

Living in Harmony

Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative



Report from Climate Change Conference COP20 in Lima

Wednesday 10th Dec. - Full day at COP for BK's

The International day of Human Rights stated at COP20 with some morning events-meetings. In the afternoon our main programs at COP took place, a press conference and a side event called "Ethics at the Heart of Climate Change".

Interfaith initiatives



Brief descriptions of several interfaith initiatives were discussed in this meeting. "Fast For The Climate", an initiative that includes a wide diversity of faith and secular participants, continues to grow. "Fasting on the first of the month" continues, with a growing number of participants and groups worldwide. Also, on each day, between now and COP 21, at least one person will fast, with people fasting from different regions of the world at different times of the year.

Exploring collaboration with OurVoices - This international, multi-faith initiative consists of peaceful, public, spiritual expressions of support for a strong climate agreement (such as the interfaith service prior to the Climate March and the recent "#LightForLima" vigils on 7th December which took place in 15 countries) combined with digital/social media outreach. We are excited to find ways to collaborate with "OurVoices".

Peace and Justice Pilgrimage in Relation to COP 21 - This campaign is self-organizing – and is already active through groups in Europe, Africa, and elsewhere. In some cases, the pilgrimage will be an actual pilgrimage to Paris, and elsewhere there will be local adaptations.

Brahma Kumaris Press Conference at UNFCCC - "Ethics at the Heart of Climate Change" (See full report of side event appendix 1)

Valeriane Bernard moderated, and invited **Guillermo Kerber, Programme Executive, World Council of Churches** to open. He began by emphasizing that it was Human Rights Day and that climate Change is affecting the rights of people, the rights to food, and the rights to water.



Picture (right to left): Guillermo Kerber, president of the World Council of Churches; Sister Gayatri, Golo Pilz, and Juan Vasquez for the Brahma Kumaris.

Golo Pilz, Advisor Renewable Energy, Brahma Kumaris

Spoke of the need for a paradigm shift saying that we are all aware of climate change and its fundamental consequences for the future of human life on earth – we have to act now. The understanding of the Brahma Kumaris is that any fundamental change in this world has to be initiated by an uplifted consciousness and awareness. Any transformation has to come first from ourselves, from the inside; we then become an example of a change we want to see in the world.

Gayatri Naraine, UN Representative, Brahma Kumaris, New York, said: "Today is Human Rights Day and Article 1 of the Declaration on Human Rights states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." Looking at dignity through the lens of hope, I believe that, even though it is human behavior and lifestyle that are cited as one of the main reasons for climate change, it is also the human family, the human race who holds the greatest hope for the direction we want to take our world and lives.

Juan Milling, Brahm Kumaris' Youth Representative, said: " Ethics being at the heart of Climate Change is something I feel that youth can connect to. I live in Canada, and like all of us, my life is made up of choices: Do I choose to buy a locally grown apple or an apple from New Zealand. I like to practice a low carbon lifestyle, I have been coming to COP by bike.

To watch the entire press conference, click the following link:
<http://unfccc6.meta-fusion.com/cop20/events/2014-12-10-14-00-brahma-kumaris-world-spiritual-university-ethics-at-the-heart-of-climate-change>



After the Press conference, Golo was interviewed by the journalist Tomas d'Ornellas Radziwill from "spectrummedia". He asked questions about Solar Energy and it's future in Peru.

Side event – “Ethics at the heart of Climate Change”

The COP side event arranged by the Brahma Kumaris and Abibimman Foundation was presided by Dr Curtis Doebber. He began with a short introduction saying: *“human rights are reflections of human values.”*

Dr Renate Christ as the secretary of the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change (IPCC) gave a power point presentation of the impact of Climate Change, from the latest report that had recently been published. Scientific information of the data collected and some mathematical modeling showed the negative effects of human activities with the planet. *“This influence has been perverse, severe, irreversible and is non sustainable for the future. Therefore, ethics have an important impact in these discussions, because it is necessary to take immediate action. Also, it is an important topic for decision makers. If we continue with the actual trend, we predict that in ten years there will be an increase of 2.2° of global temperature.”*

Impacts of Climate Change are: food and water shortages, increased displacement of people, growth in poverty, coastal flooding, increases in the level of the sea, extreme temperatures, extreme storms, hurricanes, etc”.

Then, Stuart Scott gave ‘a state of the art’ presentation illustrating an understanding of the Climate Change problem in terms of our economic system. In the system we have now we use money as a proxy for human values, the ethical dimension is lost.

