

Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative



Climate Change Conference COP22 in Marrakech, Morocco Report – Summit of Conscience and COP preparations

The Climate Change conference 2016 began most auspiciously under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco with a program on climate change and conscience in the old town of Fez.

Fez Summit of Conscience

On Thursday, 3rd November the Fez Climate Summit of Conscience brought together renowned leaders from various faiths and offered a platform for high-level intercultural and interreligious dialogue on climate issues. Brahma Kumaris was well represented with Sister Jayanti and Romina Melwani (UK), Laura Agroum (Morocco), Valérie Bernard (Switzerland) and Juan Milling (Canada). Read all interesting news and pictures at the end of this report.



Delegation arrives

The Conference of Parties (COP) is the eighth climate conference that Brahma Kumaris is actively participating. The group is very fortunate as we have been offered two beautiful villas very close to the COP venue. We can literally see the flags from our windows.

Laura Agroum and Romina Melwani our hosts in Morocco have put up a lot of efforts to make our stay a success. BKs of UK and France came for help; BK's Kusum and Pushpa from London are managing the kitchen, Guy, Davindree and Dalila are helping in various tasks.

The **youth group** always arrives first– this year the group included Juan Milling (Canada), Romina (UK) and Myrtha (Holland). They are participating in the Conference of Youth COY12 (4 -6 November) together with 5 young BK friends from Casablanca. The COY brings together passionate young global citizens from around the world to address climate change and promote sustainable lifestyles. A report from COY will be sent separately.



The rest of the COP group were welcomed by pleasant and warm winter weather here in Marrakesh on their arrival over the weekend. This included Sonja Ohlsson (Denmark) Vikram Dookna (Mauritius) and Golo Pilz (India / Germany) who came via Casablanca.

Casablanca

After the Fez Climate Summit, Sister Jayanti and Laura went to Casablanca for a program "A Sacred Relationship with Nature". The event was attended by a group of Sindhis and local contacts. Sister Jayanti

and Professor Farid of Comparative Studies and Islam addressed the audience. Our old friends Desert Rose (Lynne and Yusuf from South Africa) played beautiful music and captivated everyone. Sister Jayanti shared that even today, when the state of the world is in degradation, people still find peace when they go out in nature. Our experiences in nature awakens a sacred feeling in us. When we see the beauty in nature, it reminds us that it is God's sacred creation



Picture: Morning get together



Getting ready

After a year of intense communication at a distance, it is most important for all of us to meet personally before the conference; to introduce and update everybody on the various programs and activities. So, on Sunday evening the whole of the COY group and the COP group had a get-together, followed by a lovely dinner. We used the time to share our thoughts and hopes for the up-coming COP.

Some hopes for COP22:

- Peace and spirituality will have a break through, so it will support decision-makers to take good decisions.
- That youth are part of a generation of change that ignites hope in people's heart and love in people's mind.
- Harness the creative power in the COP team and create a new vision of the future with multimedia, so people can become excited about the future, rather than depressed.
- That the conference delegates understand that spirituality is the way forward for a better world.

Fez Summit of Conscience, Morocco
Under the high patronage of his Majesty King Mohammed VI
2nd and 3rd of November 2016

On 2nd November, at 9 pm, in the ancient and beautiful city of Fez, the Marriott hotel, opened its doors for the Summit of Conscience.



Mr Nizar Baraka, president of the economic, social and environment council of Morocco and president of the science committee of the COP22 was our host for the summit. He opened the conference with welcoming words and said that Fez was the perfect place for this conference since it is the place in Morocco where the cultural and spiritual heritage are the most vivid and multiple. He also spoke about the need to foster a change of conscience to be able to make a difference in the Climate Change crisis.

And Mr Abderrafia Zoutiten, president of the Spirit of Fez foundation enlightened the participants about the multi-cultural and historical importance of Fez in Morocco. He shared that it was a woman who opened the first religious university in this city.

Then Mr Rupert Joy, ambassador, head of Delegation of the European Union to Morocco, said how they were happy this conference on conscience was taking place and how it was in direct connection with the Sustainable Development Goals and the efforts of the UNFCCC.

Then Mr Nicolas Hulot spoke on the background of the first summit of conscience in Paris in July 2015, in the presidential Palace of Paris, before the COP21. How he initiated the summit in order to bring awareness in decision makers and the French population about the need to take the right decisions to protect our planet and all the vulnerable populations and ecosystems that are endangered by the climate change crisis. He spoke brilliantly about the need for a change in human awareness.

