



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

Report 3: December 12-14



Monday, December 12

As the Un Biodiversity Conference COP15 entered its second and final week, negotiation streams multiplied and intensified. The flow of participants increased noticeably in negotiating rooms but also in spaces hosting side-events and the Rio Conventions Pavilion. The Brahma Kumaris delegation being a member of Multigaigh Group for Biodiversity had a busy week ahead.



One million species are at risk of extinction. Wildlife populations have dropped by 69% since 1970. It's time to change course. Outside of the formal negotiations, COP15 featured the Rio Conventions Pavilion, Business Forum, Gender Caucus, Youth Forum, as well as interactive dialogues and high-level roundtables that were to bring together stakeholders from public and private sectors, civil society and academia to find solutions to some of the most pressing environmental problems we face today. As part of this the conference centre organized a Nature Positive Pavilion.

Awakening a Flourishing Future at Nature Positive Pavilion



The Brahma Kumaris hosted an intimate gathering at the Nature Positive Pavilion, which was called Awakening a Flourishing Future.

To truly awaken a flourishing future an attitudinal shift and deep commitment in peoples' hearts and minds are needed. The spiritual power from within can catalyze radical positive change.

Members of the BK delgation together with a few others who came, had a moment of deep reflection and beautiful meditation spreading positive vibrations to negotiators, observes at the COP15 and the whole nature.



Everyday the BK delegates enjoyed the delicious, vegan lunch prepared the beautiful BK family in Montreal. Lots of gratitude



FBP meeting with CBD Executive Secretary

Faith Based Organisations had a meeting with Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). She was very warm, sweet and kind, in her address to us, she said that: "All scriptures say a lot about nature. Religion is to do with being and the other stakeholders are just in the doing. We all know the power of faith, it gives power to the communities and your communities are the first on the ground taking action. We (the CBD) need you, we need people to listen to the voice of faith, the voice of being. Faith Based Organisations can help the CBD a lot because it is thanks to their beliefs that people will take action. Please remind people where we originated and where we come from". She also said that our task was to translate the biodiversity work in a language people could understand. At some point she also said that it is because people have not followed the teachings of their faiths, that there is suffering today. If people do follow the teachings of their faith they will have food to eat. Faith organisations are main influencers, even negotiators are also coming from faith.





Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity



Daily **Peace Break** at Multifaith Pavilion was conducted by Abdullah from Bahu Trust in Birmingham, UK. He started with the prayer from his Muslim tradition and then we all were sharing reflections on why we are committed in the service of people and nature, and our challenges and experiences in community, warm service in various places. It was a very inspiring, respectful and hopeful gathering.



FBO Press Conference

The Brahma Kumaris organised a multi faith press conference : “Spiritual imperative and moral urgency of an ambitious GBF”. Valeriane moderated the panel; Gopal Patel from Bhumi Global who has been coordinating the multifaith group at COP15 shared that there were about 30 FBOs present at the COP15 to advocate for a strong GBF, from christian, buddhist, hindu, muslim and catholic faiths.

Maureen Goodman, UN Representative in Vienna and Head of BKWSU Delegation to COP15 introduced the concept of ecosynthesis that takes into account the eco systems of the planet and also the importance of human consciousness and Divine connection. Our consciousness impacts our decision making, choices and action, and therefore the quality of our relationship with nature. For future generations to thrive, we need to act now with respect, care and selflessness. If I first care for myself, I will be able to care for others around me and for the earth. We can understand if we are moving forward with this consciousness when we cease to be overtaken by external influences around me and act on the basis of our inner core values.

Caroline Kiiru from Laudato Si Movement shared about the Laudato Si' document, that has been very powerful and important document for people in the Catholic faith and other religions. The Laudato Si is a letter from the Pope to inspire. It was created to impact people positively as individuals, it seeks to enhance the common good. It recommends to see, judge and act. Laudato si action platform is for local communities and has the aim to protect our common home.

Lauren Van Ham, from the United Religions Initiative, URI shared about the need to have indigenous and faith movement to cooperate. Shae said: "We need to address the moral urgency. We have created a guide book showcasing initiatives, such as collecting water in India, planting trees in Malawi. It is wonderful to see FBOs come together to take care of things on the ground and make efforts together for eco restorations and protecting cities."



