



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

Report 2: December 9-11, 2022



Friday, December 9

The Brahma Kumaris delegation entered the 3rd day of the UN Biodiversity Conference COP15 in Montreal. It was another busy day, negotiations in UN CBD COP15 showed signs of progress. Many wondered, however, whether the pace is fast enough to make it to the finish line on time. Deliberations on the global biodiversity framework (GBF) bore some results, although incessant disagreements on its goals indicate that parties' visions on the future of global biodiversity governance still differ.



CEPA Fair side event

Holistic approaches for raising awareness and changing behavior - fostering harmonious consciousness and lifestyle.

The Communication, Education, and Public Awareness (CEPA) program is an important instrument to address the lack of public awareness of the importance of biodiversity.

The CEPA Fair consists of two components:

- 1) a virtual exhibition of outreach materials and
- 2) thematic side events (discussions, presentations, or performances).

The Brahma Kumaris' virtual exhibition, presenting the approach and work of Brahma Kumaris related to biodiversity can be found here:

<https://www.cbd.int/article/cop15-cepa-fair-virtual-exhibitions#brahma>



The Brahma Kumaris and A Rocha International hosted a panel discussion and dialogue on holistic approaches for raising awareness and changing behavior- fostering harmonious consciousness and lifestyle.

The moderator, David Fletcher from Brahma Kumaris introduced the topic by sharing that real change - major changes in the world and the life of an individual - occur as a sequence of subtle shifts beginning with a change of awareness.



Sarah French, Director of International Operations for A Rocha International shared how A Rocha in its projects aims to reconnect people with nature so that people can make better choices in their lives.

Juan Vazquez, from Brahma Kumaris, shared that the aim of his work is to empower people by allowing them to go within so they can access their spiritual technologies to live in harmony with nature and sense the deep connection people have with nature and the cosmos.

Kevin Lunzalu, a marine biologist from Kenya, and an activist in the Youth Biodiversity Network shared that we lived now in a world where the economy is over ecology. "My religion says we are custodians and I hope they create stewards of nature.



Kusumita Pedersen from the Parliament of World Religions and a trustee and member of the climate action task force reminded the audience that all the different paths have some teachings about the relationship with nature.

Angela Davidson, Rainbow eyes from the Green Party of Canada spoke about the call of the forest, about the importance of the healing that happens when you 'breathe the forest soup', when you hear and follow the call of the Creator and the order of the elders.

As the last part, David engaged the panelists and audience in pair dialogues and asked them to share what touched and surprised them during the discussions.

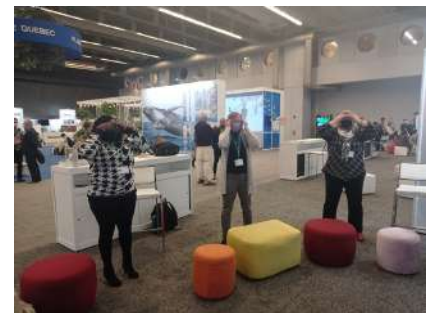
The event ended with a moment of meditation guided by Juan.

Peace Break

The Brahma Kuamris delegates, building on experience from the past UN Conferences, proposed to organize regular moments of peace, every day at the Faith Pavilion. The first Peace Break happened on Friday and it was coordinated by the BKs. It was agreed, that various faith traditions would share the coordination of the 30 min session for the next week.



The peace break started with Anne-Christelle leading a meditation in movement, feeling the connection between the soul and matter (body and nature). Then Aneta conducted personal reflection on one of the thoughts from Ecosynthesis - the BK statement prepared for the Biodiversity COP15. After sharing by all participants, Aneta led the final meditation.



Vitamin 'N' Environmental Education for a 'N'ature positive future

This was another session co-organized by the BK with A Rocha in the Multifaith Pavilion. The session started with Aneta asking participants to share about two values that would help create harmony with Nature, if everyone would live them.



After asking them to share, Aneta invited them to imagine what a new world would be like. She then presented one of the goals of the BK organization: to enable everyone to foster and to grow values within and to be able to use them in practical life. Aneta then shared about three meanings that can be associated with the word 'Nature'. The first one was about Newness. Creating newness starts within ourselves by cultivating the right thoughts which will influence our feelings, actions, relationships, habits and even our cultures. Stating that 'I am rich inside' gives birth to a complete trajectory in life, as opposed to believing 'I am lacking this or that...'.



Another meaning was then about nurturing, nourishing. If our awareness is positive, the atmosphere created by people living up to their values will then be of a benevolent and nurturing one. Finally, the value of nobility was presented as a direct result of being a bestower and living up to the ideal of serving others and of giving back to Nature all what it offers so generously to us. Aneta finally presented BK initiatives as practical applications of living up to these three values: 10 Ways to Change the World and Kalp Taruh. She also shared the resource of Living Values Educations: Caring for Earth and Her Oceans". The session ended up with a short moment of reflection and sharing blessings.



Saturday, December 10

Plenary statements gave a good reflection of the state of play. It is clear that efforts of the next half of the Conference will continue to concentrate on finalizing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF). At the same time, a successful outcome will require significant commitments regarding resource mobilization, means of implementation etc. Striking a balance between ambition and pragmatism, as COP 15 President Huang Runqiu put it, will be key in reaching consensus. In the lead-up to the high-level segment, there were clear calls to negotiators to do their best to make progress on all fronts. On the occasion of International Human Rights Day, many underscored that equity and solidarity need to guide negotiations to ensure a just and effective implementation of any commitment.