How can we leave out of the economic system the relevance of the limits of the resources of the Earth. We must quickly learn that money is less valuable than the earth. There is a life affirming economic system – ecological economics. He suggested this was a far better sustainable system.



Picture (left to right): John Crowley, Chief of the section research, policy and foresight at Unesco; Dr Renate Christ, secretary of the IPCC; Stuart Scott, Founder of the United Planet Faith and Science Initiative; Golo Pilz, Adviser Renewable Energy, Brahma Kumaris; Sister Gayatri Naraine, representative of Brahma Kumaris at the UN in New York; Dr Curtis F. J. Doebber, Professor of Law at Webster University in Geneva.

Golo Pilz considered ethics as a reason for changes in awareness and consciousness. As a meditator of the Brahma Kumaris, he inspired people to infuse ethics and values in their lifestyles. *"We also promote a vegetarian lifestyle, which has many benefits. One is better climate security. Understanding that any fundamental change in this world has to be initiated by an elevated consciousness and awareness. Any transformation has to come first from ourselves, from inside. We must become an example of the change we want to see in the world"*.

Also, he introduced to the audience the "India One" solar energy project. Since the mid 90's the Brahma Kumaris became one of the key developers and promoters in solar institutional cooking systems and solar photovoltaic power stations in India.

Sister Gayatri talked of ethics as part of our belief systems. Also, that *"Ethics is nourished by bhavna, that is a hindi word meaning pure feelings from the heart. So, the heart of hope is a collective human experience. There is a connection between*

the heart and the mind. However, to generate actions, courage is necessary. Less is more: we don't need as much. To help our planet we can live naturally, in a lotus life style. We can awaken new habits from the heart, for a whole system. We can look at the whole system, in a holistic way. We human beings are linked to other human beings and to the environment. Habits are connected with life in a cyclical way. Our hearts can bring all sectors together".

John Crowley of UNESCO introduced the topic under three questions: What makes Climate Change an ethical issue? What makes Climate Change challenging? What should be done about it? What has UNESCO done about it?

He spoke eloquently of many of many considerations: One aspect was 'causal responsibility' – who caused it and who has a duty to fix it even if no one had done it is still an ethical question. We have foreknowledge, the scientific knowledge, we have to assign responsibility, without this we have an ethical concern but no action – we can say we are deeply worried, but so what!

It is important to bring ethics and policies closer together. What counts as just and unjust? Ethics can make visible what is already there, it may not make it easier but it may shift things a bit.

Panel - "Men and Women Taking Action on Gender Equality and Climate Change; How Far Have we Come?" Gender day at COP20.

The President of COP, the Peruvian President, opened this High Level event by saying that *"women are in charge of the most important things in the family and have many answers to adaptation. It is time to recognize women's leadership"*.

Mary Robinson - Special Envoy on Climate Change. She spoke, highlighting facts from the 3rd Annual Gender Day at COP and stated that "Women's Rights are Human Rights". She finished her statement by quoting from a powerful woman Wangari Maatha: *"In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now."*



Susan McDade, UNDP (United Nations Development Program) Deputy Assistant Administrator underlined the idea that *"we need a good database on the issues that face women in climate change. UNEP rational is if you can't see it, it doesn't exist and if you can't count it, it doesn't exist!"*

Other panelist to this event were Laxmi Puri, Deputy Executive Secretary of UN WOMEN; H.E. Ms. Maria del Carmen Omonte Durand, Minister of Women and Vulnerable Populations, Peru; and Klever Descarpontriez, College of the Atlantic/Earth UNFCCC constituency of youth NGO's. For more details, please read **Appendix 2**.

Youth meeting

The participation of Brahma Kumaris youth in COP20 was appreciated for the family. Then, a meeting took place at the center for a heart to heart conversation: each one shared their experiences and how meditation and spirituality has changed their life.



Thursday 11th Dec.

Meeting with friends at the hearth of the confluence Age

The local Brahma Kumaris and the international delegation invited friends of BK family, old and new to a networking breakfast.

Afterwards, Sister Gayatri shared spiritual points on how to increase inner resilience. These were much appreciated and further questions were asked by the gathering which lead to a very interesting exchange.



Round table – Climate Change and the Civilization Paradigm. Universidad Ricardo Palma.

Over two days, the University convened a panel of activists, experts and academics to discuss “Roads to Sustainability and Climate Change”. Environmental Science Dimension; Economic Dimension; Social Policy Dimension; Educational Dimension;

Architectural Dimension.” For the “Ethics and Cultural Dimension:” Brahma Kumaris UN Representative, Dr Tamasin Ramsay (Environmental Anthropologist and NGO Representative to the United Nations) spoke. The paradigm of human attitudes is clearly becoming a key topic in climate change discussions, more than the technical side of things, to which discussions have been limited to in the past.



