

Living in Harmony

Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative



Report from Climate Change Conference COP20 in Lima

Wednesday 10th Dec. - Full day at COP for BK's

The International day of Human Rights stated at COP20 with some morning events-meetings. In the afternoon our main programs at COP took place, a press conference and a side event called "Ethics at the Heart of Climate Change".

Interfaith initiatives



Brief descriptions of several interfaith initiatives were discussed in this meeting. "Fast For The Climate", an initiative that includes a wide diversity of faith and secular participants, continues to grow. "Fasting on the first of the month" continues, with a growing number of participants and groups worldwide. Also, on each day, between now and COP 21, at least one person will fast, with people fasting from different regions of the world at different times of the year.

Exploring collaboration with OurVoices.

This international, multi-faith initiative consists of peaceful, public, spiritual expressions of support for a strong climate agreement (such as the interfaith service prior to the Climate March and the recent "#LightForLima" vigils on 7th December which took place in 15 countries) combined with digital/social media outreach. We are excited to find ways to collaborate with "OurVoices".

Peace and Justice Pilgrimage in Relation to COP 21.

This campaign is self-organizing – and is already active through groups in Europe, Africa, and elsewhere. In some cases, the pilgrimage will be an actual pilgrimage to Paris, and elsewhere there will be local adaptations.

Press conference – “Ethics at the Heart of Climate Change”

Valériane Bernard of Brahma Kumaris led the press conference. They treated aspects of ethics as a relevant issue on Climate Change. Guillermo Kerber talked of Climate Change as an important issue in human rights because of the severe negative influence it has on rights to food, water and mobilization which is affecting communities in Latin-America, Africa and Asia.



Picture (right to left): Guillermo Kerber, president of the World Council of Churches; Sister Gayatri, Golo, and Juan Vasquez for the Brahma Kumaris.

Golo presented the BK initiative India One. *“Any fundamental change in this world has to be initiated by an elevated consciousness and awareness. Any transformation has to come first from us, from the inside. We must become an example of the change we want to see in the world,”* Golo said.

“Dignity is relevant to the whole environment. There is a connection between human beings and the environment. We in the Brahma Kumaris work to give hope to our world, in renewable initiatives (communities with low carbon footprint); awakening beings disconnected from their environment, because Climate Change has a high impact on us. It is necessary to re-establish that connection... Violation of human rights is a violation of peace”, Gayatri said. Finally Juan shared with the audience some environmental examples to inspire others to do something for the planet.

To watch the entire press conference, click the following link: <http://unfccc6.meta-fusion.com/cop20/events/2014-12-10-14-00-brahma-kumaris-world-spiritual-university-ethics-at-the-heart-of-climate-change>

After the Press conference, Golo was interviewed by the journalist Tomas d’Ornellas Radziwill from “spectrummedia”. He asked questions about Solar Energy and it’s future in Peru.

Side event – “Ethics at the heart of Climate Change”



After the press conference, this side event was presided by Dr Curtis Doebber. He started by a short introduction saying: *“human rights are reflections of human values. Now, it is possible to observe how ethics play a role in human rights, and the discussions and the quality of the decisions on this topic”*.

Picture (left to right): John Crowley, Chief of the section research, policy and foresight at Unesco; Dr Renate Christ, secretary of the IPCC; Stuart Scott, Founder of the United Planet Faith and Science Initiative; Golo Pilz, Director Solar Research Institute Brahma Kumaris; Sister Gayatri Naraine, representative of Brahma Kumaris at the UN in New York; Dr Curtis Doebber, Professor of Law at Webster University in Geneva.

Dr Renate Christ presented the state of art of the impact of Climate Change. Scientific information of the data collected and some mathematical modeling showed the negative effects of human activities with the planet. *“This influence has been perverse, severe, irreversible and is non sustainable for the future. Therefore, ethics have an important impact in these discussions, because it is necessary to take immediate action. Also, it is an important topic for decision makers. If we continue with the actual trend, we predict that in ten years there will be an increase of 2.2° of global temperature.*

Impacts of Climate Change are: food and water shortages, increased displacement of people, growth in poverty, coastal flooding, increases in the level of the sea, extreme temperatures, extreme storms, hurricanes, etc”.

