

Living in Harmony

Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative



Report 1 UN Environment Assembly, Nairobi, Kenya 2019

From 11th-15th March 2019, the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly UNEA4 is taking place in Nairobi, Kenya. The United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) has overall responsibility for environmental problems among UN agencies and is a leading global environmental authority. It was founded in 1972 and has its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.



The Brahma Kumaris in Kenya has been connected to UNEP since 1979 and we have been an accredited observer organization since 2014. In 2018 the BK's were given permanent UN Ground passes and Pratibha Patel, Urvashi Vithal and Dorcas Alusala from Nairobi are regularly participating in meetings.

Preparation for UNEA4

The opening of the committee of permanent representatives took place 4th - 8th March. Pratibha and Urvashi participated and noticed that the representatives find it hard to maintain enthusiasm as the climate change is progressing fast.

Pratibha and Urvashi met with the Acting Director of UNEP Ms. Joyce Msuya.



Faith for Earth

Urvashi participated in the Faith for Earth preparation meeting. The engagement of the faith-based organizations have taken a leap under the leadership of Mr Iyad Abu Moghli. He has worked hard on bringing the religious and spiritual organizations into the UNEA. 131 faith leaders from 51 organizations are participating this year.



Urvashi together with the Faith for Earth preparation group.

The BK Team

It is the 4th biannual General Assembly of UNEP that Brahma Kumaris has actively participated in. This year our green team came from all over the world. Head of the delegation is Sister Pratibha supported by Urvashi (Kenya), Andrew (Kenya), Sonja (Denmark), Hilal (Turkey) and Jignesh (India/Sweden). The preparation meeting discussed the logistics of the conference, the need for hope, awareness, oneness, respect and the recognition of the faith-based organizations.



Urvashi, Sonja, Pratibha, Jignesh, Andrew and Hilal.

Setting up the exhibition Sunday 10th March

Brahma Kumaris has an exhibition booth called Healthy Mind, Healthy People, Healthy Planet. We were busy right from start with our popular blessing cards. We inaugurated the stand with meditation for the earth, the coming General Assembly and also for those who lost their lives in the flight crash that same morning.



The atmosphere at UNEA was tangibly affected by the flight crash in Ethiopia the morning of Sunday 10th March. People in UNEA had lost some of their colleagues who were on their way to UNEA.



Monday 11th March - First day of UN Environment Assembly 2019



The BK delegation is ready for UNEA 4 -
Sonja, Hilal, Pratibha ben, Jignesh, Urvashi and Andrew

Extraordinary opening with a minute of silence

The day started with an extraordinary assembly to honour the delegates who lost lives in the flight crash of the Ethiopian Airlines on Sunday 10th. The spokesperson addressed the gathering as the UN family: "I stand in front of you on the first day of UNEA4 with tragic news. We lost the lives of our brothers and sisters, delegates and colleagues in the flight crash yesterday morning." We had a minute of powerful silence together.



Sister Pratibha met with Acting Executive Director Joyce Msuya and the new Executive Director Inger Andersen at the assembly. Inger Andersen said to Pratibha: **At these moments, we need people like you!** It was indeed an extraordinary moment of introduction the newly appointed Executive Director of UNEP.

Sonja went to the Faith for Earth Tent and met many of her friends and colleagues from COP conferences. The atmosphere was heavy as one of the speakers that morning left the body in the flight crash.

Opening:

Siim Kiisler, President of the UN Environment Assembly, Minister of Environment of Estonia and Joyce Msuya welcomed the 4700 delegates to the Assembly. The theme of the Assembly this year is **"Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production"**.

The Kenyan Environment Minister emphasized beating plastic. Kenya has banned plastic bags and it is a big fine if you are caught with a plastic carrier bag. The Kenyan constitution is unique as it states that every person has a duty to co-operate with State organs and other persons to protect and conserve the environment and ensure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources.

In the Faith for Earth tent, there was a special interfaith ceremony for the flight crash victims and their families. Sister Pratibha represented Brahma Kumaris and gave a beautiful message for the souls.



Faith leaders in a prayer ceremony for the victims of the flight crash.

The stand was busy all of each day with many interested visitors.



Jignesh, Andrew and Pratibha at the stand.



Sonja and visitor at the stand.

Links: UNEA4

<http://web.unep.org/environmentassembly/>

Faith for Earth

<http://web.unep.org/environmentassembly/faith-earth-dialogue>

BK Environment

<http://environment.brahmakumaris.org/>

BK Environment Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/bkenvironmentinitiative/>