

Second Report

Brahma Kumaris at UNCCD COP 15

Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire (the Ivory Coast)

13th May



BK delegation at UNCCD COP15



Participating in the daily CSO meetings



Land for Life Day at the Rio Conventions Pavilion



Salih Serdar Yegül, UNCCD National Focal Point, Turkey; Herve Lefeuvre, WWF-USA, Bora Masumbuko, IUCN; Hernan Gonzalez, LD lead, GEF team, FAO; Graciela Metternicht, GEF STAP



Grace attended the morning sessions hosted by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). This programme included: the sharing of experiences by different stakeholders who have been involved in advancing the land degradation neutrality (LDN) agenda and mainstreaming gender among others. In addition, participants viewed videos on improving livelihoods through restoration of Chalghoza Pine in Pakistan and forest landscape restoration in Cambodia.

Aneta and Ndiritu attended the Great Green Wall Investment Opportunity, which was an overview of current progress and the key investment opportunities for green jobs, women's livelihoods, climate resilience and integrated ecosystem management.

For further information on this initiative see the link below.

<https://www.greatgreenwall.org/>



Ndiritu inaugurating the new BK UNCCD team's project: Good wishes for Great Green Wall (GW4GGW)



The role of Natural Yogic Agriculture in Agroecology





In the afternoon Aneta and Ndiritu attended a session facilitated by CARI on the topic of Agroecology - a way to achieve prosperity by 2030. Agroecology combines social and ecological aspects of agriculture. Therefore yogic natural farming and rural outreach programmes of BK are effective forms of agroecology.

We were introduced to three focal areas - Capacity building; Technical assessment and advocacy to potential donors - information to public.

Delegates from Burkina Faso presented their policy, challenges and opportunities.



Evening get-together at our hosts'.

About 70 people from the local Indian community and some of the BKs from Abidjan joined us for a relaxing time in the garden.

Sister Prathiba shared the knowledge of soul and the benefit of meditation. We introduced ourselves and Grace did a meditation commentary with the group.



15th May



We had a trip to Yamoussoukro, the Capital of Cote d'Ivoire to visit the amazing and enormous Basilica of Our Lady of Peace, with its stained-glass windows and towering dome. We did an hour of meditation in this majestic cathedral.

The Basilica of Our Lady of Peace is a Catholic minor basilica dedicated to Our Lady of Peace. Guinness Book of Records lists it as the largest church in the world. It has an area of 30,000 square metres and is 158 metres high. It can accommodate 18,000 worshippers. The basilica is administered by Polish Pallottines at a cost of US\$1.5 million annually. The basilica was constructed between 1985 and 1989.



16th May

The Gender Caucus is a space for advancing gender equality within the implementation of the Convention. It focuses on the four priorities for action of the Gender Action Plan, which was adopted by Parties at COP13:

- Women's participation in decisions taken during the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of initiatives to implement the UNCCD;
- Integrating women's economic empowerment in UNCCD implementation activities to eradicate their extreme poverty;
- Strengthening women's land rights and access to resources;
- Enhancing women's access to improved knowledge and technologies that relate to effective UNCCD implementation.



At the final Gender Caucus discussion



Aneta attended the session facilitated by "BothEnds" on topic of Funding agroecology as a pathway to achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN). There was a discussion on how funders can best support agroecological initiatives by local communities in drylands.

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) hosted a side event that focused on Securing Land Tenure Rights to Achieve Land Degradation Neutrality, Landbased Adaptation, and Responses to Drought.

Juliane Wiesenhütter, Team Leader, Division Rural Development and Agriculture GIZ stated that 24 billion ton fertile land is lost each year. Their aim is to offer practice, insight, showcased evidence. The barrier of implementation should be further addressed. It concerns three SDGs: zero hunger, life on land, no poverty.



Sonja sharing "magic" cards with COP15 volunteers.

Ndiritu attended the session where South Africa established the SLM progress calculator as a recognised LDN monitoring tool to measure systemic progress along SLM trajectory.



Aneta and Ndiritu joined a working party and assisted in creating a statement for private sector, regarding plant-based diet and organic farming. See below.

Why we need to encourage and support organic farming.

Industrial chemical production has a much higher carbon, water and land footprint than organic farming and has proved to be unsustainable. Chemical farming has led to low levels of soil organic content, increased erosion and renders the soil lifeless and water polluted. The toxic pesticides and herbicides etc. used in chemical farming leads to high hidden costs of ill-health of millions of people. Organic farming on the other hand is naturally sustainable and empowering to farmers as most of the farming inputs are cheaper and within reach. More than 80% of global farmland, being mostly chemical-based farming is used to raise animals which provide only 18% of calories eaten. Freeing some of the vast areas of the land currently used for industrial livestock farming for organic farming for plant-based diet would lead to more.



Reception for COP15 Friends

We had an informal get-together with our friends from COP15 to honour mother earth and celebrate our dedication to serve nature. Delegates from Antigua/Barbuda; Argentina; Colombia; Peru; Iraq; Sri Lanka; Bangladesh; India; Zambia; Benin; Ghana; Kenya; South Africa; Denmark; Côte d'Ivoire; and Poland were in attendance.