Then, Stuart Scott described a state of the art understanding of the Climate Change problem due human considerations: money, economy. He talked about a new consideration of “Ecological Economy” to make a sustainable system.

Golo Pilz considered ethics as a reason for changes in awareness and consciousness. As a meditator of the Brahma Kumaris, he inspired people to infuse ethics and values in their lifestyles. *“We also promote a vegetarian lifestyle, which has many benefits. One is better climate security. Understanding that any fundamental change in this world has to be initiated by an elevated consciousness and awareness. Any transformation has to come first from ourselves, from inside. We must become an example of the change we want to see in the world”*.

Also, he introduced to the audience the "India One" solar energy project. Since the mid 90's the Brahma Kumaris became one of the key developers and promoters in solar institutional cooking systems and solar photovoltaic power stations in India.

Sister Gayatri talked of ethics as part of our belief systems. Also, that *"Ethics is nourished by bhavna, that is a hindi word meaning pure feelings from the heart. So, the heart of hope is a collective human experience. There is a connection between the heart and the mind. However, to generate actions, courage is necessary. Less is more: we don't need as much."*

To help our planet we can live naturally, in a lotus life style. We can awaken new habits from the heart, for a whole system. We can look at the whole system, in a holistic way. We human beings are linked to other human beings and to the environment. Habits are connected with life in a cyclical way. Our hearts can bring all sectors together".

John Crowley of Unesco introduced the topic under three approaches: Climate Change as an ethical issue, why Climate Change is a challenging topic? And what does Unesco do about it?

Panel - "Men and Women Taking Action on Gender Equality and Climate Change; How Far Have we Come?" Gender day at COP20.

The President of COP, the Peruvian President, opened this High Level event by saying that *"women are in charge of the most important things in the family and have many answers to adaptation. It is time to recognize women's leadership"*.

Mary Robinson - Special Envoy on Climate Change. She spoke, highlighting facts from the 3rd Annual Gender Day at COP. The slogan that emerged from Beijing was "Women's Rights are Human Rights". She finished her statement by quoting from a powerful woman Wangari Maatha: *"In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now."*



Susan McDade, UNDP (United Nations Development Program) Deputy Assistant Administrator underlined the idea that *"we need a good database on the issues that*

face women in climate change. UNEP rational is if you can't see it, it doesn't exist and if you can't count it, it doesn't exist!"

Other panelist to this event were Laxmi Puri, Deputy Executive Secretary of UN WOMEN; H.E. Ms. Maria del Carmen Omonte Durand, Minister of Women and Vulnerable Populations, Peru; and Klever Descarpontriez, College of the Atlantic/Earth UNFCCC constituency of youth NGO's.

To know more details, please read **Annex 1**.

Youth meeting

The participation of Brahma Kumaris youth in COP20 was appreciated for the family. Then, a meeting took place at the center for a heart to heart conversation: each one shared their experiences and how meditation and spirituality has changed their life.



Thursday 11th Dec.

Meeting with friends at the hearth of the confluence Age

This day the Brahma Kumaris invited to a breakfast to friends of BK family.

Afterwards, Sister Gayatri shared some spiritual points.



Round table – Climate Change and the Civilization Paradigm. Universidad Ricardo Palma.

Over two days, the University convened a panel of activists, experts and academics to discuss “Roads to Sustainability and Climate Change”. Environmental Science Dimension; Economic Dimension; Social Policy Dimension; Educational Dimension; Architectural Dimension.” For the “Ethics and Cultural Dimension:” Brahma Kumaris UN Representative, Dr Tamasin Ramsay (Environmental Anthropologist and NGO Representative to the United Nations) spoke.