After the press conference, sister Maureen and Juan were interviewed by the journalist from the USA who was very curious to learn about the role of FBOs in restoring biodiversity and asked about many aspects of philosophy and activities of the Brahma Kumaris in this respect.



at the conference venue -
Palais des Congrès de Montréal



Tuesday, December 13

Rio Conventions Pavilion: Restoration Day

The opening day of the Rio Conventions Pavilion (RCP) addressed the theme of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

In the opening session of the day, the UN's First Ten World Restoration Flagships were announced, spanning 23 countries with the objective of producing diverse examples of ecosystem restoration.

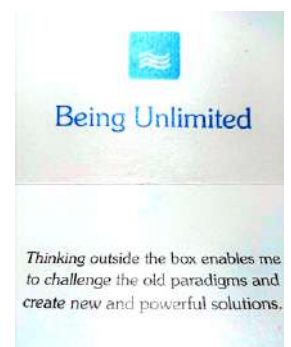
The BKs were very happy to learn that the Great Green Wall has been selected as one of the flagships. In June 2022 the BK started Peace Drops for the Great Green Wall, a meditation initiative, with a new program being released on the 2nd Sunday of each month. All programs can be watched at YouTube @BKEnvironment.



Meeting with
Sahara and Sahel
Observatory.

Moderator Tim Christophersen from Salesforce, highlighted the power of volunteering and ownership, stating that #generationrestoration was a “fast growing social movement that is now unstoppable”.

He quoted the greeting / blessing card he had received from the Brahma Kumaris before the program: Being Unlimited. He said it was a very good start of the day, a reminder that we can and in this case, we must think out of the box to create new and powerful solutions.



Peace Break

Today's peace moment was conducted by Chris from World Evangelical Alliance. A good number of people gathered in Multifaith Pavilion, listened to Christian religious songs, reflected and prayed together, creating peaceful atmosphere in the convention center.



Press Conference of the Brahma Kumaris

Shift our mindsets:

NGO from India inspires a conscious shift in awareness to reach global targets

BKWSU has released a discussion paper titled *Awakening a Flourishing Future* to stimulate thinking among delegates. It is the belief of the BKWSU that a values-based, spiritual awareness that is the most important to truly allow us to achieve a harmonious ecological civilization by 2050. David Fletcher from Halifax moderated the press conference, he asked Valérieane to present Brahma Kumaris and Maureen to speak on the natural Sustainable Yogic Farming. Valeriane Bernard, BKWSU UN Representative in Geneva introduced the Brahma Kumaris. She spoke about the different lines of work of the BKs at the UN in the field of Interfaith, climate change and ecology. She also spoke of Kalp Taruh a new project of the Brahma Kumaris tree plantation applying values.



Sr Maureen Goodman, Head of BKWSU Delegation to COP 15, told the success story about natural sustainable yogic farming and the betterment of the quality of life farmers who have been doing this work.

Then, Juan Vazquez Milling, BKWSU UN Representative introduced the paper on Biodiversity. The document is about changing our mindset - to perceive every element of the ecosystem as sacred, with its unique value. It's an invitation to experience the self, understand and experiment with the connection with Divine to open our hearts, fill them with compassion and power to use them then to take the right decisions and actions. Ecosynthetis bridges the physical world with biodiversity and inner dimension to harness spiritual energy. At the end Sr Maureen conducted a moment of meditation.

This press conference can be watched: [YouTube@cdb-live9013](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cdb-live9013)



Just after
the Press Conference:
discussion and
celebration



Human Rights and Faith event with David R. Boyd, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment

This was a very inspiring panel coordinated by our friend Kusumita of the Parliament of World Religions. The main speaker was the author of 9 books including, *The Rights of Nature*, David Boyd. He spoke about our dependence on the planet for the air we breathe and all the food we eat. He shared how the right “to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment” has now been entrenched in many UN discourses after many years of advocacy with a coalition of 1400 different organizations. He mentioned progress being made in understanding the reciprocal relationship between people and the planet which has been learned from Indigenous People. He also mentioned how the rights of nature si now seen as compelling and it is gaining recognition with many groups – even being included in the national constitution in Ecuador. He referred to a 2017 InterAmerican Court advisory that recognizes the complimentary nature beteen the human right to a health environment and the rights of nature.



Lucy Mullenkei, IPAC; Charles MacNeil, UNEP Interfaith Rainforest Initiative; and Alexandra, SGI also spoke eloquently. Lucy about how all water and land should be treated as sacred, Charles about involvement of religious groups responding to a call for action protecting the rights of indigenous people in big projects in Brazil, Indonesia, Columbia and DRC; and Alexandra giving an update on negotiations. SHuman Rights and the CBD and inseparable issues!



with
Karenn Gore,
Center for
Earth Ethics
and
Aditi Mishal,
Govardhan
Ecovillage

Values, Culture, Spirituality, and Ecosystem Restoration event organized by Center For Earth Ethics; United Religions Initiative at Mulrifaith Pavilion.