The evening ended with a wonderful concert including all the different cultures in one band. Concert: Polyphony of consciences



On the 3rd of November 2016

Mr Sergio Bergman, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Argentina, spoke and moved everyone during the inauguration ceremony: "We are facing here in Fez an amazing challenge: a challenge of being and not doing, our challenge is not technical but ethical, ... are we really human?... Each one of us has to recognize the expression of the divine in all human beings. We have to act so that economics does not drive politics anymore, it is conscience that should drive politics. Nature is a gift we need to preserve, care for, respect and revere.

We should not mistake the symptom with the sickness... the problem is not technical but it is the soul of humanity we should heal. Each one of us is called upon to be a server of peace... there is no peace outside if there is no peace inside. Revolution for all is the revolution of the spirits and it is not conditioned by any religion..."

Mr Anthony Lecren, Minister of Customary Affairs, Ecology and Sustainable Development of New Caledonia, represented all the Small Island states of Oceania. His testimony was very touching since most of the states he represented are below 3 meters of height above sea level, they are existentially endangered by climate change.

A Human Being does not exist by himself, he exists on the basis of his relationships and his capacity to develop relationships. In our Islands, we look at life (quality of life and survival) before profit. This is philosophy but don't we all share it?



Maybe tomorrow will be too late for us, but the little people that we are have knowledge, richness, traditions... so please pay attention to them. He then said, Mr Baraka I want to make you our messenger and he handed out to him a written message from his people.

In a "Leaders of Consciences" panel called "I do my share"

Ahmed Abbadi, the Secretary-General of the Rabita Mohammadia of Ulama's,

We must free ourselves of a relationship that has become abstract, disconnected from nature. It is urgent to release us from this abstraction and reconnect with our mother - Earth. The awakening of consciences will happen through this metamorphosis.

Mr Abdelhai Amor, from the council of Ulama of Fez

Nature is the creation of God and, as such, we need to recreate our relationship with the environment. At the moment, Human Beings are users of the environment but the condition we are under is that we need to keep it alive, but the feeling of ownership has led to the destruction of the environment, to climate change and epidemics... so we need to correct this perception and deficiency and look at things as if nature needs to be deserved so we can preserve the environment... handling nature and environment... lead us to its destruction because it has been destabilised. Applying the divine laws, we create the reforming vision"

Mr Abdelmajid Tribak, expert, Islamic Organisation for Education, Science and Culture:

Can religion contribute? Who can give a solution? The Human Being is an agent who received education... man creating havoc is still governed by laws. We need to upgrade our awareness. Extremism and intolerance displayed by some groups and the irrational appropriation of nature have unbalanced our system. We also need to further technology to meet our needs.

*Sister Jayanti, main UN representative in Geneva and director of Brahma Kumaris for Europe and Middle east:
Thanks for organizing this summit and for putting the things of the heart here first and it is very auspicious to be in the capital cultural of Morocco.*

Trust is the foundation of spirituality. At the heart of all traditions lie 3 things:

- *respect for the sacred and the Divine,*
- *deep values,*
- *respect for what life is about.*

And what we Human Beings should do; we do under these core understandings.

What has happened during the last 100 years is that we have listen more to economics, media and politics, but not to the voice of conscience: it has therefore become numb. The voice of conscience has stopped. If you don't listen to a friend, as a good friend, he won't talk to you anymore... the same happened with our conscience, and we didn't listen because we follow the way others are going.

