

Living in Harmony

Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative



COP19 Report of Tuesday 12th and Wednesday 13th November 2013

Networking, Learning, Sharing

The second and third day of COP19 proved to be two days of intense networking, especially for the two best networkers in our delegation - Juan Milling and Valeriane Bernard. The youth group and interfaith group are very active, they share very strong hopes for the future. Our press release got ready and there were some very interesting interviews.

The National Stadium and the Stand

The venue of the COP19 conference is the huge National Stadium and all delegates are doing their level best to find their way in the conference which is spread over many levels, from level -4 to level 2.



Our stand at the COP19 conference has been the most beautiful experience at the COP so far. Many people approach our stand just to pick up the positive personal card for the day. It is great to see how many are moved by the “10 ways to Change the World” cards and to see how a short positive message can help coping with the pressure and all the negative news in such a busy conference setting.



Youth Group

YOUNGO is the youth constituency for the United Nations Conference on Climate Change; in other words, it is a group of young adults that gather and work together to create a voice for youth in the climate negotiations.



The youth begin their mornings **very early** at 8.00 am every day so Juan takes off before everyone else. In Wednesday's meeting they discussed the relevance of sending one YOUNGO representative to an important event held by the World Bank, but no consensus was reached because of the amount of different opinions by the end of the session. It was therefore decided that there wouldn't be any YOUNGO representative for this event.

Mini-side events give young people access to a stage, a microphone and a captive audience right in the middle of the exhibition area. Young people use the mini-side events to showcase a video they produced, present a report they have written or tell the world about an issue close to their hearts. The mini-side events are extremely popular, with each of the four, 20-minute slots filled on a daily basis.

Juan from Canada and Nonie from Peru participated in a planning meeting for the next youth climate change conference in **Peru 2014**. Powershift planning team debrief meeting took place near the University of Warsaw and went on very late until 10:30 pm. This was an important meeting as the BK will now be part of the next year's planning team.

The different faith-based NGOs organise themselves

Back in April 2013, the interfaith coordination started with a meeting in Oslo, which Valeriane Bernard participated in. The main groups at the meeting there were people from Africa (from the "We have faith" campaign for Climate Justice from Durban, South Africa) and the Norwegian Church alliance.

Faith based delegates joined a meeting to share expectations and priorities for the COP19 and an overall approach to address climate change. There will be two such coordination meetings this week and a further two next week, as well as the faith-based side events throughout the week. The Polish Ecumenical Council (PEC) has been the host here in Poland.



Archbishop Seraphim Kykkotis shared his discussions with the EU diplomatic delegation on their view of the Paris 2015 agreement (a new climate change agreement). It was agreed that one of the most important roles for faith delegates is to speak to diplomats about their understanding of the policy issues, the ethical aspects of the policy approaches, and their understanding of 'equity' as it applies to the Paris agreement.

Faith leaders can provide spiritual support to negotiators and others working towards a climate agreement. The work is stressful and upsetting, and spiritual support can help in giving people courage to do difficult work.

Interfaith cooperation is important to show the global spirit of cooperation necessary for a legally binding agreement.

Concert Preparation

One of the events we thought of arranging was an interfaith concert with South African interfaith musicians combined with some Polish artists. This preparation has involved interesting meetings with the musicians and the different faith groups at various venues around the city together with Halina Paradela.

Lutheran Youth meeting inviting interfaith youth.

There were about 30 people this very cold evening and Valeriane and Nonie from the Brahma Kumaris were there. The moderators presented the fasting campaign that started in solidarity with the victims of the cyclone in Philippines and invited everyone to join it. Everyone shared their understanding of the role of peace and justice in the negotiations and their work of advocacy.



Interviews

Katarzyna Kujac from www.mediaonline.pl and a **Polish Eco Portal** came to the BK centre in Smolna early in this cold and grey morning to do interviews. She first interviewed Golo Pilz. Her questions were very clear. What are your expectations of the COP19? Golo said that every year they claim that the next COP they would fix the problem and find a solution, and in every COP conference the faith in the process is reduced. It is important not to get stuck in details but to see the big picture. We would like to give a message of hope and faith, to encourage both a personal and a collective vision of a cleaner world. Start with changing your own thoughts, and then the outer change will come. We should walk the talk; as an individual I can make a change in my diet, travel habits etc. and



become an example for others. This is where a real change can happen. If we only look at technical, economical or strategic aspects and don't take the self into consideration, it will be difficult.

Katarzyna asks: In Poland we don't believe in climate change, how to then convince the energy industry?
Golo: A paradigm shift is going on, we have to shift to clean technology at some point. In a closed system, you can't grow in a in an unlimited way. We are in a situation where we can't grow without guidance. We have to look at new economical models, new climate-friendly architecture etc. Technology is there, but not the will. New technology is not enough, we need a change of lifestyle as well.

We all need a common vision of a new beautiful future, a society based on common sense and equality. A world where personal belongings don't have the same importance as they have now. This materialistic approach towards life and the planet does not have a future. In our future there will be a lifestyle of clean technology, clean consciousness and clean heart. Renewable energy will definitely play its role in the future.

An interesting thought came up: Distance to that which is original makes you vulnerable.

Next person to interview was Valeriane Bernard. She was asked about the role of women in sustainability. Valeriane shared about the importance of women in the BK, and the everyday hero role they play in feeding, educating and sustaining others. Yogic agriculture was presented to the interviewer as a natural continuation of that conversation.

Palace of Culture and Science

The City of Warsaw had set up an exhibition for businesses and alternative technologies in the impressive Palace of Culture and Science in the middle of Warsaw. The Polish and international BK team visited this exhibition to learn more.



In the evening, Sister Jayanti and Golo Pilz and others had **dinner** with Markus from the German delegation. He was instrumental in establishing the now long-term co-operation between the German ministry GIZ and World Renewal Spiritual Trust to support the solar energy project in Madhuban.



Another side

event that Juan participated in was:

Building resilience and reducing risk in a changing climate. Extreme weather events must be responded to with actions to strengthen resilience and institutions for prevention. There is a need for better understanding of climate and disaster risk in local, national and regional capacity.

Workshop on Gender and Climate Change

It is crucial that women be trained to participate at UNFCCC conferences. These are statistics to be aware of: 23% of all delegates in COP 18 were women; up to now, 43% of all delegations in the UNFCCC conferences comprised only male representatives. The panelists pledged to create new mechanisms and a new framework to increase the role of women in environmental issues.

Read more at www.environment.brahmakumaris.org