



Report on the UN Climate Change Conference COP24 Sunday 2nd December 2018. Katowice, Poland

From 2nd to 14th December, the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24) is taking place in Katowice, Poland. It is the 11th Climate Conference where Brahma Kumaris (BK) is actively participating. Our BK green youngsters arrived previously on Wednesday 28th. They joined the Conference of Youth (COY), which is held before the UN governmental event.



COP24 KATOWICE 2018
KONFERENCJA NARODÓW ZJEDNOCZONYCH
W SPRAWIE ZMIAN KLIMATU



KATOWICE
dla odmiany

The BK preparations for this COP have been intense and, right from the beginning, the Polish family has been whole heartedly involved. For one year, the preparatory team had many meetings with organisations and activists. They also participated in a number of climate camps and conferences.



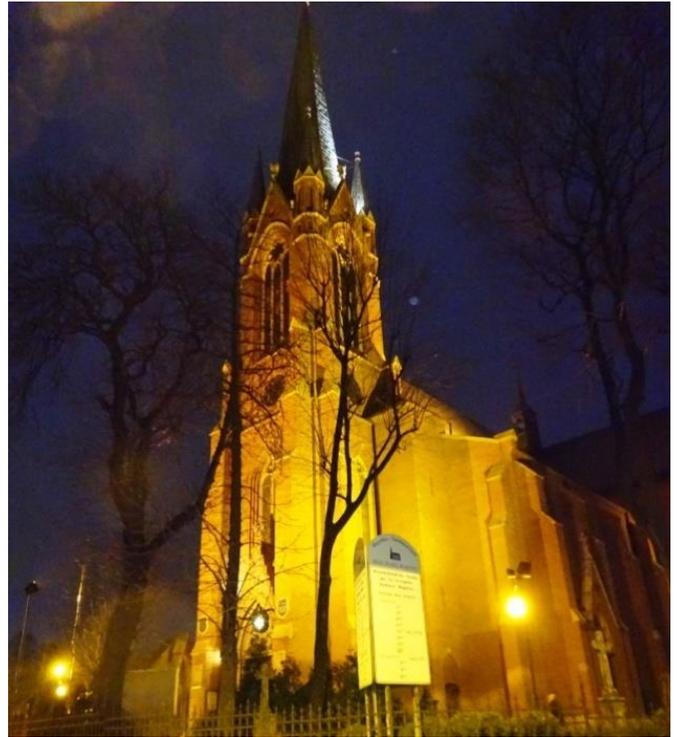
The BK Team

This year our green team has come from all over the world. The head of the delegation is Sister Jayanti (UK) supported by Golo (India), Valériane (Switzerland), Sonja (Denmark), Aneta, Asha, Dorotka, Ewa and Marek (Poland), Caroline (Germany), Francis and Erica (Brazil), Patricia (Peru) and Niranjan (India/ Germany). Our Polish hosts extended a warm welcome along with gifts and cake. The initial discussions were about the logistics of the conference. They also considered how to create an understanding of the need for hope, personal transformation and the importance of values, ethics and spirituality.



Interfaith opening of COP

On 1st Advent Sunday 2nd December, the interfaith community gathered in St Stephen's Church (Kościół św. Szczepana) to celebrate the opening of the conference. The event was organized by Brahma Kumaris, Green Faith, The Franciscans International, The Global Catholic Climate Movement and others. The gathering served as a platform for faith communities attending the COP to share their initiatives, concerns and hopes in the framework to the Talanoa dialogue ([click here](#)).



The participants, more than 140, were welcomed by the local priest, Adam Palion, on behalf of the Archbishop of Katowice. He informed us that every day, in all Polish churches, a prayer for the success of the conference and for planet Earth is taking place. Then Pan Damian Stepien, who spoke on behalf of the city, said that Katowice, which is well known for its century-old coal mining industry, is undertaking great efforts to become greener and more environmentally friendly.

Sister Jayanti then extended warm greetings of peace to her sisters and brothers in the



Sister Jayanti at the interfaith panel in the Catholic Convent

gathering. She shared the importance for people of faith to come together in such sacred places to experience friendship and co-operation. We have seen over the years how the interfaith community has been listened to more and more in the COP process. Spirituality and religion brings us together as one family. Our vision of hope becomes a practical reality. All of us share the awareness of the Earth being a sacred space and it is our role to share this awareness with everyone. We have to send good wishes to the negotiators so that all of us together can make the world a beautiful place.

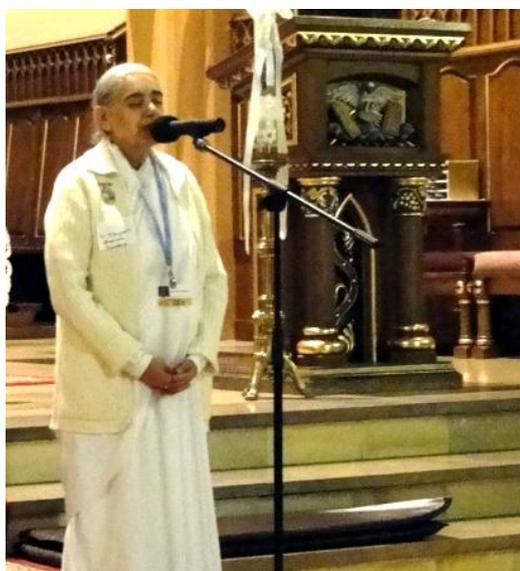
Valériane introduced topics for dialogue including climate justice, practical action, values and ethics. Sonja moderated the group on values and ethics and asked the participants to share their experience of how these concepts helped them to take difficult decisions.