The paradigm of human attitudes is clearly becoming a key topic in climate change discussions, more than the technical side of things, to which discussions have been limited to in the past.



Tamasin spoke about the spiritual dimension as the foundation of culture and ethics. *“The deepest cause of the problem we call ‘climate change’ is a disconnect between human beings, and the living and non-living worlds they inhabit, starting with the ecosystem of their own body. Since the industrial revolution, people have come to believe that things in their raw and*

unprocessed form have little value. Our tendency today is to value things once they have been altered, manufactured, manipulated, processed, packaged and finished off with a price tag. This is also the case with our own bodies. We rarely leave them untainted, but we alter them, color them, adjust and adapt them. We do the same with the physical world. We process it, mine it, dig, extract, fracking and build without due consideration”.

For more information, please read **Annex 2.**

Meeting with Ministers.

Sister Gayatri and Julia from New York and others of the BK delegation had a one hour meeting with the foreign minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Winston Dookeran. The focus of the conversation was self-transformation and the importance of youth came up.

After the meeting, while walking in the open space of the COP venue, a TV Peru Journalist stopped Sister Gayatri. During the interview she asked Sister Gayatri about her opinion of what is going on at COP20 in Lima and a short message for Lima citizens.

Both Sister Gayatri and Golo met with Edna Molawa, Ministry of Environment of South Africa. They conveyed greetings from the Brahma Kumaris.



While drinking a coffee, under the Olive trees in the garden of COP venue, Golo met the German Environment Minister Mrs. Barbara Hendricks. He gave the India One brochure, explained about the project and thanked the support of BMUB (German acronym of the Ministry of the Environment). He also advised of the good progress of India One and expressed his hopes she may come for inauguration at the end of 2015.

BK Program – “Creating the future we want” – Congress of Peru

It was a sunny day and fresh evening. The program was opened by an artistic performance.

Juan Vasquez, BK youth representative was the moderator of the event.

The congressman and panelist Modesto Julca opened the conference, welcoming the participants and drawing their



attention to *“the essence of our society lies on the relationship we have with nature and the environment”*.

Afterwards, Juan said *“Creating the future we want starts with our thoughts and our power to meditate”*. Juan asked the panelist to share their thoughts of how to create the future we want.



Panelists were: François Becher, Moira Lowe, Sister Gayatri from Brahma Kumaris. Modesto Julca First Vice-President of the Congress; Freddy Ehlers, Minister of "buen vivir" (Good Living or Sumak Kawsay in quechua) of Ecuador; Juan Vasquez and Nonie Reaño of Brahma Kumaris, Peru.

Freddy started saying that the world has changed drastically and that the solution to our problems is in nature. But he felt that there is an awakening "*We are the ones that have to change*". He concluded with the following story: "*Once Gandhi was approached by a mother and she asked him to tell her son to stop eating sugar because he was very sick (the boy admired Gandhi so he would obey him). But Gandhi asked the mother to return in a month. After a month she and her son returned and Gandhi asked the boy to stop eating sugar so the boy did it. But the mother was curious to know why Gandhi asked her to return in a month to tell her son something so simple. Gandhi replied that he had to stop eating sugar first so he had the right to ask the boy to do so*".

Sister Gayatri said, "*There is resistance to clean our world because our feelings and thoughts are not clean. We prefer to paint a dirty wall instead of cleaning it up first. Resistance comes when we do not know how to use our own resources; when we think we can control them; when we grow up with a false identity. So, we think our car is our identity, or our clothes are our identity. Stop thinking that way and you will stop resisting*", she concluded.

Then François believed that a better world is one where we all feel in harmony, where we are in tune. "Peace means to reach our own rhythm and to be in tune with ourselves. When we feel in tune with ourselves, we feel content and therefore we don't have any wish. Besides being in peace, we have to reach silence. Where there is silence, there is God", François concluded.

Read more at: www.environment.brahmakumaris.org

Annex 1. Panel - "Men and Women Taking Action on Gender Equality and Climate Change; How Far Have we Come?" Gender Day at COP20.

