



Report on the UN Climate Change Conference COP25



Tuesday 3rd December 2019, Madrid, Spain

The climate conference has started and is now in full swing. More than 20,000 delegates have arrived. The civil society is also present in big numbers and even Greta Thunberg has arrived in Lisbon today by sailboat. This COP is all about stepping up ambitions and responding to the latest scientific reports which indicate that climate change may spiral out of control. For more information and background please read this article:

<https://www.greenbiz.com/article/4-key-tasks-countries-cop25-madrid>

For the Brahma Kumaris (BK), the first day of COP25 had the most engagements and programs. Sister Jayanti arrived early morning, and Valérie had to leave suddenly due to family matters. We had 3 side events in the COP area and a busy day at the stand.

Exhibition: 10 ways to change the world

The stand as been well received right from start with many visitors from all over the world, a mix of government representatives and civil society. Our free, colourful wristbands with the "10 ways to change" slogans along with our web link seemed to be most attractive and helped a lot to engage participants.



Interfaith Coordination Meeting

The Interfaith community came together for its first meeting this COP. The discussion was mostly about their COP25 statement "**Faith communities demand climate justice**". Rev Henrik Grape, Senior Advisor on Care for Creation, Sustainability, and Climate Justice at the World Council of Churches led the meeting. Valérie, BK, plays a major part in coordinating the faith communities' presence at COP, and Sonja participated in her place. [The statement can be found here](#). Later, it will be presented officially to high level representatives of the UNFCCC secretariat.



Side event in the Sustainable Development Goals Pavilion

The event "**Strengthening Peaceful Pathways to Sustainable Solutions**" was designed to facilitate authentic communication, to implement peaceful and inclusive solutions for a more sustainable future. Thoughtful stories from the fields of science, faith, politics, spirituality and health were shared. They had the focus of peace as an instigator for change. The common theme was that when things get difficult, we tend to get anxious. This is so even when we are aware that a calm and peaceful mind takes better decisions. Pausing for peace helps us to recognize the subtext and acknowledge the stresses so that real solutions start to emerge.





In this picture of the presentation, from the left: Moderator: Julia Grindon-Welch, Brahma Kumaris Representative to UN, New York, Gabrielle Martin, Head of Programs and Events, Brahma Kumaris, Australia, Rev. Dr Neddy Astudillo, Director for Training and Latino America, GreenFaith Institute, Thomas Bruhn, Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies, Dr Nicole de Paula CEO Global Health Asia Institute, Klaus Töpfer co-chairman of UN-ECOSOC, Martin Frick, Senior Director for Policy and Programme Coordination of the UNFCCC. The event was co-hosted by BK and the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies.

Official Side event at COP

The title of this event was **Inspiring Courage to Act and Adapt in a Climate Emergency.**

It was hosted by BK and other partner organisations. The presentations centred around how best to implement the Paris Agreement in solidarity and compassion. Special focus was kept on human and Indigenous Peoples' rights. The Speakers explored ways to transform lives, communities and politics, and how best to foster resilience.





The speakers from the right: Moderator Lindsey Fielder Cook, Quaker UN Office, Bishop Philip Huggins - National Council of Churches, Australia, Sister Jayanti Kirpalani - Director Brahma Kumaris in Europe, Dr Mark Lawrence – Inst. for Advanced Sustainability Studies, Andrea Carmen – International Indian Treaty Council, Indigenous Leader, Rev Chebon Kernell- World Council of Churches. Ben Schachter - Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ana Villalobos - Delegation of Costa Rica.

The event was organised by Quaker UN Office, Brahma Kumaris, Franciscans International, Quaker Earthcare Witness.

The topic of courage inspired both the panellists and audience of about 100 people. Some points that were shared by Sister Jayanti:

- It is important to have a vision for a better world and to be instruments to make that happen. We have to see beyond the present challenges. I know we can all make a difference. In fact, even just one individual can have huge impact. We have the example of Greta Thunberg in front of us. Let me not wait for others, but let me start with courage and hope.
- To increase courage, it is important to have faith in the self. I can achieve my aim when I use my full potential of goodness within.
- We have faith in God, and that power can make the real difference.

Side Event at the EU Pavilion

The title of the evening event at the EU Pavilion was “**Collective Adaptation to the Climate Emergency**”. How can science and faith-based communities support humanity in the future climate-related disruption? The four panellists shared their insights on how best to respond with collective solidarity and commitment to the coming climate emergency.



From the left: Moderator: Sonja Ohlsson, Denmark, and speakers: Sister Jayanti Kirpalani, Director Brahma Kumaris in Europe and Middle East, Prof. Mark Lawrence, Director at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) in Potsdam; Bishop Philip Huggins, President National Council of Churches, Australia, Golo J. Pilz, Energy Adviser to Brahma Kumaris.

The panellists were asked to prepare a question for each other and the following discussion was moving, personal and in depth. Some questions that came up:

- Has science been an obstacle or support in your personal development?
- You have a strong positive vision of the future. How to bring onboard those who don't share the same vision or don't have one?
- How do you deal with the insincerity in congregations?
- When we let go the old, what new would you like to "let-in"?
- Listening is healing: is there another component needed to create healing?
- What is BK's gift to the world?

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Sonja, Shantanau, Golo and Julia at the COP25 entrance