We started with ten minutes of meditation, followed by a special activity in which we introduced another to the group. We then had a vegan meal.





More Photos of the enjoyable evening with our circle of friends



17th May

We all attended the Open Dialogue Session (ODS) of CSOs with the Parties. The Topic was agroecological approaches and regenerative agricultural practices as solution to positive transformative change, achieving LDN and addressing desertification, land degradation and drought issues. The open dialogue showcased community-based initiatives, key findings and lessons from the field on production system transformation, and proposal to support this approach.



In order draw attention of the parties to this ODS, the CSO group marched from the CSO meeting room to the Plenary Hall with placards and singing "Agroecology, right now".





Values & Legacy of Natural Living

Tuesday 17th May 2022, 1-3 pm
Venue: MET 14

at UNCCD COP15 in Abidjan,
Côte d'Ivoire



Allen Ottaro
Founder & Executive
Director, Catholic Youth
Network for Environmental
Sustainability in Africa
(CYNESA)



Pratibha Patel
Assistant Regional
Director
Brahma Kumaris
Kenya



Aneta Loj
R&D Coordinator
India One Solar Thermal Power
Plant, Director Brahma Kumaris
Poland



**Dr. Elvis Paul Nfor
Tangem**
Coordinator,
Great Green Wall Initiative
(GGWSSI) at the African
Union Commission,
Cameroon



Prof. John Ndiritu
Professor of Water Engineering
University Witwatersrand,
S.Africa



Sonja Ohlsson
Coordinator, Brahma
Kumaris Eco Initiative,
Director, Brahma
Kumaris, Denmark



Ernest Senanu Dovlo
Communication and Media
Practitioner, CYNESA
Ghana



Values and Lagacy of Natural Living

Side event of Catholic Youth Network for Environment Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA) and Brahma Kumaris at UNCCD COP15 in Abidjan on the 17th of May, 2022.

We shared our approach, experience, research studies and best practices of applying values in land restoration and regeneration through education, youth empowerment, Great Green Wall program, yogic agriculture, plant based diet and innovation in renewable energy.



18th May

The BK group met with Marco Montoiro NGO and Civil Society Liaison Officer UNCCD. He began by saying how grateful he was for the meditation at the end of the first ODS.

We discussed how Faith -based organisations (FBOs) can play a greater role in the convention. He encouraged us to inspire other FBOs to join the convention. He shared that UNCCD is planning to give mandate to various groups , for example Faith-based, youths, and indigenous people. We shared all the different activities that we do with him.



Ndiritu attend an evening session at Rio Convention Pavilion entitled "Great Green Wall for an Inclusive and climate change-resilient development". The side-event will highlight the synergies between the efforts of Sahel Alliance members, the GGGI through their low-carbon and sustainable transition strategy, as well as the Great Green Wall Initiative and its Accelerator.



Aneta attended the Asian CSOs meeting: Points for discussion included:

- * How Asian CSOs can have a stronger presence at the COP
- * Discussion about the next CSO Panel member from Asia
- * How we can collaborate with each other?

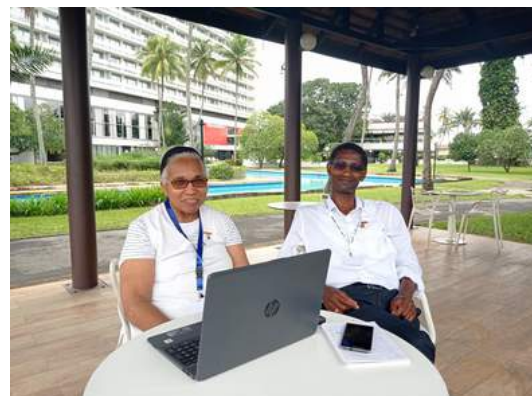
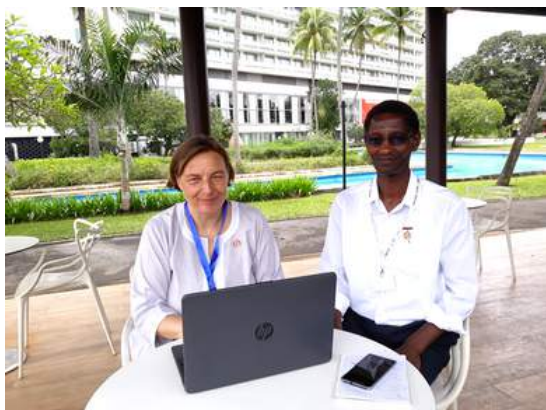
Participants:

- * Nahid , CENESTA , Iran
- * Hemantha, CEJ- Srilanka
- * Amiya , DYDF , Bangladesh
- * Aneta, Brahma Kumaris, India

Alain Richard Donwahi, COP15 President addressed the gathering of CSOs. He thanked the CSOs for their valuable contributions and encouraged them to connect with private sector. He promised that he will follow through with the drive for gender equality and also agroecology.



