

# Living in Harmony

Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative



## SUMMARY REPORT OF COP19, THE 2013 UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE



The 19<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties (COP19) was held in November 2013 in Warsaw, Poland.



COP19 was taking place in the atmosphere of a strong call from science as well as from the communities adversely impacted on by climate change, with the most pleading message coming from the Philippines, recently devastated by a typhoon. Their lead negotiator, Mr Naderev Yeb Saño, inspired many to join in the solidarity fast with typhoon victims, which he himself initiated and held throughout the climate change conference, thus protesting global inaction.

## **The Outcome of COP19**

The conclusion of the COP 19 on Saturday, Nov 23rd, where the path to a new 2015 climate agreement was defined, was received with mixed feelings. Let us look at the general outcome of the conference through the eyes of the European Parliament delegation chairman, Matthias Groote: “Warsaw managed to overcome the poisonous divide between developing and developed countries, albeit at the cost of rather vague wording and deadlines, while we need clear and urgent commitments. Much is left to the next COP meeting next year”. In the words of the vice-chair of the European Parliament delegation, Karl-Heinz Florenz, “The Warsaw conference finally delivered after being very close from a complete failure. Once again, compromises were found long after the official deadline...” Indeed, the last days of COP19, the frustration from the lack of progress and lack of ambition in the UN negotiations, solidified into a protest act whereby, for the first time in the COP history, several environmental NGOs handed in their badges and walked out from the negotiations.

## **Need for Spiritual Support from the Faith-Based NGOs**

It was in this general atmosphere, where the words “loss of hope” were very frequently heard, that the unique role of the spiritual messages given by the faith-based NGOs became more and more obvious. Equity, justice, and value-based discussions were called for, reminding the faith-based delegates of their ethical duties and of the necessity to offer spiritual support in the uneasy task of the climate negotiations.

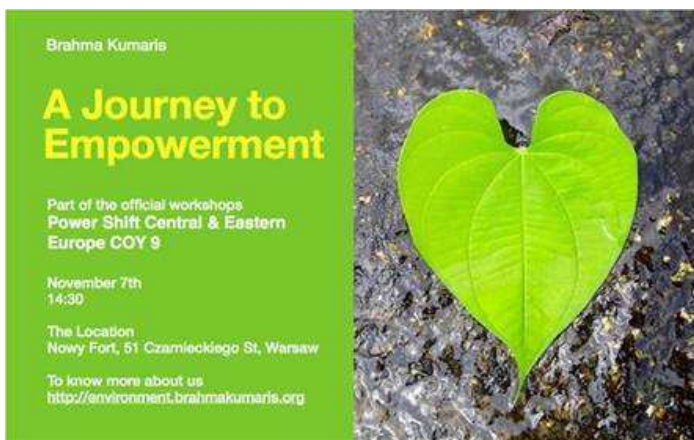
The BK delegation participated regularly and actively in the various interfaith activities. At the international interfaith conference on climate change, titled “Faith Actors Working towards Climate Justice” that took place in Warsaw on the 18th and 19th of November 2013, many strong statements were voiced: 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. 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. It is necessary to propose positive solutions and adequate policies, in order to change to a fairer, more peaceful and just world. In this context, the BK participants shared the Brahma Kumaris position on the link between spirituality and the environment, and the practical examples of actions undertaken to bring back harmony into nature. All participants were given the BK “10 Ways to Change the World” personal cards and were invited for a minute of silent reflection.

A very significant support from the side of the UNFCCC Secretariat came towards the end of the COP 19 conference, when both **Mr. Daniele Violetti, Chief of Staff UNFCCC, and Ms. Christiana Figueres, the UNFCCC Executive Secretary, personally expressed the need of a closer involvement of the faith-based organizations in the climate negotiations** and said they should be given more space in the future conferences. Sister Jayanti and many of the BKs participated to make plans for future co-operation.

### Highlights from the COP19 participation

Let us now have a brief look at the some of the highlights from the COP19 participation. For the Brahma Kumaris, this was the sixth time to participate in a COP as an observer organization.