Laxmi Puri, Deputy Executive Secretary of UN WOMEN said: *"this is an historic moment, we are in the midst of celebrating the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing +20) and women are a priority for sustainable development. We now have a gender equality and women's empowerment Goal (Sustainable Development Goals) and we need to make sure we build on the tremendous progress we have made since 2010, until then UNFCCC was gender blind. Now, climate policies have more than 30 references to women. We must unite these two biggest projects of humanity of this century: women and climate"*.

H.E. Ms. Maria del Carmen Omonte Durand, Minister of Women and Vulnerable Populations of Peru, said, *"We have many different climates in Peru: our Amazonia is a virtual drug store of solutions to health and to many issues of today. Peru has 50 different indigenous communities in rural areas and women are the ones who are most affected. So, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations in Peru, acknowledge the important position of women in climate change. It is a challenge - we need a representation of gender equality in politics, business, the public sector, and the community. Women have to be the ones who believe in themselves, be courageous and believe in their capacity. We are doing this - we have to participate in decision-making, we have to find our way into that space. So let us assume the challenge and work together and work in alliance with other women and men who want sustainable change. Human capital is our best resource and women are half of it"*.

Klever Descarpontriez, College of the "Atlantic/Earth", UNFCCC constituency of youth NGOs said: *"We need to make our vision a reality with a transformative approach. I envisage a future where we have been able to unlock our creativity"*.

Annex 2. Round table – Climate Change and the Civilization Paradigm. Universidad Ricardo Palma.

Over two days, the University convened a panel of activists, experts and academics to discuss Roads to Sustainability and Climate Change. Environmental Science Dimension: Ricardo Giesecke Sara Lafosse (physicist and former Environment Minister); Economic Dimension: Hugo Cabieses (former Deputy Minister of the Environment); Social Policy Dimension: Veronika Mendoza Frish (Congressman of the Republic of Peru); Ethics and Cultural Dimension: Tamasin Ramsay (Environmental Anthropologist and NGO Representative to the United Nations); Educational Dimension: Edmundo Murrugarra Florian (educator and researcher on Peruvian Reality); Architectural Dimension: Tanith Alortqui del Castillo (Professor, Faculty of Architecture, University of Ricardo Palma, Peru)

Experts spoke from their area, but what made it unique was that each one spoke about the need to address the foundation of human behavior as the sole solution to our global problems. The paradigm of human attitudes is clearly becoming a key topic in climate change discussions, more than the technical side of things, to which discussions have been limited in the past.

Tamasin spoke about the spiritual dimension as the foundation of culture and ethics. *“The deepest cause of the problem we call ‘climate change’ is a disconnect between human beings, and the living and non-living worlds they inhabit, starting with the ecosystem of their own body. Since the industrial revolution, people have come to believe that things in their raw and unprocessed form have little value. Our tendency today is to value things once they have been altered, manufactured, manipulated, processed, packaged and finished off with a price tag. This is also the case with our own bodies. We rarely leave them untainted, but we alter them, color them, adjust and adapt them. We do the same with the physical world. We process it, mine it, dig, extract, frack and build without due consideration. This dissatisfaction with our own bodies, and with the natural world means we now prioritize the plasticized and financial worlds above and beyond the elements that - in their purest state - which give us life and sustain us: water, earth, fire and air. Drawing on Australian aboriginal culture, Dr Tamasin introduced the fundamental concepts of Kanyini which is the relationship of care and responsibility one has with Country (the environment or natural world of living beings and non-living things)”. These four building blocks of Kanyini are also the spiritual foundation of an ethical framework for climate change.*

Aboriginal concept of an Ethical construct:

- tjukurra (dreamtime, creation, stories, beginning) - beauty
- ngura (place, land, all things in the right place) - complexity
- walytja (kinship, family, wholeness, connection) - integrity
- kurunpa (spirit or soul, breath, life, spiritual energy) - resilience