nuclear weapon). It was an historic moment, and

a euphoric one for the diplomats in the Conference, but problems – as always – remain. Firstly, they are now bogged down in another set of procedural wrangling, mostly focused on the length of the mandates of the chairs of the bodies set up to discuss and negotiate each item. Secondly, the fact that my applause was from the balcony, rather than the floor of the chamber, is a reminder that the Conference still operates under rather antiquated rules with regard to NGOs, severely restricting their access and participation. Nevertheless, some progress is finally being made, and I was privileged to witness such a significant step.

Less dramatically historic, but just as satisfying personally, has been the opportunity to be involved in two pieces of work that are still in their fairly formative stages – the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, and the growing body of work on Armed Violence and Development. In both cases, the small size of QUNO and the early stage of the work means that I get to take part in some of the strategic planning (even if I don't have very much to say!), and in both I have been able to take a small research project and develop it under my own initiative. I described both projects in some detail in my last letter, and won't bore you all by doing so again. However, a highlight (and something I found rather intimidating) was being able to present some bits of our mapping of Armed Violence and Development projects at a meeting organised by the UN Development Programme and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, back in May. Another interesting moment was sending in the joint civil society submission for the Secretary General's report on Armed Violence and Development. We had worked with several organisations on this, but the submission was to be made by QUNO on behalf of the group, and I spent a rather stressful day confirming final sign off from organisations spread over several time zones. As with the summer school, though, the difficulties are part of what makes the work exciting. On a rather sadder note, however, our work on Armed Violence and Development was darkened by the death of a colleague, Swiss diplomat Ronald Dreyer, on the Air France flight lost over the Atlantic. He was a fun person to have around, as well as incredibly important to the work, and is sorely missed.

Outside of work, I've been enjoying Geneva itself. I've become rather used to living on the edge of a beautiful lake, and will feel somewhat bereft when I can no longer spend an evening in a park by the water's edge, perhaps taking a quick swim, or visit my favourite lakeside bar and watch Mont Blanc turn pink in the sunset. It's a beautiful place to live, especially in the sweltering, thunderstormy summer weather, and I've had a great time walking in the mountains, going to free outdoor music festivals, and visiting other parts of Switzerland on the incredibly efficient Swiss trains. Actually, I've got so used to the trains being on time that I got irrationally annoyed last time I was in the UK, and found my train delayed by a whole ten minutes! All things considered, the last year has been fantastic – I've been able to work on the issues that interest me, with great colleagues, in a lovely office building (when will I work again somewhere with a swing in the garden?), in a beautiful city. I'm

enormously grateful to everyone at QUNO, and to QPSW, for giving me this opportunity.

In Friendship,

Adam Drury