A very successful beginning of the BK role in the climate change meetings in Warsaw was the participation of the BK youth delegation in the **9th Global Climate Conference of Youth (COY9)**, held in the four days immediately preceding the COP19. It was a great opportunity to meet and network with 350 young people from more than 20 countries, deeply caring about the earth and the climate-related justice, solidarity and unity. This year, the BK youth group became a part of the COY core planning team, thus playing a very active role in the process. Apart from the co-ordinating role, the BK youth contributed to the COY with **daily morning meditations**, several **interviews**, and other activities. They were invited to lead **five key workshops** (on empowerment, inner resilience, vegetarian lifestyle, etc.) which were highly attended and appreciated, and so was their COP19 mini **side-event**. They were able to offer the missing element: **the inside-out approach**. (For a summary youth report, see [www.environment.brahmakumaris.org](http://www.environment.brahmakumaris.org))



For the closing plenary ceremony of COY, Nonie Reaño was invited as the **keynote speaker**, as a representative from Peru, next year's host for COP20. She delivered a very moving and inspiring speech.

Following this, Nonie was invited to give a talk at the local university, arranged by the Polish Youth Climate Movement.

And most importantly: the **Brahma Kumaris will be a part of the organizing team to the COY10 in Peru 2014** and Juan Milling will lead this work.

Many relationships with environmental organizations were developed and will be sustained (in particular with the Polish youth), since much appreciation was expressed by them of the BK spiritual and organizational support to the COY, and of their “real and authentic” attitude. In the words of Koen Verbruggen, the COY9 Planning Team Coordinator from Friends of the Earth, *“What the Brahma Kumaris offer is essential to the conference as it addresses the needs of the time and empowers people.”*



Similar appreciation of the BK spiritual approach was experienced also during the **COP19 conference** itself. With the failing negotiations and the atmosphere of resignation, hopelessness and fear, the COP19 participants were becoming more and more ready for spirituality.



Throughout the conference, the various BK contributions were experienced to touch many hearts, be it the very popular personal cards (called “10 Ways to Change the World”) at the BK exhibition stand, or the message shared in various interviews, panels, presentations and during deep personal dialogues.

Particularly positive feedbacks were received for the guided meditation that Sister Jayanti was invited to conduct during the Sustainable Innovation Business Forum 2013. The meditation was projected

on a large screen. The Communication Director of Climate Action came up to Sister Jayanti afterwards and said this was one of the most interesting inputs during the day. Many others stopped Sister Jayanti and appreciated the meditation. Much valued were also the meditations Sister Jayanti guided at the end of several of her interviews, talks, and meetings. It was beautiful to see what a potential a short meditation has in bringing back hope and enthusiasm.



The **BK press conference**, titled “**Sustainability Enacted by the Guiding Values of UNFCCC**”, focused on the topic of values in the context of climate change negotiations. Sister Jayanti explained how the called-for global fairness stems from respect and dignity, which in turn come from the consciousness of the eternal



spiritual identity. Golo Pilz shared how values and ethics have been fundamental in the process of establishing the new and unique India One Solar Thermal Power Plant. The press conference finished with Sister Jayanti asking the audience to share a moment of silence for the world, for the Philippines. The whole press conference can be viewed here: [http://unfccc4.meta-fusion.com/kongresse/cop19/templ/play.php?id\\_kongresssession=6914&theme=unfccc](http://unfccc4.meta-fusion.com/kongresse/cop19/templ/play.php?id_kongresssession=6914&theme=unfccc)

Inspired by the press conference, international environmental journalist Stephen Leahy from Canada came to ask for an **interview** with Sister Jayanti. Other interviews took place during the conference: the Climate Change Studio TV did interviews with Sister Jayanti (<http://climatechange-tv.rtcc.org/2013/11/16/cop19-jayanti-kirpalani-calls-for-a-spiritual-change-in-order-to-combat-climate-change/>) and Golo Pilz (<http://climatechange-tv.rtcc.org/2013/11/16/cop19-golo-joachim-pilz-speaks-about-indias-solar-power-potential/>), Valeriane Bernard and Golo Pilz were interviewed by Polish Eco Portal, Juan Milling was interviewed by a Venezuelan TV (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fay1zpoiSAY>).

