

The UN Climate Change Conference COP19 — Warsaw, Poland
“Global Justice, Equity and Sustainability” side event 20th November 2013 organised by:
The International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations (ISMUN)
Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU)
Alert for Defence of Youth and the Less Privileged (GADYLP)

Global Justice, Equity and Sustainability

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Climate negotiations are grounded in UNFCCC values, such as equity and cooperation, but are weakened by narrow interests. We consider the crucial role of systemic & holistic thinking and the principles of international law, human rights and inter-generational equity in the transition to a sustainable world.

Other speakers at this event were: Budi Tjahjono, Chair of the Geneva NGO Committee on Human Rights;
Obi Goodluck, Director, GADYLP, Nigeria;
Joachim Golo Pilz, Director, Solar Research Institute, India;
Mithika Mwenda, Secretary General, The Pan African Climate Justice Alliance.
Moderator: Jan Lönn, ISMUN

I wish to bring another view to this topic; the perspective of spirituality. Spirituality isn't specific to any one religion, but rather spirituality is at the heart of all faiths. And so I speak from that perspective. In fact in the whole subject of climate change or even environment generally, what we've been seeing is that, it's not been possible for countries to step away from nationalistic boundaries and be able to come to any decisions or binding accords because always there'll be political influences, and financial considerations. We've seen these issues arise many times in recent years and especially now.

This situation raises two questions: what does the future hold, and what is it that's actually going on at the present time? The vision that I have of the future is one that there will be a world in which human beings will live in peace with love and respect for each other. Alongside that, human beings and nature—in fact all forms of life—will be able to live together in harmony. I think it's possible to make this happen; this is not an impossible dream. But yes I do understand that this transformation will require a paradigm shift. And the shift that's needed is away from the materialistic outlook we've had for some time. It's difficult to put dates to that era, but this awareness has been around for a long while. But, in recent times, we can see how our materialistic outlook has led to consumerism and, as a direct result of consumerism, we assumed there could be indefinite growth and infinite growth. Naturally that's just not a reality. It's not possible. And so we've seen the subsequent breakdown in our home life. Normally there is concern for keeping the home intact, but strangely, we have not been able to achieve this.

And even at this moment, whatever the message from scientific research, with its substantial data, has been ignored. In previous decades, we saw that when scientists spoke, they were given the reverence of the guru who was speaking in modern times. People listened to their scientific wisdom. But in the case of climate issues, people and governments have found it highly inconvenient to listen. And so science's message has largely been ignored. This may also have happened because no-one had presented any viable alternative.



If on the one hand people are told there mustn't be development, there mustn't be growth, you can't have this, you can't have that— a most unpleasant tablet to digest—and there seems to be no alternative, naturally people lose hope and become disoriented. But if we consider the alternative to materialism and consumerism as being a world of dignity, a world of true justice, a world in which there's fairness, equity and sustainability, than that option begins to be more attractive. Spiritually speaking, if the future actually holds dignity and peace for us given just a little shift of consciousness, why would we not make the move?

Coming back to the awareness of spiritual laws, by understanding the laws that govern this universe of ours, we can also alter our consciousness so that we can view each other with the awareness of one human family. I believe that all traditions would accept that this to be fact. But it's not been the reality in terms of the way we live our lives.

The message that all the traditions believe in, *love thy neighbour as thyself* also means respect them, whether it's about rights, whether it's about justice; it also means a philosophy of care and share. I've been pleased to see that here in Poland, we've got to the words of caring. When this caring becomes a reality, even our consciousness will shift. If the heart and soul enter the equation, the focus will shift from being solely on figures and black and white statistics. I see this being the way of the future, when the heart and soul enter discussions or rather, when they lead the discussions.

The reason why we are not able to love each other and love our neighbour, is an interesting one, because the key rests with loving neighbours as you would love yourself. This begs the question, "Do I love myself?" Far from being an egoistic question, this is a question of self-reflection. It's a question that allows us to journey inwards, to where we are able to see the self from the spiritual perspective and see the values that lie within the self. When I connect with those inner values, then – love, justice, fairness – each of these things become easy to access.

So spirituality says, begin inside, connect with the self, emerge these qualities and then you'll be able to express them in your relationships. And when we can do that on a one-to-one basis, the sparks of reaction travel worldwide and become global. We don't need the world to change, but we need a minority to change. Any transformation in the past has happened because a small group of committed individuals believed in something and had made it happen. And when even a minority begins to do something that works, the majority also sees the results and joins in.

I've shared this vision of hope. Definitely the world ahead of us is one of justice, of equity and sustainability. But the basis is the journey inside.

Thank you for your attention.

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