

Living in Harmony

Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative



COP19 Report of Tuesday 19th November 2013

Every morning, the international group makes a 30 minutes long power walk through the old town of Warsaw to the Smolna meditation center. There they have their daily briefing sessions on the activities of the day. Tuesday will be a busy day...



Interview by a Venezuelan TV

Juan Milling was interviewed in Spanish by Telesur, a Venezuelan TV. They asked:

Q. What is your impression so far after two days at the COP?

A. The evidence is clear that the problem of climate change is getting bigger and bigger. What has happened in the Philippines is more evidence that the climate is changing drastically, I think it is time to take personal responsibility and begin to start looking for individual change in order to create real change and to reflect on new ways of solving this big issue of climate change.

For the five-minute clip with the interview, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fay1zpoiSAY>.

Meeting Ms. Christiana Figueres

A private meeting was arranged between Sister Jayanti and Ms. Christiana Figueres, Secretary general of the UNFCCC, together with Sonja Ohlsson. They had a very deep conversation about the whole situation with people, governments, climate. It was a very personal meeting about hope, love and inspirations on how to bring more heart and soul into the negotiation process. At the end, they had a meditation together.

Women's Day at COP19

Directly after the meeting with Ms. Figueres, the Gender Day started. Sister Jayanti together with the BKs were sitting in the audience in powerful meditation supporting the women on stage with peaceful vibrations. Very powerful individuals were there, among others the former Presidents of Finland and Ireland, the former PM of New Zealand who now heads up UNDP (the UN Development Programme), the female Deputy Executive Director of UN Women in India etc. There was also an amazing woman singer, Elizabeth Njoroge. Many people from Media were around. The female Mayor of Warsaw was absent and so Mary Robinson did something interesting. She said that since we have a chair vacant and we have young people in the audience, perhaps we could have a young woman who is brave enough to come and occupy this chair share her thoughts? And indeed, a young woman jumped up on the stage very quickly. She was Australian and very articulate, and of course happy and excited to have the opportunity.



Christiana Figueres was sitting on the stage, asking everyone to share their dream **(for a more detailed report on their beautiful answers, please see below)**. In her enthusiastic speech, Christiana Figueres asked everyone to listen to their heart and soul, and to use silence to reach both the power to act and the dreams from within. At the end, she asked people to stand for a minute in silence, while listening to a song.

During the time for comments and questions, Sister Jayanti spoke about the dignity of every

human being, and how such change can happen very quickly with just a switch of consciousness from the material to spiritual, thus contributing to the creation of a better world. Other women also spoke, making very important points.

Opening of the High-Level Segment of COP19

The high-level segment was the General Assembly of the ministers who had just arrived for COP19. Many of the BKs in the Stadium watched the opening of the high-level segment. Francois Becher and Marek Frydrych had special tickets to come into the main hall. It was opened by a beautiful piece of art where a woman drew the history of evolution in sand accompanied by music and light effects. The opening can be viewed in the main media news all over the world. Following are some points from the opening:



- All members in the **UN family** must reach an agreement.
- Don't do it for the South, don't do it for the person next to you, do it for the children.
- The COP19 is held at the time of an incoming awakening call from the scientists and from the victims of the typhoon in the Philippines. We have the strongest case for action ever in history.

Meeting the Indian Ambassador



After lunch, Sister Jayanti, Aneta, and Asha (Joanna) went to meet the Indian Ambassador, Ms Monika Kapil. She received them very warmly. She had heard about the activities of the Brahma Kumaris in London, when she was the Director of the Nehru Centre there, but never had an opportunity to actually meet. Ms Kapil has had good connection with the Polish BKs. There was time for meditation together. Ms Kapil invited the BKs to the Press Conference that the Minister of Environment of India was holding the next day.

Faith Actors Working towards Climate Justice

International conference on climate change, "Faith actors working towards climate justice" took place in Warsaw on the 18th and 19th of November 2013, co-organized by CIDSE (Coopération

Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité), Caritas Poland and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński's University in Warsaw.



A number of panel discussions and workshops were held at that occasion; their participants represented Catholic as well as other faith-based organizations, NGOs and politicians. The speakers covered issues related to climate change from various perspectives, such as science, theology and international solidarity. They were talking about the need to change to a fairer, more peaceful and just world. Six representatives of Brahma Kumaris were present during the two-day event: Asha Rekawek, Dorota Wasilczyk, Zbigniew Lisiewicz, and Aneta Loj from the Polish group, and from the international group, Valeriane Bernard and Francois Becher.



The high level panel discussion was joined, among others, by Connie Hedegaard, European Commissioner for Climate Action; Paul Wheelhouse, Scottish Minister for Environment and Climate Change; Mgr Theotonius Gomes, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Dhaka (Bangladesh). They all were sharing their opinions and ideas on the topic: “From the moral imperative to act towards adequate policies: the way forward”. Throughout the whole seminar, two voices could be heard: from the scientific-business perspective and from the care, compassion and ethics side.

It was said that we are in a crisis from which we are not able to get out by any standard ways. The current time requires cooperation, because the needs have outgrown the capacity of an individual. Questions about the spiritual condition of human beings were asked. The speakers talked about the need to turn our attention to virtues; it was said that we live as if we were the last generation.

