



Tuesday 1st December

It is becoming clear that faith-based communities are playing a more prominent and important role in the climate change negotiations. Today there was both a faith program and a UNESCO program in the public part of COP21- the Climate Generation Area. The whole Paris Brahma Kumaris group came to explore this area.

RINGO meeting

In the morning, Valérieane went to the meeting of Research and Independent Non-Governmental organizations (RINGO). Brahma Kumaris are registered under this group.

Valérieane was interviewed by France Culture (of Radio France) and it should be broadcast on the Friday 4th of December at 11.40 within a program on "Faiths and Climate Change"

Valérieane was also interviewed by Radio France Internationale on Spirituality and Climate Change.

Sister Jayanti and Valérieane were interviewed (on video) on Spirituality and Climate Change by Maria Paula Schmidt from a Brazilian NGO: Uma Gota no Oceano (a drop in the ocean – ref: umagotanooceano.org)

Climate Generation area



Inside the climate generation area



This is public space

The climate generation area is open to the public of Paris, free of charge. Over the period of COP21, a total of 360 organizations will be present in the area. There are 120 stands and some 20 interactive educational exhibitions. There are almost 340 conferences and more than 60 film screenings planned. The UNESCO event described below is one such event.



Interviews in the Climate Change Area



Sister Jayanti being interviewed by Uma Gota no Oceano (A drop in the ocean).

Golo Pilz being interviewed by Uma Gota no Oceano.





Sister Jayanti being interviewed by another international TV station.



Ethics and Climate Change

The event was organized by UNESCO and aimed to present the reflections undertaken by Commission Mondiale d'Éthique des connaissances Scientifiques et des Technologies (COMEST, World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge) on ethical principles in relation to Climate Change. An international panel was invited to comment and review what was at stake. This event held in UNESCO Pavilion



The panel was moderated by John Crowley (Chief of Research Section, UNESCO). The panel members were:

Sister Jayanti - Director of the Brahma Kumaris and Representative of Brahma Kumaris to the United Nations

Virginie Maris - Environmental Philosopher and researcher, Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS)

Professor Rainier Ibana, Vice-Chairperson COMEST and Coordinator of the COMEST Working group on Environment Ethics

Professor Donald Brown - Associate professor of environmental ethics and law at Penn State
Luka Omladič - member of COMEST working group on environmental ethics)



10 ethical principles were presented by the COMEST members. The panellists were invited to identify and comment on the ones most appropriate to respond to Climate Change. The panellists said they were most interested in:

- Biodiversity,
- Global Justice,
- Sustainability,
- Frugality and
- Do No Harm.



It was noted that the IPCC included ethics in their report for this year for the first time. This was said to be a move in the right direction.

Sister Jayanti commented that we are not only experiencing an environmental crisis but we are also facing an ethical and spiritual crisis. She said the principle of fairness is a deep spiritual matter: one of re-education and awakening of consciousness. It is also a question of identity. From a

spiritual perspective, it is about awakening the change in humanity by seeing ourselves as one human family. Sister Jayanti then raised questions surrounding the principle of 'Do No Harm':

- How can I as an individual make this happen?
- How can I follow the path of justice?

Changing the outside will come later. The issue now is about re-awakening the inner treasures of love, compassion and kindness within each human being, so that these qualities drive the outer change that needs to happen. She concluded by saying that it was a time for silence and introspection.

The panel concluded with each member sharing a message with the audience. Sister Jayanti chose to end with a meditation commentary. She invited the audience to reflect and connect with the ethical principle they most resonated with.



Interfaith Dialogue on Climate Change, Sustainability and Resilience

The Interfaith Dialogue organized by the International Networks of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) and Gaia Education. The event was very well attended as more than 70 people filled the conference room.



Sonja preparing for the dialogue with a monk from Korea



The panel was moderated by Dr Nigel Crawhall (from the International Network of Engaged Buddhists)



The participants in the panel were:

Haeyoon Kang - Wonbulgyo Eco Network

Ven Athuralive Rathana Thera - Buddhist monk from Sadaham Sevana

May East - CIO Gaia Foundation

Sonja Ohlsson - Coordinator of the Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative

Deborah Ikaroot Oriama - Activist and Campaign Manager We have Faith - Act Now

It was a fascinating dialogue as panellists shared their view on specific subjects, in relation to climate change, such as social justice, education and inner resilience.

Athuralive Rathana shared that, today, compassion, kindness, tranquillity and mental capacity are the qualities most needed to shift the current paradigm that is based on human greed.

Nigel commented that we had reached a state of extreme vulnerability. This uncertainty can be challenging and stressful. He then invited Sonja Ohlsson to elaborate on the theme of inner resilience and how to deal with the challenges ahead.

