



## *Friends Responses to Global Change* An FWCC Worldwide Consultation among Friends

### **Background**

This section includes two parts. The first part gives a brief outline of what is global change and what Friends are doing about it. The second part is a brief introduction to FWCC.

#### **1. What is Global Change ?**

Friends around the world are responding to changes in the environment, climate, economy, society. These changes affect us all. They affect us at a practical level and at a spiritual level. Change also affects us all at a global level and in our local communities. Collectively we call these changes ‘Global Change’. One practical example of how global change affects us all and how different changes are interconnected is the relocation of factories from the developed world, say, Europe or the USA to the developing world. This throws people out of work in America or Europe but increases employment in China or India and leads to lower consumer prices in Africa, Asia, America and Europe. The transfer of manufacturing to the developing world also leads to increased pollution from developing countries and to competition across the world for natural resources, affecting communities in Africa, Asia, Latin America and elsewhere as well as transforming the world economy. All these changes are transforming the world as we know it. If they continue, the dramatic increases in pollution, deforestation and rapid use of natural resources may fundamentally change the nature of life on earth. Some Friends see these developments as challenges to our fundamental covenants with God. Other Friends see these changes as threatening life on earth as we know it. These changes give rise to both practical and spiritual issues.

When we use the term Global Change, we see it as being the “unity, integration and the inter-connection of all change. Seemingly different or unrelated changes are in fact aspects or facets of a single greater change.”<sup>1</sup> We note that all seemingly different or unrelated changes are connected through their role within a greater global system and are thus best described as all being part of a single unified global change. One of the main changes we refer to is the link between development, industrialization, degradation of land, atmosphere and water and the human contribution to environmental and climate change which threatens the very nature of the world we live in. One of the principal challenges the world faces is how to reconcile the mitigation of the causes and impacts of climate change with the right of developing countries to develop.

Friends at the 2007 Triennial agreed that global change is a concern of Friends worldwide and approved a Minute on the environment and sustainability. Following on from the FWCC Minute, Asia West Pacific Friends agreed a Minute which asked FWCC to consider holding a worldwide Consultation on Global Change to discern if there is a distinctive Quaker voice on global change. FWCC agreed to hold a Feasibility Study and after receiving the recommendations of that Study, agreed to hold a Consultation. The Consultation process is now underway and we invite you to participate. We set out below how you can participate as well as brief information on the Consultation process and brief background on FWCC.

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<sup>1</sup> quote from Julian Stargardt *Friends and Global Change*, FWCC-AWPS, 2008 p.1 available online at [www.fwccawps.org](http://www.fwccawps.org)

We have yet to hear the voices and experiences of many Friends. In some cases, these are the voices of communities feeling the greatest impact of Global Change. The Consultation is a process designed to offer Friends around the world the opportunity to tell their own stories and share their own experiences of the effects of change, their visions, discernments and the actions they are taking in response. It is our intention to design a process that encourages the participation of previously unheard voices from around the world.

## 2. **What is the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) ?**

You may be asking yourself: “What is FWCC?”

FWCC is Friends World Committee for Consultation. It is the Friends world umbrella body which links together yearly meetings representing all the different strands of Friends traditions around the world. FWCC sponsors international gatherings of Friends, including meetings of the Committee usually every three years [Triennials] and world conferences and consultations on a periodic basis. This Consultation on Global Change is an example of the type of activity that FWCC convenes.

FWCC’s day to day activities are managed by a small team based in London and headed by the General Secretary, who is currently Nancy Irving. The General Secretary reports to the Central Executive Committee (CEC) which is composed of Friends from the four geographical sections and at-large members. The CEC meets annually in conjunction with a Section gathering.

FWCC has its world office in London and is composed of four Sections, Africa Section, Asia West Pacific Section (AWPS), Europe and Middle East Section (EMES), and Section of the Americas. Each Section is independent and has its own work and activities but works cooperatively with the others.

More information about FWCC can be found on the website [www.fwcc.org](http://www.fwcc.org) and more information about the global change initiative can be found at [www.fwccglobalchange.org](http://www.fwccglobalchange.org).

*prepared February 2010*