



Climate Change Conference COP23 Thursday 16th & Friday 17th Nov 2017, Bonn, Germany

Thursday 16th November

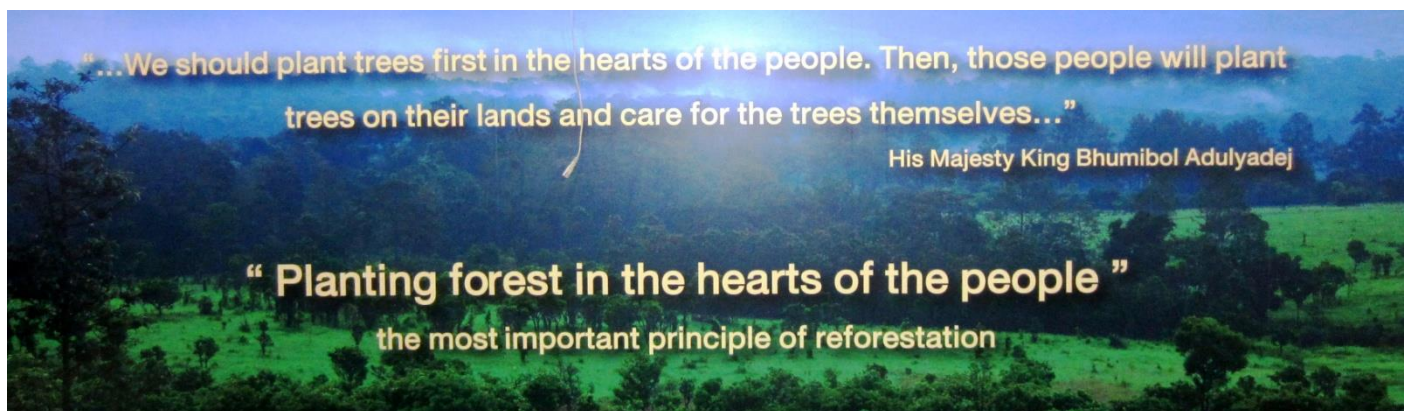
The Climate conference is coming to an end and, for the sake of easy reading, we combine the reports of the last two days. Thursday was a busy day for our delegation with two side events and many meetings.

Side Event in Bonn Zone: Faith and Community Approach to Climate Action

This program was organized by

- World Renewal Spiritual Trust,
- the Inter-religious Climate & Ecology (ICE) Network and
- the International Movement of Engaged Buddhists.

It began with Venerable S. T. Khunsiri, Head monk of Smart Pagoda in Wat Doi Pha Som presenting the Eco Temple project via Skype call from Chang Mai, Thailand. He described how the members of the temple and the local community are deeply engaged in plantation projects and eco buildings.



Golo briefly introduced the solar projects in Abu and then highlighted the intricate connection between our inner and outer worlds. He said we have to reach out to communities and support them with clean technology. We also give guidance how to build up inner resilience and deal with old karma. Often, fear and insecurity become an obstacle in climate action and community building. Here, meditation heals humans on the inside and can become the tool to deal with climate change in a more efficient manner.



Ms. Kosha Joubert, CEO and Executive Director of Global Ecovillage Network, appreciated the growing collaboration between the Eco Village and the faith-based communities. Mr Kichul Oh, Secretary General of the Green Asia Network, described the rapid desertification and sandy storms in Mongolia.



Sister Jayanti spoke about the spiritual principles and said we have to increase flexibility and resilience in communities. She invited everyone to come to our headquarters in Abu to see how the campus is built around the trees. She informed the audience that Brahma Kumaris maintains many public parks in Indian cities, which do benefit the local communities. Climate Action begins with a change at heart, which comes from a spiritual awakening of purity and goodness that exists in every person. Even the inspiration, emerging in this gathering, will reach far and wide.

Solar Cooker International

Brahma Kumaris shared their stand with Solar Cooker International and we truly did appreciate their co-operation and friendship. They invited Golo to join their session and share his expertise of 20 years in solar cooking. Golo met a small, dedicated group, mainly from Africa, and he explained the various large solar cooking systems the BKs use and the spiritual background of the success.



Interfaith meeting decides on carbon fasting and next year's action

Valérieane moderated the second interfaith meeting during this year's climate conference which included next year's activities at the COP24 in Katowice, Poland. Many participants expressed their view that, in future, a proper interfaith meditation space would be very helpful, so that negotiators have the possibility to relax and find peace.

It was also suggested to connect the theme of "LOVE" with climate change for next year. Everybody liked also the bicycling / rickshaw ride as people from different faiths come together with a clear message. It is a good example of "ACTION and not just WORDS and it was decided to plan for a similar event in Katowice. There was also a strong voice for "carbon fasting" during the next COP to offset the CO₂ emissions for travel and operation of the conference. Another creative idea was, "A walking meditation" through the next COP. Daniel Violetti, head of Staff at UNFCCC, appreciated the interfaith engagement at the COP, and on the local level. He encouraged the group to approach the Polish delegation as soon as possible, to lay the ground for more interfaith activities at COP24.

