



BRAHMA KUMARIS WORLD SPIRITUAL UNIVERSITY

Awakening Biodiversity Consciousness

Statement for the
Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity
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"We live in the tropical rainforest of Brazil. Our home is being threatened because of something called "progress." But what future do we really want? On behalf of our many "reasons" we have altered the balance of nature. By speaking too much we believe we are bigger. But nature is a whole, and we are a part of her. The problem is we have withdrawn ourselves from nature. If we don't stop speaking and start listening carefully we will all fall down, citing our reasons while falling. Each of us just wants to be happy and well. There are many living beings like us, but who have no voice, and who have to be heard. The present is like it is because of the past. Everything we do now will be reflected in the mirror of our future."
Guaranee People of the Rainforest, Rio de Janeiro, 2012

Since 1936, the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU) has been dedicated to helping people understand and explore their inner resources as a basis for developing the highest level of personal integrity. The BKWSU teaches a simple meditation based on self-awareness and a connection with one's innate qualities. As an international NGO the BKWSU offers a spiritual approach to global concerns, and instruction in the living application of human, moral and spiritual values.

We are keenly aware of the current breakdown between human beings and the natural world, and recognize this disconnection as being a key contributor to loss of biodiversity and the consequent suffering of all living beings. Thankfully, the Convention on Biological Diversity through the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (UNEP 2002) and other studies have brought many of these issues to light and initiated action programmes to address them.

Biodiversity helps to regulate local and global climates. Complex and diverse ecosystems, whether biological or human, are more resilient and better able to adapt to change than systems that have been radically altered and simplified. There is an urgent need now, to restore the natural harmonic relationship between people and the natural world through clear decision-making and consistent and determined application. The loss of complex ecosystems of flora and fauna has caused serious problems, such as an increased vulnerability to natural disasters, poverty and famine, and an overall reduction in the global population's health and wellbeing. To curb the rapid demise of our environment, we must address the problems that exist at the level of attitude, and its associated behaviour, within all of us. 'Awakening biodiversity consciousness' means reminding people that the biodiversity crisis is not a problem external to us, and that it cannot be changed unless we change our entire thinking around the issue.

The last 20 years has taught us that policy alone does not bring change. Throughout the environmental movement, there has been a tendency to create policy on the basis of quantitative data, without looking more deeply at the qualitative attitudes that both drive our policy and lie at

the heart of human behavior. Identifying and understanding changes in human habits, preferences, feelings and behavior requires an approach grounded in spiritual and holistic values, an approach that has broad enough scope to hold the all aspects involved in the change. Real change must begin - and be sustained - in the minds and hearts of human beings.

Indigenous peoples have long accepted the inherent connection between human thought and feelings, and the natural world, a connection that scientific research continues to affirm. The idea that thoughts can affect matter is not a new one. Recent notable studies include Emoto's (2004) popular research photographing water crystals confirming that thoughts, words and intentions affect matter. A study by theology student Du Charme (2007) revealed that positive and negative intentions have a statistically significant effect on seed germination. Roney, Dougal and Solfvin (2003) have also conducted healing energy studies on seeds, with positive results. Radin (2000) published a meta-analysis of more than 40 years of studies, reiterating the effect of human thought, feelings and intention on the material world. Human beings are a key part of the world's greatest ecosystem, and everything we do and think affects every other part of the system.

A divisive approach based on numbers and exponential growth for a few has created the world we live in today that is. A world that is, to a great extent, environmentally and socially impoverished. We strongly support Aichi Target 1 of the Convention on Biological Diversity that states, "By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably" (CBD 2011).

With this in mind, we are considering three areas for further development and collaboration:

- It is a well-established fact that thoughts and intentions affect matter. Therefore communities and governments at all levels must harness the capacity of human minds and hearts in order to bring positive change.
- Attitudes among people, from those in large cities to small-hold farmers, must change from one of 'rights,' where nature is used as a commodity, to one of 'reverence' where what is taken from nature is appreciated, used with care and returned in some way. In addition to education, people must have the opportunity to experience the natural world first hand, so they may be moved internally to bring change.
- At the core of the Brahma Kumaris' work is expertise in the interconnection between awareness, attitude, vision, action and the world. All real change – from big changes in the world to small changes in a single life – occurs as a sequence of subtle shifts, beginning with a change in awareness. We wish to offer this expertise to further empower those who are working towards restoring biodiversity and curbing the effects of climate change. If we continually maintain the attitude of 'my' organization, 'my' country, 'my' needs, nothing will change. Like any ecosystem, we are all part of a greater whole. The attitudes we have, and the choices we make, do not just affect us. They affect each and every part of our global living ecosystem.

The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University view is supported by environmental philosophers, ethicists and religious leaders: that to bring about change in any social or environmental system, requires a spiritual foundation. A foundation grounded in self-reflection, universal values, and self-change. The Brahma Kumaris have applied concrete change based on spiritual values in support of biodiversity by: practicing Sustainable Yogic Agriculture,¹ establishing a solar energy plant² and restoring biodiversity to the land at Shanti Sarovar, Hyderabad. Complex problems require holistic solutions. People's lifestyles and values systems

¹ For further information, visit www.yogickheti.com and read Ramsay (2012).

² Read more about the solar energy initiative of the World Renewal Spiritual Trust, a sister organization of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University at www.india-one.net and www.environment.brahmakumaris.org.

must correspond to the principles and values associated with a biodiverse and sustainable world. Nothing will change if we don't address the problems at this most fundamental level.

"We walks towards the future on the pathways of our ancestors because they have stepped on the ground and breathed the air. Now theories are made but not lived. Come. Stand in the earth and breathe the air. Then you will change."
Yorta Yorta People, Australia, 2009

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The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University

The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University is a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in consultative status with UNICEF and affiliated to the Department of Public Information (DPI). It is also an accredited observer organization to UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

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