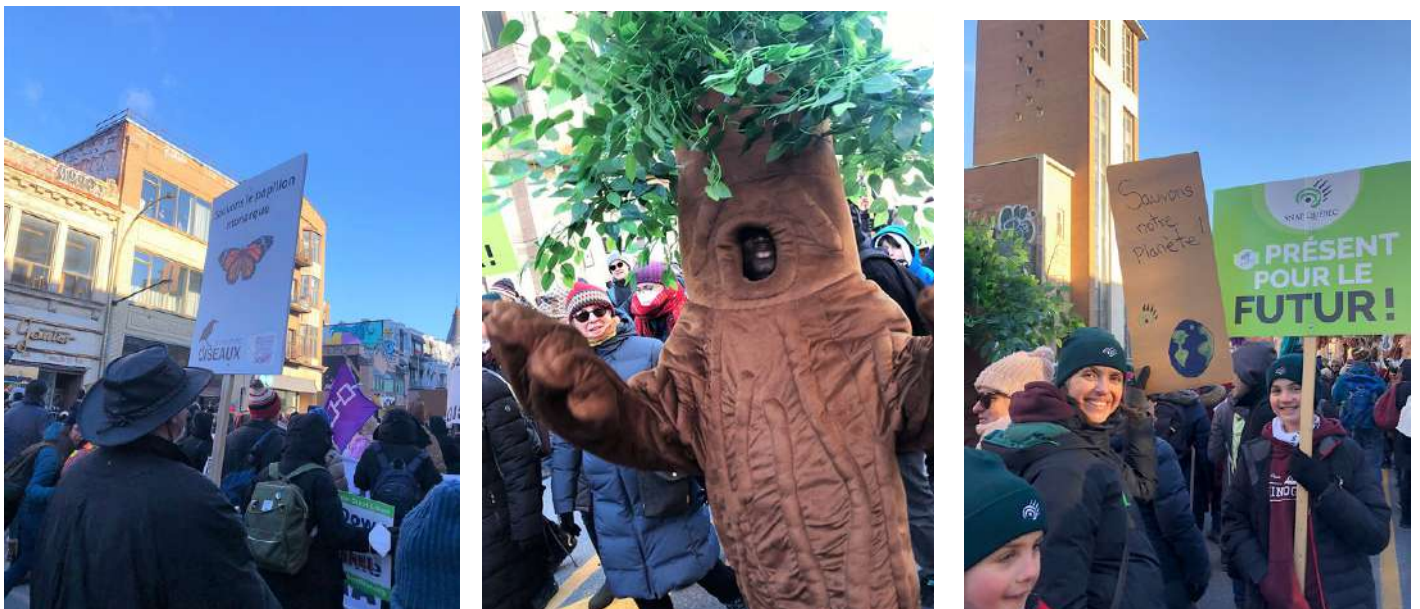


Grande marche pour le vivant / March for Biodiversity and Human Rights

On Saturday a March for Biodiversity and Human Rights took place in Montreal. It was organized by the Quebec Civil Society Collective for COP15, which regroups 85+ organizations mobilizing for biodiversity protection in the context of COP15, along with local and international allies.

The convening highlighted that we are one with nature, human rights have to be protected. Together, we can halt nature's decline, as well as fully respecting human rights and Indigenous peoples' rights. Together, we have the opportunity to propose a new social vision based on the preservation of all forms of life. No Biodiversity framework without human rights. Conservation cannot be done without indigenous peoples and local communities.

Juan marched for biodiversity and human rights, together with other CSOs.



Peace Break on Saturday was prepared and conducted by Amy from the Missionary Society of St Columban. We heard reading from the Old Testament and then we all reflected on it and finished with a moment of silence. It was a very sweet and inclusive moment of peace.

On Saturday some of us found time to go out and breath in the fresh air outside :-), plus spend some very warm time with friends in Montreal.



St. Columban, Ireland's sixth century missionary .



And finally... Green Angels' team is complete!



Sunday, December 11

Sunday December 11th was a beautiful day spent mainly in the vibrations of the Montreal Centre and family. After a lovely murli with sis. Maureen, who joined us the previous day, and sharing breakfast we were all blessed with a conversation with Sister Jayanti. She greeted Eric, Anne-Christelle, Tanya and the Montreal family and thanked them for what great service they are doing and then met with the Green Team. She had some questions about how the COP was progressing and then gave her blessings. All team members were deeply touched by the interaction.



In the evening a reception was held for friends from the COP15. Guests were greeted with hot apple cider and felt the warm hospitality of the centre throughout their stay. Friends from the local ISKON temple, local work acquaintances and colleagues from other provinces were joined by COP delegates from USA, UK, India, Scotland, Phillipines, and elsewhere. Guests were treated to a short talk and meditation by Sister Maureen, a beautiful buffet of snacks prepared by the Montreal BKs and were all presented with a bottle of maple syrup as a gift. .



After the reception other guests joined and we were treated to a panel discussion on Faith and Biodiversity. It was a deep discussion with diverse voices united to protect nature and support a flourishing future. Gopal Patel, founder of Bhumi Global a Hindu environmental organization and coordinator of the CBD multifaith group, introduced the role of faith groups within the CBD COP and got us off to an inspired start. Maureen Goodman, BKWSU was then joined on a panel by Dr Alexandra Masako Gosserens, SGI, Dr Husna Ahmad, Global One and Joy Kennedy, WCC. Valerieane Bernard, BKWSU facilitated the discussion which flowed easily and naturally between the panelists. They shared many profound ideas from their own faith traditions related to respect and love for all living things on the planet, and what was most touching was how similar they valued the relationship with nature whether they were speaking from a Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist or BK perspective. One guest, Liza Zogibb from Diverse Earth and IUCN, was so moved she stood up and performed a traditional Bharat Natyam dance for us. It was beautiful! Everyone seemed truly touched.

