



Report, 4th December, UN Climate Change Conference COP24, Katowice, Poland

## General Update

This year's Climate conference is about finalizing the so-called "rule book" to actually implement the Paris agreement to stay below 1.5°C (max. 2°C). The countries will finalize how to measure and monitor the promised reduction of carbon emission (Nationally Determined Contributions, NDCs) and what to do if a state fails to fulfil its promises. However, this is complicated as many details have



to be worked out and agreed among all the 200-member states. This has been further complicated by the USA government planning to pull out of the Paris agreement and Brazil's new government withdrawing its offer to host the next climate conference.

At the opening of the conference, Poland's President made a blunt statement: "Don't worry. As long as I am the president of Poland, I won't allow anyone to murder Polish mining". This was not surprising since Poland is one of many nations heavily reliant on coal. Along with other fossil fuels, coal has been identified as a leading climate enemy at the COP24 summit. It seems not all the parties understand and want to follow the recently published Climate report by the Intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC). This indicated that climate change is accelerating and the window of opportunities to deal with the problem is rapidly closing.

Famous actor Arnold Schwarzenegger is also attending the meeting and said, "We have a meshugganah leader in Washington, but the U.S. is still in." He wished he could travel back in time to stop us from digging up and using fossil fuels, as he did in his famous film "The Terminator".



Meanwhile, climate change can be felt all over the world, the 15-year-old Swedish school girl Greta Thunberg said today. The world's youth must lead in pushing for climate action as our politicians are "behaving like children". In August 2018 Greta began a [solo climate protest](#) by striking from school in Sweden. These school strikes have now spread to at least 270 towns and cities in countries across the world, including Australia, the United

Kingdom, Belgium, the USA and Japan. It is quite interesting that one little girl from Sweden can have such global impact, it seems courageous leadership can be quite inspirational.

## Exhibition

Today Sister Jayanti visited the conference and held a minute of silence in the main negotiation hall. She then came to our exhibition stand which is very busy. People are really attracted by our blessing cards and wristbands.



Sister Jayanti, Sonja and Ewa

We then went to the popular German and French stands; they both serve free coffee! It is a favourite meeting point. Sister Jayanti met a number of old friends from previous conferences and heard the latest update from the negotiations.



One Planet Café: Patricia, Sister Jayanti, Sonja, Golo, Valériane and a rep from Ecovillage

## Interfaith Press Conference

This afternoon, the Faith based Organisations (FBO) held a press conference to present their contribution to the Talanoa process. Talanoa is a traditional word used in Fiji, and across the Pacific, to reflect a process of inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue. The purpose of Talanoa is to share stories, build empathy and to make wise decisions for the collective good. The process involves the sharing of ideas, skills and experience through story-telling. Valériane from the Brahma Kumaris moderated the session with representatives from four different religions.



Henrik Grape, Jamie Williams, Valériane Bernard, Rev. Fletcher, Lindsey Cook

Henrik Grape, from the World Council of Churches, presented the document "Faith communities envisage a more just and equitable world". He talked about respecting the boundaries of Mother Earth, about caring for ecological systems, the most vulnerable communities and all future generations. Lindsey Cook from the Quakers stated that the faith-based organizations' input is important because they are not political and use a soft language that can touch people.

Valériane then asked the Rev. Fletcher Harper from GreenFaith what actions the FBO's can take to help solve this climate crisis. He emphasized that they can take a leading role in divestment from fossil fuel as well as promoting life style changes.

Jamie Williams from Islamic Relief talked about the needs of the most vulnerable people. Caring for people in need is one of the main principles in all religions.

The audience asked the panellists many questions and there was a lively discussion.

## EU Pavilion Side Event

The Brahma Kumaris organised an evening programme in the EU pavilion: **Lifestyle Changes that last - for the Future of the Planet**. Sonja moderated the panel discussion with experienced "spiritual practitioners" who went into depth on how to initiate behavioural changes and to overcome inner and outer barriers for effective climate action. Around 20 people participated in the program.

Fletcher Harper admitted that changing behaviour is often hard. Information is not enough to create a real change. He emphasized six key points to support lasting lifestyle changes:

1. A respected leader within the community becomes a role model
2. Experience the benefit of changing
3. Avoid moralistic talk, but share good stories; be positive
4. Clarify the reason and motive
5. Take support from friends
6. Celebration helps to reinforce new behaviour.

Kosha Anja Joubert (Executive Director of Global Ecovillage Network, GEN) presented the work they have been doing. The communities develop their own guiding principles for lifestyle change and collective wisdom. She emphasized that each individual has their own entry point into personal change. It could be nature, books, dialogue or meditation.

Sister Jayanti shared that when individuals align their personal change into a collective effort a global scale transformation can happen. A lasting change has to come from the heart.



Sonja Ohlsson, Dorota Stasiak, Rev. Fletcher Harper, Sister Jayanti, Kosha Jubert, Golo Pilz

Dr Dorota Stasiak, from the Institute of Advanced Sustainability Studies, said that new policies will be successful when people have been included in the process through co-creative approaches.

Golo, the last speaker, called for a paradigm shift. We have to overcome the separation of our inner and outer world. What you think and feel matters! If we want to inspire change in others, we need to walk the talk and be role models of change.

Sonja Ohlsson asked the panellists to share their most treasured personal change. Fletcher and Sister Jayanti mentioned their decision to become vegan.

A question was raised from the audience about the increase in air travel and the enormous CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Golo shared that BK is soon launching an in-house travel compensation program for the benefit of renewable energy projects. Kosha emphasized that we have to connect more with our hearts and minds. We can use more video conferencing and digital tools.



Our Polish BK team is working day and night supporting us. Here you can see them folding blessing cards.

[www.eco.brahmakumaris.org](http://www.eco.brahmakumaris.org)