Our outdoor office








19th May

Virtual Exhibition

This year the exhibition space was limited, so we reverted to a virtual exhibition using a QR code that detailed all our posters with information of our activities. We were able to share it among some delegates. The posters featured: Solar Energy, Natural Yogic Farming; Food; Values; Rural Outreach Programmes.





Love and Light
for Land and Life
Enthusiasm
to passionately serve nature
Gratitude
for the bounty of our lands
Attitude
to change the present state
of the land
Courage and Determination
to do what it takes to
restore green lands
Yoga Power
to bring about the changes

eco.brahmakumaris.org



Studies on the Effect of Meditation on Crop Growth

University of Witwatersrand
South Africa

Can meditation enhance the yield of carrots?

800 carrot seeds were planted in 100 buckets.

50 buckets were meditated on remotely from 10.4 km.

The other 50 buckets were used as control.

Energy transmitted for 3 minutes (4:45 - 5:15 am)
20 minutes to carrots
10 minutes to water
For 100 days

Crop yield comparison

The average weight of treated carrots was 11% greater.
Statistically significant difference ($p = 0.003$)
Average weight of stem and leaves was 9.5% higher for the meditated carrots.

Group	Average carrot weight (grams)
Control	~42
Treated	~46

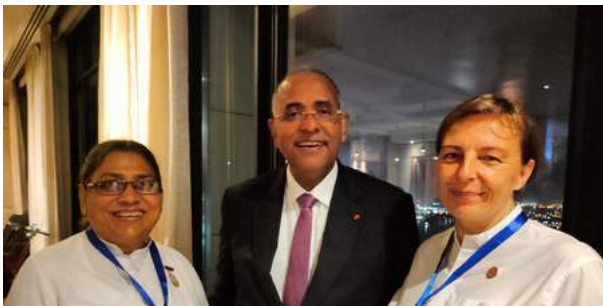
There were notable improvements in nutrition content

Nutrient	% Increase in nutrient content
Energy	~15
Protein	~10
Fat	~35
Moisture	~10
Ash	~5
Flavonoids	~5
Sodium	~5
Saturated fatty acid	~45
Monounsaturated fatty acid	~25
Polysaturated fatty acid	~10
Potassium	~10
Vitamin A	~10

Dinner organized by the Government of Côte d'Ivoire

A celebratory dinner hosted Prime Minister Patrick Achi of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire to honour Mr Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Conference to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Brahma Kumaris was invited to attend. Sister Prathiba and Aneta represented the BKs. They met with The Prime Minister, The Executive Secretary of UNCCD and the President of COP15. They introduced Brahma Kumaris and shared blessings for them and for the environment.



Sister Prathiba and Aneta with Mr Patrick Achi, Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire



Sister Prathiba and Aneta having a selfie with Mr Ibrahim Thiaw, Secretary General of UNCCD and My Alain Richard Donwahi, President of COP15. In second photo, Sister Prathiba gives a blessing card to the President of COP15.

20th May



Aneta met delegates from India: Shri Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Gov't of India, Jigmet Takpa, Joint Secretary for Ministry for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Gov't of India and also Ricky Kej, a multi Grammy Award-winning Indian music composer and Land Ambassador. They all had already been acquainted and appreciative for the Brahma Kumaris and its contribution for society and environment. Aneta shared gratitude and good wishes for their respective environment service.



Feedback Meeting

Present were Aneta, Ndiritu, Grace, Pratibha, Sonja. The feedback did not focus on logistical as location, group or setting might not be the same. Each share one magic moment . We took some decisions for the future:

- A leaflet dedicated for UNCCD COP:
- Strengthen the voice of Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs);
- More presence in Gender Caucus and Youth: events
- Greater partnership for organised side events.



Every day throughout the two weeks of the conference, we participated in the CSO coordination meetings, when the daily sessions were discussed and plenary sessions were presented and statements and interventions for all the COP groups were planned.

Today was the last meeting and everyone shared their gratitude for the Coordinating team and all the participating CSO members. We also shared our good wishes and blessings to everyone.



Summary of Closing Statement

A united global pledge to boost drought resilience and invest in land restoration for future prosperity concluded the 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire on the 21st of May 2022.

This two-week meeting on the future of land management drew nearly 7,000 participants, including Heads of State, ministers, delegates from the UNCCD's 196 Parties and the European Union, as well as members of the private sector, civil society, women, youth leaders and media.



An the final statement, the CSOs called for more and faster actions on land tenure, gender equality, agroecology and land regeneration plus CSO involvement in the UN processes. The clear statement was made on the need to humanize droughts, to give drought a human face and better understand the impacts of this disaster on the lives of children, women, men, farmers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, and local communities.





Last evening with our host families in Abidjan



Brahma Kumaris message on restoring the land through restoring the mind has been recognised and appreciated by our CSO colleagues and other delegates.

Thank you and Om Shanti