



## COP21 – First report, Friday 27<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November

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#### *Getting started*

Friday 27th November the international COP21 delegation started to arrive in Paris from all over the world. A rather cold winter weather but a very warm welcome from the hosts - the Brahma Kumaris group in Paris and France.

The youth group had arrived a day before, and are very much engaged in the Youth Conference on Climate Change. The group grew to 8 people with both international and French youth.

We had to settle in quickly on the very first day, as the COP21 Interfaith programs were due to start just the next day. The French BK group have really done everything possible to make us feel welcome – the welcome kit included all the information we needed, gifts with personal COP logos etc. A real community atmosphere has been created in the local centre. Over the weekend the total number of helpers, visitors, friends and residents for lunch were 40 Brahmins.





**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> November**

## **COP 21 - Interfaith Meeting**

The interfaith meeting celebrated pilgrimages arriving at the Basilique of Saint Denise who had been walking to draw attention to climate change. Nearly 1.8 million climate pilgrims and their signatures were collected. There were speakers from many faiths.

Sister Jayanti (Director for Europe, Brahma Kumaris) gave a talk and said the power of love and peace can chase away violence and hatred. We only need to clean out our hearts so we can channel God's light and love. She spoke out a meditation commentary invoking the power of God's love to awaken hope, to awaken our conscience and to give us the strength to do what we know is right. She invited the gathering to unite to send vibration of peace to the whole human family so they can find peace in their hearts





Desert Rose, the South African sacred music group, gave a beautiful rendition of Ave Maria in their own delightful style. It was very sweet. A number of singers and musicians made their own contributions making the event light and pleasant, despite the serious nature of the topic.



After the Interfaith gathering in the Basilique, the special guests moved to a program arranged by 'Faith in Climate Justice' which was organized by four international faith-based networks working together for a common cause: ACT Now for Climate Justice (part of ACT Alliance), OurVoices, Religions for Peace and the Global Catholic Climate Movement.

Sister Jayanti met Nicolas Hulot, special envoy of the President of the French Republic for the protection of the planet, for the Paris Conference 2015 Climate Change (COP21)

Several key individuals spoke at the event: from the Philippines, former COP negotiator Yeb Sano; from Brazil, Cardinal Claudio Hummes; from South Africa (a friend of the Brahma Kumaris for some years), Archbishop of Cape Town the Rt Rev Thabo Makgoba; from the US, the Rev Kyoichi Sugino of Religions for Peace International and others.



Sister Jayanti was interviewed by Notre dame radio.

Sister Jayanti also met Christina Figueres, the Executive Secretary to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. She is the architect of the COP meetings and agreements. Christina and Sister Jayanti have known each other for quite a few years and have met often at COP events.





The pilgrimage petition was given to Christiana Figueres with Sister Jayanti taking part.

The event became lively and Christina Figueres pulled Sister Jayanti and others onto the stage and all danced together. It was joyous.





## ***New consciousness for serving the planet***

This meeting was conducted, 15:00 – 17:00, in French at a centre in Gonesse (close to the COP 21 area) out in the suburbs of Paris. It was well attended and some had little understanding of the climate change subject. Francois Belcher posed the question: why have human beings become the predators of the planet over the last few decades? He was able to give a good account of the subject and the role of the Brahma Kumaris in providing an education on our simple lifestyle that is good for the environment.

### ***Core Group***

On Saturday evening, the COP21 core group met to create and discuss the strategies for the coming 2 weeks of intense activities.



## Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November

### *Morning class*

Sister Jayanti shared why Brahma Kumaris are engaging the the climate change conference with the large group of Sunday morning class of about 60 people.

Sonja Ohlsson gave everyone an interview exercise on what Brahma Kumaris are doing at COP21 and why our input there is relevant. This was very entertaining.



The Conference of Youth (COY11) team shared their experiences.

The Conference of Youth report will be distributed separately.

### ***Introduction of Negotiations at COP21 & Climate Change, Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> 08:30***

Patricia Iturregui Byrne, formerly one of the Peru climate negotiating team, and now a member of the BK COP21 team, gave an overview of the COP meetings and the negotiating background to the Brahmin family.

Since 1999, it was clear to the scientific community that human beings were responsible for the climate change that was being detected. The international laws do not require 100% certainty of this before action is required. Any efforts to prevent the climate change would, in any case, bring significant benefits to people's health, the environment and insurance risks around the world. This is true for both developing and developed countries. The Brahma Kumaris lifestyle is very good for the environment and we have much to offer the world.

Patricia gave two examples where industry had turned waste into profit. A company in Lima gave diapers free to mothers on condition the used diapers were returned (normally they are a problem nobody wants!). The company turned the waste matter into high quality fertiliser. Another company took the rock dust from mining waste and waste plastic and created a new and stronger type of paper. This is the principle of the circular economy – re-using everything. So being environmentally friendly can be compatible with economic growth.

The Congress of USA has already said they will not pass any binding climate-change laws, but if an agreement is reached with China, it would be very difficult for Congress to over-ride it. President Obama has already reached an



agreement with China. A race will soon start for the industrialisation of renewable energy devices and whoever wins will dominate the world economy.

The French diplomacy is regarded as number 1 in the world. For this COP meeting, they have gathered all the leaders together first, rather than at the end as in previous COPs. If the leaders can reach an agreement, the ministers of each country will be obliged to co-operate to make it happen.

Patricia said that everyone has high hopes for the COP21, but the outcome is by no means clear. The current proposals from all the countries are expected to yield a 2.7 degree rise in temperature, compared with the previous commitment to achieve only a 2 degree rise.

The agreed treaty needs to be binding and including the numbers of the commitments of each country. If it is full of loop holes or has no numbers, it will not be a good agreement.

### ***Setting up the exhibition, Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> December***

Arrival at the venue with Armelle, Juan, Golo, Patricia, Valérie and Vikram



Golo and Armelle setting up the stand.



The stand ready for action.



The first customer at the stand. He took all of our leaflets, promised to come to all of our events, to become a vegetarian and to live a simpler life! We think that is what he said.

# Human Chain demonstration Climate Coalition

The planned Climate March along the Paris roads was banned due to the tragedies on November 13<sup>th</sup>. Parisians decided instead to create a static human chain starting at the Place de la Republique on November 29<sup>th</sup>, using only the pavements. They brought their shoes (old ones) to leave at the start as a symbolic rally and to make sure politicians understand their concerns and hear their demands on climate injustice.

Over 10,000 attended including our BK team consisting of Francois, Michel, Laetitia and Camille participated in the chain. On Monday, more than 140 leaders are expected to arrive, including heads of states from USA, Russia and China to talk about their commitment to fight climate change and reduce ever-rising CO2 emissions.



Website: [Eco.brahmakumaris.org](http://Eco.brahmakumaris.org)

Some text was taken from a press release by actalliance, the photo of Sister Jayanti and Ms Figueres hugging was taken from Radio Notre Dame website.

(End of report)



