



The Brahma Kumaris at UN Biodiversity COP15 in Montreal December 6-19, 2022

Report 1: December 6-8, 2022



Biodiversity, the variety of all life on earth, is being lost at an alarming rate. Ecosystems, from forests and deserts to freshwater and oceans, are in steep decline. One million plant and animal species are threatened with extinction. Genetic diversity is disappearing. Underpinning human well-being and livelihoods, biodiversity is the source of essential resources and ecosystem functions that sustain human life, including food production, purification of air and water, and climate stabilization. The planet's life-support systems are at stake.



United Nation Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP 15 in Montreal is expected to adopt the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF), which will set out a new plan to transform society's relationship with biodiversity and ensure the Convention's 2050 vision of living in harmony with nature is fulfilled.

The Brahma Kumaris is part of the Faith and Biodiversity Group formed after the launch of the 2020 Biodiversity Call to Action to provide space for faith-based organizations (FBOs) and conservation groups, to network and jointly advocate for biodiversity at key international moments in order to set the stage for urgent action over the next 10 years.



The COP15 Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative team members were welcomed with much warmth and grace by the Montreal family – and have been fed, housed and supported in the most royal way since our arrival. David (Halifax, Canada), Aneta (Poland) and Valeriane (Geneva) joined Anne-Christelle and Juan (local team members) and all feel truly blessed by the loving and powerful vibrations Baba and the local family have created.

Since mid November the family have been preparing to host the COP15 team and have been holding regular mensa seva – the atmosphere they have created can be felt! That atmosphere has uplifted the team who are ready to enthusiastically engage in many events in the two weeks.



On the 6th of December, during the opening ceremony, UN Secretary-General António Guterres reminded participants that UN Biodiversity Conference COP15 has the “urgent task of making peace with nature”. The session featured a ceremonial welcome, statements by high-level representatives, and cultural performances. “If we can’t agree as a world on something as fundamental as protecting nature, then nothing else matters,” said Canada’s Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Indigenous activists interrupted his speech, demanding land rights and justice for Indigenous Peoples in Canada.



Wednesday, December 7

The opening plenary session of the COP15 was an opportunity for all negotiating parties to state their positions on their priorities for the upcoming discussions. The session was opened by the chair, China’s environment minister, who referred to the comments of the UN Secretary General that we need to “make a peace pact with nature”. He expressed his hope that all parties can ink a deal in the next two weeks and stop thinking of nature as an obstacle, but to recognize it as our greatest ally.

The need for a sense of urgency to achieve a successful outcome was prevalent in the opening statements by Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). The UNEP Executive Director added we should be celebrating the 30 year anniversary of signing the original CBD convention which has been signed by 193 countries and move forward in the spirit of consensus and compromise.

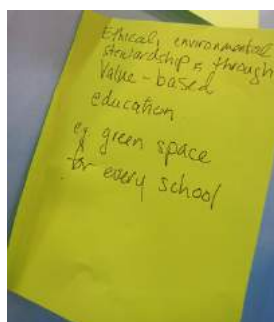




COP 15 President Huang Runqiu, Minister of Ecology and Environment, China; Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, CBD Executive Secretary; Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UNEP

Nature Positive Action: The Power of Collaboration

The BKEI team participated in the inaugural event at Nature Positive Action: The Power of Collaboration. This interactive session was an opportunity to connect with each other and share the diverse approaches to create an equitable, net-zero and nature-positive future. the invitation was to participate in this celebration of nature-positive leadership, and to reinforce our belief that change is possible and requires collective action NOW. Members of the BKEI team shared the need for values-based approach in education and in implementation of the GBF targets.



An Evening of Spirit and Faith

This was the opening event for faith communities at COP15, faith delegates had the opportunity to reflect on the global state of biodiversity, shared their hopes and the importance of engaging faith based organizations. Juan who represented the BK in the event offered a reflection about the film presented in the program a documentary about restoration in Vanuatu, he shared the relevance of creating communities greatness, where spirituality becomes a practical way of living.



Serving in Harmony with Nature – public event at Centre

On Wednesday 7 December, evening l'émergence organised a panel facilitated by Eric entitled "Serving in harmony with nature". He asked each one of the BK representatives at the UNCBD COP15 to share about their trajectory both with spirituality and with the environment.



Thursday, December 8

Faith Voices Raising Ambition for a Strong Global Biodiversity Framework

This side event aimed to present a variety of faith voices advocating for a strong and ambitious Global Biodiversity Framework. Valeriane Bernard from the BK spoke about Production and Extraction / Changing lifestyles priorities in the GBF and within that she presented India One Solar Thermal Power Plant as an example of a way to generate energy without unnecessary extraction and waste. Thermal storage developed by the team is a manifestation of benevolent innovation created through the lens of sustainability of nature and benefit for humanity. She also presented the sustainable yogic farming by the BK. Valeriane spoke about the vision of the world where in the heart of motivation there were non-violence and sufficiency rather than accumulation.

The speakers included: Gauranga das, Govardhan Eco Village; Sarah French, A Rocha; Caroline Kiiru, Laudato Si Movement; Kamran Shezad, Bahu Trust; Gopal Patel, Bhumi Global / COP15 Faith Coordination Group; Moderator: Dan Perell, Baha'i International Community.

Link: www.youtube.com/@faithsatcop15





With Valérie Plante,
the Mayor of Montreal,



With Elizabeth Maruma Mrema
Executive Secretary of the CBD



Talanoa Dialogue

Talanoa Dialogue was the kick off activity at the Multifaith pavilion at COP15. Talanoa Dialogues are the way indigenous people of Fiji solve the crisis they are facing, by meeting and having dialogues, exploring and responding together to the questions: where are we at?, where do we want to go? and how do we get there?

At the beginning of the activity, Valériane Bernard welcomed everyone and set up the context of this dialogue at the CBD COP 15 and invited Yves Lador from 'Earth Justice' and Ben Schachter from the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights to share about the importance of the CBD COP in terms of Human Rights. She then invited Gopal Patel from Bhumi Global to speak on the role of Faith Based Organizations at the COP15.

The group of people was then invited to join one of the different facilitators to have a dialogue on Human Rights - facilitated by David, Food systems - facilitated by Aneta or Implementation - facilitated by Juan and respond together to the questions: where are we at?, where do we want to go? and how do we get there? After the dialogues, people from each group were invited to feedback on what they took from the dialogue they were in. The activity endend with a moment of meditation.