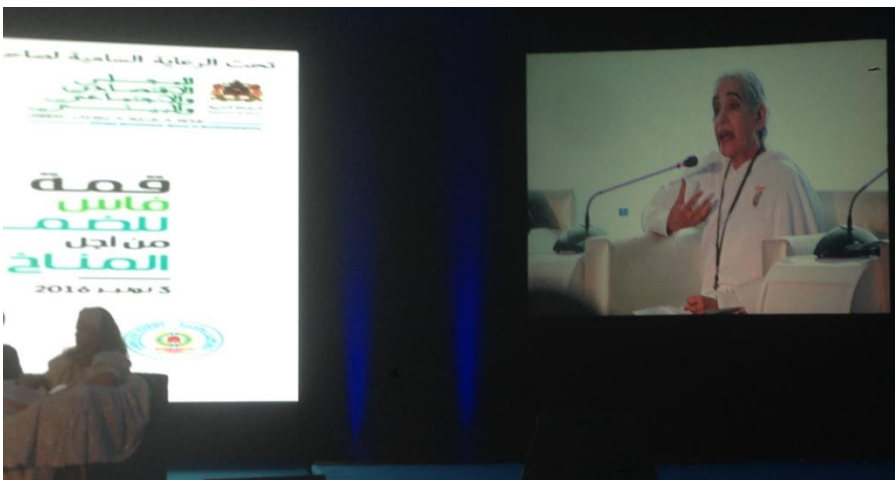
But people with awakened conscience have come here in Fez, and it is minority...But in the past it always is a minority that has brought change in the world.

In Paris in July, now in Fez, it is a start, where a small group of people say we need to listen to our conscience... and what happens as a result? We move away from a narrow perspective and move towards seeing the whole humanity as our family and the planet as our home....

The choice is a question of the survival of the world so it is such an important time when we meet. Everything starts with human heart and mind; when we begin to treat each other with respect.

In silence, I can connect with the true peace that lies within the being and then, when I listen to this, I start having self-esteem. It is a crisis of values and esteem the world is facing today.

Respect starts when we go inside, see and value the qualities inside and, in respecting the self, respect extends to others, all forms of life and the planet we share. So, I believe we need to listen to the inner being,



Mr Somboom Chungprampree, Director Buddhist Spiritual Education, Thailand

Sisters and brothers, and I am addressing this audience in this way because out of 26 seats in the front row, there are only 5 women. We need to look at indicators. In human life, we are connected in many varieties of ways: by gender, rich and poor, intergeneration, and also the balancing of nature and the spiritual world. We need to keep connecting and balancing between those who are doing something good. Similarly, at the level of the UN, they are negotiating how to change, how we can work on Climate Change but not just through negotiation. How can we connect and get going all together? How can we help each other to connect and move on?

It is about spiritual friendship so we can carry on together and know how we can respect and question the others in order to move forward. It would be good if we could seat in the garden and discuss in a circle to help be more open and connecting each other.

Mrs Susana Andrade, afro-umbandist Priestess, member of parliament, Uruguay

We all believe in something that is invisible, the afro umbandists are animists whose beliefs go way back, from before Christianity. We believe in the orillas, spirits of nature. This religion has come from the people who came with slavery, they have demonised our religion but we don't even have a devil ourselves. Religions have to act and also have to plea to show the example of our spirituality.



Family photo of the participants to the summit

At the end of the summit a set of recommendations and an appeal to the COP 22 were made (refer: <https://www.opinion-internationale.com>, in French). A translation is given below.

Appeal to COP 22 in Marrakech, Chair and Parties, to:

- Make the COP 22, the starting point of a new era in which proactive climate awareness is recognized as a key factor in our relationship with the Earth to break:
 - Excessive consumption habits and destruction of resources;
 - Negative wait-and-see attitudes and behaviours that do not contribute to the preservation of our planet, humanity and all other species;
 - All forms of selfishness, waste and indifference before it's too late.
- Appeal to beliefs, spirituality and the values of responsibility and sustainability issues of our common spiritual heritage in the development and implementation of policies and measures to be adopted during the COP 22;
- Involving representatives of religious and cultural institutions and actors in connection with the rights, ecology and education, in order to contribute to the implementation of the decisions and programs relating to mitigation and adaptation climate change;
- Integrate human development and sustainable development in national contributions and commitments of the parties to ensure decent living conditions for people in their own living spaces particularly through infrastructure, health, education, food security and the fight against climate migration;
- Ensure the integrity of the production of climate science and ensure, in the context of climate equity, to make up the deficit in data and scientific knowledge on the effects of climate imbalances in poor countries and island states threatened with extinction including land areas and the most vulnerable marine ecosystems;
- Facilitate the access of developing countries to the results of research, development and climate innovation through technology transfer and capacity building;
- Work to organize annually as part of the activities of each COP, a Conference of Consciences for Climate (COC) with the participation of religious, spiritual, philosophical and cultural leaders in the world to guide us towards a better future for our planet and all the species that inhabit it.

Made in Fez, 3rd November 2016