Meeting Indian Minister of Environment

Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Indian Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change gave a talk at India's Pavilion. He referred to the ancient spiritual Indian tradition as well as Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy on simple living, inner contentment and respect for nature. Sister Jayanti, Golo and Abhishek meet him and described the solar / eco projects of BK. He took one of our blessing cards.



Afterwards Golo met Ajay Narayan Jha, the Indian Environment Secretary, and told him about the BK's various solar and eco projects.



The last Program!

Our first and last program in the COP took place in the Energy 2050 Pavilion. Towards the late afternoon, most of the delegations had already celebrated the end of the Climate conference and we had to mobilise all our resources (literally) for the program titled: "Mobilising inner resources towards sustainable living - building conscious communities".



Valeriane moderated the session and asked the four panellists to share their core value that helped them to build sustainable communities. Sonja referred to the three core values of love, courage and fairness. Golo shared that determination and meditation helps a lot on the long run. Kosha Jubert from Eco Village Network said that she had to find the DNA of her soul and stick to it no matter what. Guillermo from ENERGY 2050 shared that his vision of the future is driving him forward with determination.

Friday 17th November, the last day!

After a sumptuous breakfast, the whole green team gathered in our spacious and cozy villa for the last feedback meeting.



Everybody praised the yummy vegan food, great accommodation and excellent transport arrangements. Special thanks here to the German BKs for the great help in the whole conference, but also for the continuous meditation and well wishes. The team appreciated the number of programs we had, a record breaking of 7 within the conference and several outside events. Excellent interaction and service also took place in the interfaith constituency and the Conference of Youth (COY).



One of the highlights of this COP was definitely the incredible advertisement campaign for India One. The German government selected the project for their "Ready for the Future" Campaign and the poster of India One was everywhere in the conference, at German bus stops, railway stations, airports and in newspapers. The renewable energy activities of Brahma Kumaris/WRST turned out to be an excellent opportunity to interact with organizations and people. This year, we also noticed an increased openness for soft topics, like hope and spirituality.

The German BK's are very enthusiastic to continue the networking and service in connection with the environment.





Hello and goodbye from Cecilie, Gopi, Valeriane, Sister Jayanti, Sonja, Golo, Heidi, Carolin, Laura, Simone, Erica, Bri, Almut, Klaus Peter, Kanjan, and Antje.



Around 11 o'clock, Almut, Sonja, Golo and Klaus Peter went to the Bonn Zone of the conference to dismantle our stands and pack everything away. This task is always a bit sentimental, especially to the old hands in the climate negotiations, as it marks the end of 2 weeks of packed action, joy and fun.

We then strolled for a last time over the COP and took the chance to check out the 360 degrees virtual reality goggles at the UNDP stand. It's an amazing experience to see climate change in 360 degrees. After some time, the illusion becomes perfect and one feels to be inside the image. In future, we may explore this technology to give people a deeper experience of peace and happiness.





Afterwards we strolled to the German Pavilion and said goodbye to Markus, our friend from the German Government, and had a last cappuccino - organic, fair trade and most important, free and tasty.



"Sustainia Claus" also showed up and gave gifts to the delegates

On our way back, we were drawn to the Indonesian Pavilion where a full dance party was going on. Sonja and Klaus Peter had no second thought and joined the rhythm and the crowd.



As we left the Climate conference the sun came out and greeted us with warm rays and illuminated the scene in beautiful light.



Flash Update:

On Friday evening the Nations agreed to launch the next steps towards higher climate action ambition before 2020. Backed by a wide range of positive announcements from governments, cities, states, regions, companies and civil society, delegates from over 190 countries agreed to a 12-month engagement focusing on 'Where are we, where do we want to go and how do we get there?' The 'Talanoa Dialogue', inspired by the Pacific concept of constructive discussion, debate and story-telling, will set the stage in Poland in 2018 for the revising upwards of national climate action plans needed to put the world on track to meet pre-2020 ambition and the long-term goals of the two-year old Paris Agreement.

This is another step to implement the Paris Agreement to stay below 2°C or even better 1.5°C of temperature rise.



More information from: <https://cop23.unfccc.int/>

For those who want to follow climate change, here are links with more details:

<http://climatenetwork.org/eco-newsletters>

<http://enb.iisd.org/climate/cop23/enb/>

<https://unfccc.cloud.streamworld.de/webcast/briefing-10-must-knows-on-climate-change>

<https://unfccc.cloud.streamworld.de/webcast/visionary-leadership-for-the-transition-to-a-susta>

You can also join the Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative for regular updates on our activities and projects. Please send an email to: environment@brahmakumaris.org

This is our last report and the editors Golo and Sonja are now truly "COP-ed out". They hope you enjoyed reading the reports, the stories and pictures. Special thanks to Peter in Oslo, who gave the final touch and distributed the reports.

Goodbye and see you in Katowice, Poland in December 2018.



facebook.com/bkenvironmentinitiative/



twitter.com/ecobrahmakumari

eco.brahmakumaris.org