Sister Jayanti represented the Brahma Kumaris at the **press conference “Call to Fast for Climate Justice”**. She was invited to share on spiritual action for climate, and the role of silence and meditation in the process. Following is the link to the press conference: [http://unfccc4.meta-fusion.com/kongresse/cop19/templ/play.php?id\\_kongresssession=7073&theme=unfccc](http://unfccc4.meta-fusion.com/kongresse/cop19/templ/play.php?id_kongresssession=7073&theme=unfccc)



Several very significant meetings took place during COP19, among them a **personal meeting of Sister Jayanti with the UNFCCC**

**Executive Secretary, Ms. Christiana Figueres.**

This was a very deep conversation about people, governments, climate, hope, heart,



soul, and silence. At the end, they had a meditation together.



The BK delegation further met with the **Indian ambassador in Poland**, who invited them to a press conference with the **Indian Minister for Environment and Forest, Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan**, and arranged for their personal meeting with the minister, where Sister Jayanti and Golo Pilz shared about India One Solar Power Plant and about the Brahma Kumaris.

Sister Jayanti also had a private meeting with one of the **organizers of the Sustainable Innovation Business Forum 2013** arranged by Climate Action and UNEP (United Nations Environment Program), to give hope and comfort by meditation and spiritual awareness.

Valeriane Bernard attended regularly the interfaith meetings, and together with Julia Grindon-Welch, meetings of RINGO - the group of research and independent organizations, which Brahma Kumaris is affiliated with.

Halina Paradela with the help of others have also co-organized two interfaith concerts – in the following link, you can see the video (including the guided meditation by Sister Jayanti) created by the South African group Desert Rose. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8lCXd7eYEE>

### **Global Justice, Equity and Sustainability – Side Event of the Brahma Kumaris with Partners**

More than 110 people gathered for the side event “Global Justice, Equity and Sustainability”, co-organized by the Brahma Kumaris along with two partner organizations. Discussed were the missing human rights mechanism in the climate change context, and climate change consequences on people’s lives in Africa, with emphasis on children and women. Sister Jayanti introduced a different perspective to the climate change challenges, placing spirituality at the heart of everything. She shared the vision of hope for



the future, where people enjoy inner peace and harmony with each other, nature, and with all forms of life. She indicated that a shift of consciousness from material to spiritual is required for that. She spoke about the care-and-share philosophy versus materialism and consumerism, and about the universal law of love. Golo Pilz presented installations and achievements of the Brahma Kumaris in the solar energy field. The event finished with a moment of silence and a meditation guided by Sister Jayanti.

### **Public talks and presentations**

In her **public talk at the Polish Teachers’ Association, titled “Living in Harmony - Restoring the Balance in Nature”**, **Sister Jayanti** explained very well the causal connection between our thoughts and the state of our planet and society, and illustrated her inspiring message with various facts and numbers showing the beneficial effects of a vegetarian diet on the environment. She also included examples of the practical efforts of the Brahma Kumaris (planting trees in India, solar thermal project etc.), which accompany the inner spiritual endeavours.

**At Warsaw University of Technology**, Golo Pilz had an enthusing talk about the solar power employment. A clear message was delivered: the resources and technologies are available to meet the energy needs in terms of global climate change; what is missing is human factor in terms of ethics. The University has then invited Golo to take up a series of lectures. Golo also had other presentations in Warsaw, one of them titled **“Consciousness and Climate Change”**.

At the end of the conference, members of the BK delegation travelled to different cities in Poland (**Gdansk, Lodz and Katowice**) to share the news from COP19 and to give several talks, titled **“Awareness and Environment”** (Golo Pilz), **“How to Discover Your Resources and Manage Them Wisely”** (Francois Becher), **“Being Resilient - the Art of Returning to Equilibrium”** and **“Living in Harmony”** (Valeriane Bernard).