Sonja mentioned how the biggest resilience comes from the Earth itself. She stated that the world today is overloaded with communication and so the tendency is for people to disengage and shut off when problems arise. To counteract these impulsive behaviours, we have to look for methods to bring back hope and to stay strong. Each one of us have to find out what makes us strong. Some people need silence whilst others need to empty their minds and others need to connect with like minded people. Another way to bring strength is to make meaning of everything that happens. Sonja defined resilience as the long-term capacity to deal with change. She mentioned how some of the fundamental principles of Stockholm Resilience Institute (SRI) can also be applied to the self.

The first principle is increasing Bio diversity.

Sonja said that, on a personal level, she asked herself what does it mean to her. Internal biodiversity would be, for example, opening her heart to different ways of thinking and feeling, creating diversity in her friendships and opening her mind to the light while remaining broadminded.

The second principle is managing connectivity.

According to SRI, connectivity can be both good and bad and so this is definitely a principle we need to manage for the self thus bringing benefit to both myself and to the whole

system. It's important to be careful with our thoughts as negative thinking can harm the whole system. We should respond with love and peace.

The third principle is to broaden participation. It is when we come from a position of love that we



Romina, Francois and Michel following the event on screen.



can see the whole perspective. Alternatively, fear can make us feel marginalized and lonely.

In essence, it is this inner resilience that makes us strong; if we take time to reflect and meditate not only as an individual but as a collective, belonging to a whole system.



Nigel Crawhall, Sonja Ohlsson, May East, Julia Grindon-Welsh

Reverend Hayun Khan then shared information on the modelling of eco-temples and eco-villages with the aim of reducing carbon footprints.

May East, who is a farmer's daughter just like Sonja, highlighted the importance of focusing on growth. She stressed on the importance of balancing reflection and action. Our politicians attending COP are engaging only in rhetoric and are therefore unsuccessful. According to her, we need a space to create laboratories of sustainability to redesign our presence in the planet.

She used a memorable simile when she stated that 'today each one of us need to be nurses of a dying system and become midwives of an emerging system'. However, the politicians are unable to appreciate the joy of being part of a transition.

For networks to survive and thrive, we have to turn ourselves into network of learning people that will lead the seed of influence and hopefully further the influence in COP.

The last speaker of the afternoon was Deborah Ikaroot, an activist from



Julia asking questions after the UNESCO event

Africa who mainly focuses on economic justice, climate justice and leadership. The aim of the 'We Have Faith' movement, which she was representing, is to create families and communities that engage with each other with kindness and compassion.

The evening concluded with a question from a participant: How can we influence the negotiations? The panellists were invited to respond.

According to Deborah, we need bring morality into the negotiations. Sonja replied that one of the



first steps is to take responsibility for our own lifestyles. Adopting a vegetarian diet for example or being aware of the vibrations she emitted in her home.

May responded by stating that transition will happen. She said either we design it or we become victims of it! However, she was hopeful that we will have a deal at the end of COP21.

Climate Change Studio Interviews

Golo Pilz, Adviser on Renewable Energy to the Brahma Kumaris, spoke about 'Transition to Clean Technology demands a New Mindset.' He shared that technology, funding, and strategy alone will not bring the necessary momentum to change the negative climate trend. It is of paramount importance to bring ethics and values back into the process. This is where faith-based organizations can play a major role. Golo advised that meditation is a powerful tool to change awareness and behaviour in people.



Golo being interviewed.



Sister Jayanti Kirpalani spoke about the role of ethics and human awareness in climate change solutions

Oxygen in life – by Youth for Youth

Following the Conference of Youth (COY) in Paris that had attracted young people from all over the world, the French Brahma Kumaris Youth team planned a special programme for young adults at the Brahma Kumaris Centre. It was entitled: 'Oxygen in Life by Youth for Youth.' 27 young adults came to the event. Many were friends the team had met during the COY held last week.

The program started off with an icebreaker and a question: What are your hopes for the planet?



Participants were invited to write down their wish on a piece of paper and to tie it to a balloon as a way to acknowledge this wish. The group created drawings expressing their hopes for the planet. The evening alternated with moments of lightness, reflection and silence allowing each one's creativity to shine through. Participants really seemed to enjoy the atmosphere of unity and love experienced during the event.



The Breaking of the Fast - Dinner

As representatives from Brahma Kumaris; Francois, Sonja, Valérie and Laura were invited to this important event. It was held at the Foyer de Grenelle, Fraternity of the Popular Mission 17, in the 15th arrondissement of Paris, and arranged by 'Fast-for-the climate' and World Lutheran Organization. It was an opportunity to network with interfaith leaders and friends and people from all walks of life who have been fasting in France and all over the world. The meal was vegan and music from around the world was performed by Desert Rose from South Africa. Many friends from previous COP conferences were also there.



And so the team made their way home – through a very nice part of Paris (Le Louvre)

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(end of report)