Tamasin spoke about the spiritual dimension as the foundation of culture and ethics. *“The deepest cause of the problem we call ‘climate change’ is a disconnect between human beings, and the living and non-living worlds they inhabit, starting with the ecosystem of their own body. Since the industrial revolution, people have come to believe that things in their raw and*

unprocessed form have little value. Our tendency today is to value things once they have been altered, manufactured, manipulated, processed, packaged and finished off with a price tag. This is also the case with our own bodies. We rarely leave them untainted, but we alter them, color them, adjust and adapt them. We do the same with the physical world. We process it, mine it, dig, extract, fracking and build without due consideration”. For more information, please read **Appendix 2.**

Meeting with Ministers

Sister Gayatri and Julia from New York and others of the BK delegation had a one-hour meeting with the foreign minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Winston Dookeran, whom they had recently met in New York in September after the UN General Assembly and his visit to Peace Village. The focus of the conversation was self-transformation and the importance of youth came up.





After the meeting, while walking in the open space of the COP venue, a **TV Peru** Journalist stopped Sister Gayatri. She was asked two very direct questions: Q 1: What is your view on the COP20 process? A: It is good that the conference continues to take place as it serves to keep a momentum going and although the pace of mitigation is moving at snail's pace, the fact that people come together and remind themselves

and the world of what climate change is all about is important and a cause for hope.

Q 2: What is your message for Lima? Lima, you are beautiful. Too many cars in the road, but nevertheless beautiful. To the people, thanks for hosting COP 20 and for having us all and for making it so easy for us to live in the City.

Under the trees in the garden of COP venue, Golo met the **German Environment Minister Mrs. Barbara Hendricks.**



He gave the India One brochure, explained about the project and thanked the support of BMUB (German acronym of the Ministry of the Environment). He also advised her of the good progress of India One and expressed his hopes she may come for inauguration at the end of 2015.

Both Sister Gayatri and Golo met with Edna Molawa, Ministry of Environment of South Africa, whom they knew previously. They conveyed greetings from the Brahma Kumaris.

BK Program – “Creating the future we want” – Congress of Peru

The evening BK program was opened by an artistic performance. Juan Vasquez, BK youth representative was the moderator of the event.

The congressman and panelist Modesto Julca opened the conference, welcoming the participants and drawing their attention to *“the essence of our society lies on the relationship we have with nature and the environment”*.



Afterwards, Juan said *“Creating the future we want starts with our thoughts and our power to meditate”*. Juan asked the panelist to share their thoughts of how to create the future we want.



Panelists were: François Becher, Moira Lowe, Sister Gayatri from Brahma Kumaris. Modesto Julca First Vice-President of the Congress; Freddy Ehlers, Minister of “buen vivir” (Good Living or Sumak Kawsay in quechua) of Ecuador; Juan Vasquez and Nonie Reaño of Brahma Kumaris, Peru.

Freddy Ehlers started saying that the world has changed drastically and that the solution to our problems is in nature. But he felt that there is an awakening *"We are the ones that have to change"*. He concluded with the following story: *"Once Gandhi was approached by a mother and she asked him to tell her son to stop eating sugar because he was very sick (the boy admired Gandhi so he would obey him). But Gandhi asked the mother to return in a month. After a month she and her son returned and Gandhi asked the boy to stop eating sugar so the boy did it. But the mother was curious to know why Gandhi asked her to return in a month to tell her son something so simple. Gandhi replied that he had to stop eating sugar first so he had the right to ask the boy to do so"*.

Sister Gayatri said, *"There is resistance to clean our world because our feelings and thoughts are not clean. We prefer to paint a dirty wall instead of cleaning it up first. Resistance comes when we do not know how to use our own resources; when we think we can control them; when we grow up with a false identity. So, we think our car is our identity, or our clothes are our identity. Stop thinking that way and you will stop resisting"*, she concluded.

Then François believed that a better world is one where we all feel in harmony, where we are in tune. *"Peace means to reach our own rhythm and to be in tune with ourselves. When we feel in tune with ourselves, we feel content and therefore we don't have any wish. Besides being in peace, we have to reach silence. Where there is silence, there is God"*, François concluded.

Read more at: www.environment.brahmakumaris.org

Appendix 1 Brahma Kumaris Press Conference at UNFCCC.

