



### CONFERENCE OF PARTIES (BIO-DIVERSITY) 13, Cancun, Mexico – 3<sup>rd</sup> report

After a lovely weekend in nature, the second week at COP13 started; and there is no better way to start than with a side event! This side event was organized by Brahma Kumaris and took place at the CEPA (Communication, Education and Public Awareness) area. The title was “Awakening Biodiversity Consciousness - Connection Between the Inner State and Nature”. The speakers were:

- Mateo Alfredo Castillo Ceja (Earth Charter),
- Daniel Gomez Iñiguez (Solven Solutions), and
- Claudia Lizana (Brahma Kumaris).



Figure 1. Daniel Iñiguez, Claudia Lizana and Mateo Ceja: speakers in the panel

The natural interaction between the three panelists and their discussions made for an interesting and successful panel. Mateo Castillo Ceja spoke about the connection of values and the Earth and how the loss of values is the main reason behind the loss of our planet's biodiversity. He explained how the “Earth Charter” organizes workshops to increase the awareness of the connection between the inner values and the means of living in harmony with nature.

Mr Daniel Gomez Iñiguez shared experiences of his life and how Brahma Kumaris, especially its spiritual leader Dadi Janki, has helped him to focus on what is really important. He is very successful in the business field and he inspired the young people present at the event to reach out in life using a different perspective. This includes the practice of meditation and experiencing silence to enjoy life to the full.

Instead of just chasing after money, he now has a very fruitful business that is focused on helping and educating young people with low incomes.

The approach of Brahma Kumaris is to become aware of our modern life-style (and how it has disconnected us from what we really are) and what is really fulfilling in our lives. We have stopped appreciating what life offers us; we take nature for granted and we have disconnected ourselves from the destruction we are causing. The proposal from Brahma Kumaris is to re-build our connection with nature, and to be grateful for what nature offers us. This connection of the spiritual being with nature can then provide hope, peace and happiness.

By working in the field of biodiversity conservation, people are exposed to frustration, stress and negativity. So it is essential to make care of the self a priority. This also ensures that the flame of hope is kept alive.

The BioClick challenge was introduced and parts of the website were shown to the audience. The BioClick project shows a new perspective on how to approach and how to act on the issues that are destroying the world's biodiversity. (<http://bioclick.wixsite.com/bioclick>)

## Press conference



Figure 2. Press conference. Mr David Ainsworth (Information Officer, CBD), Mr Bráulio F. de Souza Dias (Executive Secretary CBD), and Mr H. E. Rafael Pacchiano (Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico and COP13 President).

The team attended a fascinating press conference where the progress of the convention and the state of the protected areas in the world was reported. In this conference, the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico presented the news that the Mexican president signed a presidential decree for the protection of 650 marine square miles in the Caribbean region, including the whole coast of Cancun.

The UN representatives showed that, globally, the size and number of the areas being protected are increasing. But still, too many of the unique, endemic, and delicate ecosystems are not being protected. There is a high risk of them disappearing in the coming years if no actions are taken to protect them.

They had a live Skype call with Lewis Pugh who was the first person to complete a long-distance swim in every ocean of the world. He is an environmental activist who swims in open seas to bring public attention to the delicate, marine ecosystems and the actions needed for their protection. On this occasion, he was in the Antarctica, preparing for his next swim at the site that he called: “the biggest ecocide of history”. In that particular place, 200 years ago, they slaughtered so many blue whales to extract their oil that only 7% survived. Now this same area is being threatened by oil exploration.

## **CEPA kiosk**

The number of visitors to the CEPA fair diminished towards the end of the week. However, many people visited our kiosk and had conversations with us. Our connection with the German delegation was renewed (their kiosk was next to ours). The inspirational cards distributed were a great success. Even people, who received one two years ago, remembered it and wanted to have another.

The visitors to the kiosk were also very interested in the BioClick project. The representatives of the Mexican government social media mentioned that they were looking to create a similar project, and they were very happy to find something like BioClick. Also, a delegate from the UN-youth team was very pleased with BioClick and so we were invited to visit their stand to introduce the project to all the other UN-youth delegates. We also provided BioClick brochures as they help to promote the project.

## **Other activities**

We meditated in the convention’s meditation room with Ms Maria Eugenia Arguedas. She is our contact for biodiversity from the Costa Rican government. She said she was stressed about her intervention during the negotiations and the meditation helped her to regain peace. She was very pleased afterwards and she wanted the rest of the Costar Rican representatives to meditate too.

## **Final remarks**

After two weeks of intense negotiations everyone agreed that good progress was made. However, more efforts are needed. After the conference, there was a feeling that some countries are pushing back; they want to slow down and ease the legislation.

Mexico did a great job hosting COP13 and we would like to thank everyone for their hospitality. The next COP will take place in 2018 and the host country will be Egypt.



Figure 3. The COP13-team:

- Irene Artavia, (BK Costa Rica),
- Andrea Gutierrez, (BK-Finland),
- Fidel Ladrón de Guevara Bravo (Saving our Sharks Mexico),
- Carmen Barbachano (BK-Mexico),
- Yolanda Moreno (BK-Mexico)
- Claudia Lizana (BK-Costa Rica)