Connie Hedegaard, European Commissioner for Climate Action, said that religious communities shall reinstall the moral imperative. The problem is that the long-term needs are disregarded by the short-term view of the politicians. She highlighted the necessity of a positive narrative, to show people what they can do; to propose solutions to them. The panelists and participants were reflecting on what should be done for the faith organizations to have a greater impact on politicians and businessmen when deciding on the green house gas emission reduction. An idea came up to create a common platform and get ready with the positioning and arguments for the Conference in Peru, 2014. BK participants shared the BK position and practical examples of actions undertaken to bring back harmony into nature.



All participants were given green BK blessings cards and were invited for a minute of silent reflection.

Public Program Consciousness and Climate Change



How to connect the power of a pure mind with the present scenario of climate change and extreme weather events? This was the content of the presentation made by Golo Pilz in Tuesday's evening program in the Meditation Gallery, the BK centre in Smolna. The audience also heard the practical hands-on experience of how to combine the power of meditation with the very technical and financial matters of building a Solar Energy Power Plant in the middle of Rajasthan desert. Brahma Kumaris investment in solar energy has

proved to be a great example for other communities on how to combine spiritual efforts with the efforts to build a world of harmony.

Interfaith Coordination Meeting Continues



Valeriane shared some comments from the group:

We are the only ones who can talk about moral imperative and this is very necessary.

Interfaith has to be looking at Climate Change with good will for the whole humanity.

Detailed report: Impressions and Experiences of Julia Grindon-Welch, BK Representative in the UN Headquarters in New York, from the Gender Day at COP19

A new initiative at COP - a day of Gender!

From the meeting with Christiana Figueres, Executive Director of UNFCCC, some of the BK delegation, along with Sister Jayanti, went to the first Gender Meeting of the Day hosted by Christiana Figueres, called "Women for Action on Climate Change: Vision 50/50" Upon entering the room, all participants were handed a small green bow brooch to pin to our lapels in solidarity of the day.



The setting was informal, low chairs, and Christiana Figueres, dressed in gleaming white, entered with her fellow panelists. These powerful women included; Bianca Jagger, Chair of Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation, Elizabeth Njoroge, Director of the Art of Music Foundation (Kenya), Laxmi Puri, Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, Mary Robinson, Former President of Ireland, Helen Clark, Former President of New Zealand (now heading up UNEP), Tarja Halonen, Former President of Finland.

Christiana Figueres opened by inviting everyone to share from their heart and speak from their soul so that together, men and women, can create the future we want for our children. She encouraged everyone to remember to keep their feet on the ground but their eyes on the stars.

Following are some of the dreams that were shared:

Bianca Jagger: Standing at the edge of climate change, women are there and needed. It is very important young women are given the opportunities to lead. If we empower women farmers, the world would be fed.



Laxmi Puri: The heart and soul comes from the lived experience of women, we want to change the lived reality of all women so that they have an equal voice in the household, at country, regional and global levels. Our dream is to reach a goal where women are contributing to, and benefiting from, climate change action and sustainability. Link the dreams and actions in what we do.

Helen Clark: My dream is where gender equality is accepted - that this is the way it works, so we don't even need to talk about it. There was a paradigm change last year of equal participation which is progress.

Mary Robinson: We are not just dreaming in the abstract, if we don't imagine it then we won't get the future of what we want. We need to transform this world, where we are on a course of catastrophe. We need to dream and implement the future we want for our grandchildren.

Tarja Halonen: It is difficult to know what is a dream and what is a dream that can be implemented. Our dreams here in Warsaw are the dreams of women on this planet: A world without war, without violence between nations and in nations, in families or between genders. Women's rights are human rights. It is important to have dreams because without dreams you don't have a future. Also something which is not yet on our agenda can be in our dream, and then we can make the dream possible.

A song which was especially written and composed for this event was then sung by Elizabeth Njoroge - it was a song of both men and women walking together, which included the following words "We have a dream of hopes that turn the page that marks a golden age - a greener planet earth."

The audience were then asked to share their dreams, Sister Jayanti contributed: I dream that every individual has their own inner dignity and is able to stand with their head held high. Change is possible. Change from physical to spiritual can happen in a second. This is a change in consciousness that will bring equality, equality in opportunity, music, and joy, and then we will have the future we want that we are all dreaming of.

After some others shared, Christiana Figueres then asked everyone to have a moment of silence together to connect to their dreams. The event ended with Elizabeth Njoroge leading the audience in song.

This was a good way to start the day where other events focused more on the nitty gritty of bringing some of these dreams into action, including a couple of other events attended by our

delegation: "Women's Carbon Standard: Supporting Women's Empowerment through Climate Mitigation Projects" and then later in the day "Gender at work: points and perspectives towards gender-responsive and transformative climate policy" - this was a de-briefing of the gender workshop held earlier to assess progress and identify gaps that need to be addressed to achieve gender equality. One of the main points brought out was that although it was good that gender equality agreements are now specifically included in the documents, up until now, they have come after main agreements have been drafted. Now it is important that they are in the main agreements from conception (and therefore included in the thinking) of the documents, not as 150 add-ons, or after thoughts.

Read more at www.environment.brahmakumaris.org