Wednesday, December 14

Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Caucus - Morning Briefing

A very interesting briefing that morning – the NGO people present are knowledgeable and on top of the issues. Unfortunately, there also seemed to be a lot of frustration, pessimism, blaming, and “prescribing intent” to others. Valeriane and David sent them good wishes. Some of the updates they shared:

- Resource mobilization is stalled – developing countries walked out of meetings at midnight last night
- Harmful agricultural subsidies – debating between “eliminate” or “reform” – a few parties strong on eliminate, but others like India say that is impossible for them to do
- NGOs feel no ambition and no commitments from Canada, Australia and EU
- Financing discussing resources “from all sources” – caution is this could then include carbon credit kind of purchases for greenwashing which would be a disaster



Negotiations continue.



Discussions around the venue.

Contact Group Negotiations Stalled!

David attended the Capacity Building and Scientific and Technology Transfer contact group. The intention was to go through their CPR (conference room paper) line by line to report to plenary. Brazil, Columbia, Costa Rica and Mexico spoke up and said they are not willing to negotiate further until some progress is made on “resource mobilization”. Their argument was they came to COP 15 with an ambitious agenda as they were asked, but have found there is very little commitment in resource mobilization. They feel it is unproductive to continue negotiations for an ambitious agenda unless there is some movement on resource mobilization issues. When asked if they would leave the room if others began discussing the issues line by line – recognizing they would still have the right to comment in the future or in plenary - they and a number of other countries raised their hands that they would leave the room. The contact group session was therefore drawn to a close.



Delegates conferring during a contact group on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework



View of the room during a contact group on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

Peace Break

Aditi from Govardhan Ecovillage took care of facilitating the space at the Faith pavilion on that day. She took the participants on a trip to the amazing perfect world of Vrindavan

She led us with so much love to that divine world of beauty and bliss under a kalpa tree then took us in a field where colourful cows and dancing peacocks were blissfully eating and singing . She invited us to go in the pristine River and playfully splash each other. It was a very sweet experience, spreading the waves of peace and joy around the venue.

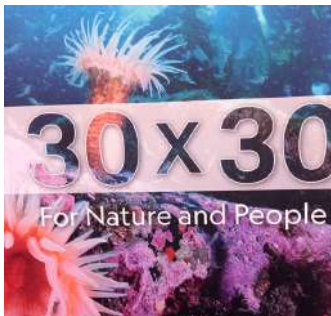


Govardhan EcoVillage, India Dr Aditi Mishal at MultiFaith Pavillion

Our friend Aditi gave a detailed presentation on the work of the Govardhan EcoVillage, biodiversity, spirituality and ecosystem restoration. The EcoVillage is in Palghar District, Maharashtra, 90 minutes north of Mumbai. It started in 2003 and was given UN accreditation in 2016. Its work is based on three pillars: spirituality, sustainability and social impact. Aditi explained how the holistic approach touches on all 17 of the SDGs, by working through collaboration and convergence. The village's programs serve tribals with schools, health camps, geriatric homes, organic farming support, rainwater harvesting ponds etcetera. 100 species of local rice, millets and vegetables are grown on 347 acres of land and seeds made available to farmers. Sustainable education programs are run for urban youth to learn about life in a sustainable rural community. It was an inspiring story. More can be learned at <https://ecovillage.org.in/sustainability/>

Around the venue:





In the Heart of a Better World Public Program at the BK Center

On Thursday evening Valeriane Bernard was interviewed by Anne-Christelle for the public who came to the BK center. The program was in French and Anne-Christelle asked Valeriane about her spiritual journey and her experience on how to make the world a better place.

Valeriane shared how human beings always want to make their life better, let it be their home, relationship, or health. She said that if we start and continue to look at ourselves and focus first on the self, we create in our hearts the energy of peace, respect, and love, and then it influences our relationships and life outside, as we act with appreciation, gratitude, respect, compassion, etc.

But if we just want to improve things outside, then it can lead to us being controlling, demanding, and expecting which will bring a different result, opposite to what we desire.

Program in French can be watched at [YouTube@BrahmaKumarisMontreal](#)

