



The 12th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity is being held in Pyeongchang, Korea from 6th -17th October 2014.

Living in Harmony is the theme the Brahma Kumaris brought to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Korea. The main aim of the convention is to reach the Aichi Biodiversity Targets which starts with: *By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.* A total of 11 delegates from Brahma Kumaris registered: Meera Ryu (South Korean), Heera, Shivani, Raksha, Bhavana and Jugnu from Korea, Sonja Ohlsson (Denmark), Piero Senatore Musini (Italy), Andrea Gutierrez (Finland), Soon Bee Eam (Malaysia) and Jessica Yuille (Australia). We hosted an exhibition, a display kiosk and two panel discussions. To help awaken biodiversity consciousness we prepared a BK position Statement, two booklets, a small poster and a set of Living in Harmony cards in both Korean and English.

Hand-over from Letchumanan Ramatha

Letchumanan Ramatha (Malaysian) was attending the earlier part of the conference. He spent one night with the team before leaving, and handed over some insights into the conference and service tips: *visitors should be attracted to our message about change of human awareness, as it is something new. We shouldn't underestimate the supporting energy of being positive and sharing a message of hope.*



Figure 1. Letchumanan Ramatha and the team.



Conference Exhibition

The exhibition was open to the public as well as conference participants. Large display posters on the India-One solar power plant, yogic agriculture and human awareness attracted passers-by to look closer. They enjoyed picking a *Living in Harmony* card which gives an awareness and action to practise to bring positive change. The exhibition was relatively quiet, perhaps because the conference venue was three hours from Seoul in a quiet mountain area. There were also many parallel events offered which delegates were busy attending. Around 50 visitors came to the stand a day: delegates, police, fellow exhibitors, government officials and school groups. Most visitors were from Korea, but we also connected with international representatives who were interested to connect with us in their country.



Figure 2. BK team at the exhibition.



Figures 3 and 4. Visitor choosing a *Living in Harmony* card and Koreans hearing about our projects.

Display Kiosk

We had a small display kiosk within the *Communication, Education & Public Awareness* (CEPA) area, which showed a video on yogic agriculture and held our brochures.



Figure 5. CEPA exhibition kiosk.



Visit to Woljeong Temple

During the week monks from nearby Woljeong Temple, Buddhist oriented environmental activists and scholars were meeting to prepare a declaration to be submitted to the CBD. One of our contacts at Seoul centre invited us to attend, so we went and wished them success. Meera visited them again the following day to meet some of the participants in the program at the temple. Then we all went back on the weekend to take part in a program the monks prepared for interested CBD participants. There was a Buddhist ceremony, traditional tea drinking and the Chief Priest offered their declaration on Biodiversity to the conference. Meera translated his speech into English for the audience.



Figure 6. Wishing the Monks and activists well with their Declaration on Biodiversity for the CBD.

Side Events

Side events are organized at the margin of the major official meetings with a view to sharing experiences and increasing opportunities for informal dialogue among the meetings' participants. The BK team attended side events each day and made connections. Interesting side events were:

- social marketing and behaviour change by RARE,
- biological diversity and radiation hosted by Japan Civil Network for the UN,
- biodiversity and social ecological resilience by Stockholm Resilience Centre, and
- the role of indigenous women by the Network of Indigenous Women of Latin America and Caribbean.



Figure 7. Kusum Vyas of the Green Yatra, a friend of the BKs.

Biodiversity loss and its impact on humanity

The most unique feature of Earth is the existence of life, and the most extraordinary feature of life is its diversity. Approximately 9 million types of plants, animals, protists and fungi inhabit the Earth. So, too, do 7 billion people. Two decades ago, at the first Earth Summit, the vast majority of the world's nations declared that human actions were dismantling the Earth's ecosystems, eliminating genes, species and biological traits at an alarming rate. This observation led to the question of how such loss of biological diversity will alter the functioning of ecosystems and their ability to provide society with the goods and services needed to prosper.

(www.nature.com)