Valeriane Bernard moderated, and invited **Guillermo Kerber, Programme Executive, World Council of Churches to open**. He began by emphasizing that it was Human Rights Day and that climate Change is affecting the rights of people, the rights to food, and the rights to water. He stated that ethics is indeed at the Heart of Climate Change. In Geneva they have a committee, the Geneva Interfaith Forum (GIF) (members include the Brahma Kumaris, the World Council of Churches and others), to remind us that beneath the discussion of human rights there is an ethical and justice issue. GIF have called for the establishment of a special rapporteur on climate Change in the Human Rights Council. He concluded by saying that to reverse the negative effects of Climate Change it is important to bring ethics and values back into the discussions.

Golo Pilz, Advisor Renewable Energy, Brahma Kumaris spoke of the need for a paradigm shift saying that we are all aware of climate change and its fundamental consequences for the future of human life on earth – we have to act now. The understanding of the Brahma Kumaris is that any fundamental change in this world has to be initiated by an uplifted consciousness and awareness. Any transformation

has to come first from ourselves, from the inside; we then become an example of a change we want to see in the world. It is time to 'Walk our talk' and in order to do so people need to be strengthened and empowered to take the right decision and choices. Meditation is a very powerful tool for such a self-transformation.

Golo then gave a short introduction to how the Brahma and its daughter organization, the World Renewal Spiritual Trust in India, bring practical examples of this shift in consciousness into the world. Golo Pilz continued: The Brahma Kumaris established a Department of Renewable Energy, which has become a very good opportunity for us to combine the spiritual lifestyle with renewable energies.

Since the mid 90's the Brahma kumaris became one of the key developers and promoters in solar institutional cooking systems and solar photo voltaic power stations in India. We have carried out various research and development projects with the Indian and German Government and received in 2011 official recognition, through the Ministry of Science and Technology, as a Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (SIRO).

At present we operate 6 large solar steam cooking systems across India, that produce steam for various process applications such as cooking food, laundry, sterilization and water pasteurization. Our biggest solar cooker can cook 35000 meals a days. In addition WRST has installed and operates around 350 photo voltaic battery systems (off grid) with a total capacity of more than 1.200 MW peak

In the beginning of 2011 the Trust initiated the design, development and installation of "India One", a 1 MW solar thermal power plant in Abu Road, Rajasthan.

This innovative R&D project is partly funded by the Indian Ministry for renewable energies (MNRE) and the German Ministry of environmental (BMUB via GIZ). The project features 770 numbers of newly developed 60m2 parabolic dishes with a thermal storage to generate heat and power continuously for 24 hrs. We do expect to go fully operational by end of 2015.

We believe that spirituality and technology shall join hands and that the fusion of both will drive us towards a better future. He then invited all to join us in our efforts.

Gayatri Naraine, UN Representative, Brahma Kumaris, New York, said: "Today is Human Rights Day and Article 1 of the Declaration on Human Rights states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

Looking at dignity through the lens of hope, I believe that, even though it is human behavior and lifestyle that are cited as one of the main reasons for climate change, it is also the human family, the human race who holds the greatest hope for the direction we want to take our world and lives.

The Brahma Kumaris focus on lifestyle; not just advocacy but through an awakening of a spiritual awareness - a part of the human consciousness that we have become disconnected from; in the same way that, we have become disconnected from our

natural environment. This awakening calls for us to reestablish a relationship between the inner and the outer climate.

Every human being has an inalienable right to peace, to love, to happiness, and this is something that is very much connected to human dignity. The heart is the inner dimension, and within the heart of the human being is also the conscience. If we are born with dignity, reason, and conscience -if we are going to awaken, and change our behavior, it has to be within the heart of the collective consciousness of the human race.

We need to awaken 'New Habits of the Hearts'. Habits of the Heart emerge from collective experience within a whole system: before I create a habit that can emerge from the domain of truth I have to connect to my inner consciousness, to being a living being and to relate to others as living beings and that we all exist in an environment that is living. We need to understand the cyclical patterns of life, not just focus on the parts of the whole but on the whole system. In the domain of the heart we are able to think the problems through together and reach solutions from seeing and understanding climate change from a holistic perspective. Then the will to act will to change behaviors and lifestyle will not come from what we need to give up but from what we want to reestablish and reconnect with".