The gradual successful progress of the BK participation in the climate change conferences over the past six years was reflected during the COP19. We have witnessed how the hearts of strong female leaders become touched when they meet Sister Jayanti. Business leaders and politicians came up to us to ask for the blessing cards (of which roughly 2000 were distributed!), and appreciated our talks and meditations. Networking and friendships grew and there has been the experience of two weeks of non-stop service.



The Polish family has been very very co-operative, generous, loving and professional in their hosting of the team.



For the COP20 in Lima next year, a new BK statement under the theme Consciousness and Climate Change is already in the pipeline.



Read more at [www.environment.brahmakumaris.org](http://www.environment.brahmakumaris.org)

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For the list of delegates and a short summary of BK activities during COP 19, please see next pages.

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**Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative**



## SHORT SUMMARY OF THE BRAHMA KUMARIS ACTIVITIES AT THE COP19 AND COY9 IN WARSAW, POLAND, IN NOVEMBER 2013

### **The Brahma Kumaris COP19 Delegation:**

**Sister Jayanti Kirpalani**, UK/India – Head of Delegation, Main Representative at the UN, Geneva for the Brahma Kumaris and Director of Brahma Kumaris, Europe & Middle East

**Sonja Ohlsson**, Denmark - Designated Contact Point to the UNFCCC and Co-ordinator of the Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative

**Francois Becher**, France - Director of Brahma Kumaris, France

**Valeriane Bernard**, Switzerland - NGO Representative at the UN, Geneva for the Brahma Kumaris

**Marek Frydrych**, Brahma Kumaris Poland

**Julia Grindon-Welch**, USA - NGO Representative at the UN, New York, for the Brahma Kumaris

**Aneta Loj**, Brahma Kumaris Poland / Research & Development India One, Solar Power Plant, India

**Juan Milling**, Canada - Head of Brahma Kumaris Youth delegation

**Nonie Reaño Quinteros**, Peru - Psychologist and Consultant for Business and Corporate Universities

**Golo Pilz**, Germany/India - Director of Solar Research Institute and Energy Advisor for the Brahma Kumaris

### **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP19, Warsaw, Poland, 2013**

The Brahma Kumaris had:

1 Exhibition “Shifts in Consciousness and Systemic Thinking”

1 Side Event “Global Justice, Equity and Sustainability”

1 Youth Mini-Side Event

2 Press Conferences

8 Public Talks and Presentations in 4 cities

Several experiential meditations, incl. one at a Business Forum

Media opportunities:

2 Climate Change TV interviews

1 Venezuelan TV Interview

Other Interviews: 3

Distributed around 2000 very popular personal cards “10 Ways to Change the World”

Sent 9 conference reports

Significant meetings took place, with ministers, Indian ambassador in Poland, and UN Secretariat staff, including a personal meeting with the UNFCCC Executive Secretary

Active participation in the international “Faith Actors Working towards Climate Justice” conference

Organized 2 interfaith concerts and participated in networking by

- attending interfaith coordination meetings, youth interfaith meetings, ecumenical services and concerts,
- attending 2 business fora, RINGO (Research and Independent organizations) meetings, workshops, side events, panel discussions, exhibitions, and a film screening

**The Brahma Kumaris COY 9 Youth Delegation:**

**Juan Milling**, Canada - Head of Brahma Kumaris Youth Delegation

**Gaby Havard**, UK

**Romina Melwani**, UK

**Ash Patel**, UK

**Nonie Reaño Quinteros**, Peru

**THE 9TH GLOBAL CLIMATE CONFERENCE OF YOUTH (COY9), Warsaw, Poland, 2013**

The BK youth group:

- was part of the COY core planning team
- led 5 key workshops
- daily meditation sessions
- did several interviews
- delivered a keynote speech at the closing plenary ceremony
- networked, participated in workshops, short film shooting, developed relationships with environmental organizations
- for the COY10 in 2014, BK will be part of the organizing team with BK Juan Milling as the main coordinator

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