Mr Ovais, Deputy Secretary of UNFCCC with a representative from Interfaith and Valériane.

After 45 minutes, all 13 groups presented their findings and ideas. Mr Ovais, the Deputy Secretary for UNFCCC, emphasized the important role of interfaith groups in the UNFCCC processes.

The evening continued with prayers, beautiful songs and speeches inside the Cathedral. Sister Jayanti closed the event with a meditation commentary. Everyone then had dinner which had been cooked with a lot of love by the Polish BKs.



The intense Preparations and engagement with Civil Society

The preparations for COP24 have kept the Brahma Kumaris centre in Poland busy for over a year. The engagement in the Polish civil society with the topic of climate change is on a totally different level compared to COP19 in Warsaw 5 years ago. Awareness of Climate Change has arrived in Poland also. Environmental groups and activists are now more outspoken and the general understanding of climate change in the Polish population is increasing day by day.



Sonja and Golo visited Poland during the summer 2018 as part of the COP preparations. They met the Heinrich Böll foundation in Warsaw and gave a talk in the BK centre in Smolna. Afterwards, they drove with Aneta and Ewa to the town of Kielce. There, in the mountains, was an environment summer camp. There, they gave a detailed presentation on climate change and spirituality.



A Green workshop in Warsaw centre, Summer 2018

Afterwards, the group went to Bytom near Katowice and checked out the accommodation and the conference venue in Katowice. The accommodation was very good, thanks to the Polish BKs who had booked it almost a year before.



Preparation team: Sonja, Aneta, Ewa, and Golo

Later in summer the Polish green team participated in a Climate Camp and met a number of environmental groups, including Green Peace. The enthusiasm and new energy of these activists was exciting to witness.

In September 2018 the BK's attended two big Environmental conferences in Warsaw: "Adapt City" and "Is it too late"-organised by the famous think-tank Institute of Eco Development.

Interfaith

The interfaith and ecumenical climate change activities have been led by Adam Palion from the delegation of Archbishop of Katowice. He has been very co-operative and helpful towards other faith organisations in preparing for this COP24.

On 25th October, the Ecumenical Academy arranged a conference called "Stop the speech of hatred". The Polish BK group had an opportunity to present the project "Million Good wishes for the Earth" and share our spiritual approach towards environment problems.



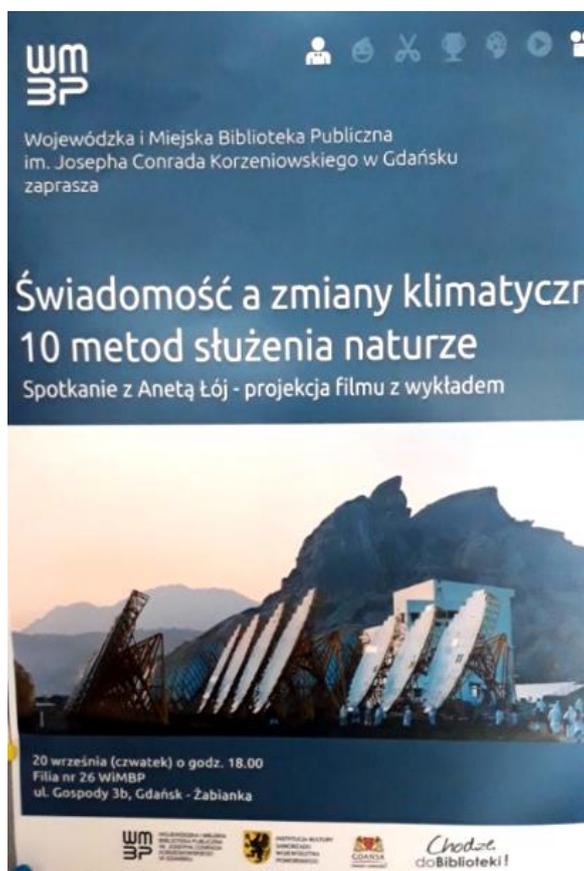
On 29th Nov. there was a conference called "The Earth is One" attended by Ewa, Aneta, Marek, Bishek and Teresa. Representatives from different religions shared their perspective upon climate change. The BKs invited everyone to the Talanoa Dialogue and highlighted the connection between our inner and outer world. Pre COP for non-party stakeholders.

In October, Aneta participated in a pre-COP meeting arranged by the UNFCCC in Katowice to get a clearer picture of the arrangements for COP24.

Brahma Kumaris programs

The BK centres in Poland organized meditations for the Earth and COP24 twice a week from February.

The centre in Gdansk arranged 6 public programs in libraries on the personal values connected to the environment. Aneta and Dorotka also presented the main Polish initiative "A Million Good Wishes for the Earth".





BK Darek from Katowice at the health fair

BKs participated in a Health fair in Katowice, speaking about the impact of the climate on human health.

They also organised a campaign in the trams in Katowice for 2 weeks. Advertisements for BK programs were shown at regular intervals.

Support team

The Polish BK group is whole heartedly supporting the Climate Conference activities and organises, with lots of love, the cooking, transport, and many other duties. We also have help from the centre in Kaliningrad.