Juan Milling, Brahm Kumaris' Youth Representative, said: " Ethics being at the heart of Climate Change is something I feel that youth can connect to. I live in Canada, and like all of us, my life is made up of choices: Do I choose to buy a locally grown apple or an apple from New Zealand. I like to practice a low carbon lifestyle, I have been coming to COP by bike. This act reduces (my carbon footprint, but also contributes – to my health, and also the health of the city, it has an influence on the streets, not just effecting traffic, but it shows me that I do have an effect and I can contribute. These examples of simple choices show us how ethics can work in our lifestyles. It gives us the power to contribute and make things flourish we can give to life and give to nature. Instead of consuming we are adding to the flame of life - when we see change hope arises immediately and hope is something no one can take away from you. This is something I can do as a youth and invite others to do this also".

Appendix 2. Panel - "Men and Women Taking Action on Gender Equality and Climate Change; How Far Have we Come?" Gender Day at COP20.

Laxmi Puri, Deputy Executive Secretary of UN WOMEN said: "*this is an historic moment, we are in the midst of celebrating the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing +20) and women are a priority for sustainable development. We now have a gender equality and women's empowerment Goal (Sustainable Development Goals) and we*

need to make sure we build on the tremendous progress we have made since 2010, until then UNFCCC was gender blind. Now, climate policies have more than 30 references to women. We must unite these two biggest projects of humanity of this century: women and climate”.

H.E. Ms. Maria del Carmen Omonte Durand, Minister of Women and Vulnerable Populations of Peru, said, *“We have many different climates in Peru: our Amazonia is a virtual drug store of solutions to health and to many issues of today. Peru has 50 different indigenous communities in rural areas and women are the ones who are most affected. So, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations in Peru, acknowledge the important position of women in climate change. It is a challenge - we need a representation of gender equality in politics, business, the public sector, and the community. Women have to be the ones who believe in themselves, be courageous and believe in their capacity. We are doing this - we have to participate in decision-making, we have to find our way into that space. So let us assume the challenge and work together and work in alliance with other women and men who want sustainable change. Human capital is our best resource and women are half of it”.*

Klever Descarpontriez, College of the “Atlantic/Earth”, UNFCCC constituency of youth NGOs said: *“We need to make our vision a reality with a transformative approach. I envisage a future where we have been able to unlock our creativity”.*

Appendix 3. Round table – Climate Change and the Civilization Paradigm. Universidad Ricardo Palma.

Over two days, the University convened a panel of activists, experts and academics to discuss Roads to Sustainability and Climate Change. Environmental Science Dimension: Ricardo Giesecke Sara Lafosse (physicist and former Environment Minister); Economic Dimension: Hugo Cabieses (former Deputy Minister of the Environment); Social Policy Dimension: Veronika Mendoza Frish (Congressman of the Republic of Peru); Ethics and Cultural Dimension: Tamasin Ramsay (Environmental Anthropologist and NGO Representative to the United Nations); Educational Dimension: Edmundo Murrugarra Florian (educator and researcher on Peruvian Reality); Architectural Dimension: Tanith Alortqui del Castillo (Professor, Faculty of Architecture, University of Ricardo Palma, Peru)

Experts spoke from their area, but what made it unique was that each one spoke about the need to address the foundation of human behavior as the sole solution to our global problems. The paradigm of human attitudes is clearly becoming a key topic in climate change discussions, more than the technical side of things, to which discussions have been limited in the past.

Tamasin spoke about the spiritual dimension as the foundation of culture and ethics. *“The deepest cause of the problem we call ‘climate change’ is a disconnect between human beings, and the living and non-living worlds they inhabit, starting with the*

ecosystem of their own body. Since the industrial revolution, people have come to believe that things in their raw and unprocessed form have little value. Our tendency today is to value things once they have been altered, manufactured, manipulated, processed, packaged and finished off with a price tag. This is also the case with our own bodies. We rarely leave them untainted, but we alter them, color them, adjust and adapt them. We do the same with the physical world. We process it, mine it, dig, extract, frack and build without due consideration. This dissatisfaction with our own bodies, and with the natural world means we now prioritize the plasticized and financial worlds above and beyond the elements that - in their purest state - which give us life and sustain us: water, earth, fire and air. Drawing on Australian aboriginal culture, Dr Tamasin introduced the fundamental concepts of Kanyini which is the relationship of care and responsibility one has with Country (the environment or natural world of living beings and non-living things)". These four building blocks of Kanyini are also the spiritual foundation of an ethical framework for climate change.

Aboriginal concept of an Ethical construct:

- tjukurrpa (dreamtime, creation, stories, beginning) - beauty
- ngura (place, land, all things in the right place) - complexity
- walytja (kinship, family, wholeness, connection) - integrity
- kurunpa (spirit or soul, breath, life, spiritual energy) - resilience