

In the Spirit of the Talanoa Dialogue

Building Trust and Respect with Planet and Community

Saturday 3rd July 2022 5.00pm to 7.00pm at Global Cooperation House

Brahma Kumaris in partnership with Faith for the Climate offered this hybrid event as a contribution to London Climate Action Week with a special focus on Africa, on the road to COP27.



MC **Minal Patel** warmly welcomed the audience both in person and on webcast. He explained that through the Talanoa dialogue we would be exploring 3 questions in relation to different environmental topics: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? And How do we get there? Then Minal introduced the speakers Canon Giles Goddard and Maureen Goodman in person and Professor John Ndiritu on Zoom.

Canon Giles Goddard, Chair for Faith for the Climate, spoke first on the topic of Adaptation and Ambition. He outlined the damage that has been caused due to our addiction to fossil fuels, highlighting the particularly devastating effect on continents, such as, Africa. Climate change disproportionately affects the poorest around the world. Justice needs to be at the heart of everything we do, Giles said, as we make the transition to an environmentally sustainable economy and away from carbon dependency. He emphasised that there are many levels of action but individual actions matter, as put together they become a mass movement. Faith for the Climate works with many different traditions. There is the clear understanding amongst all faiths of the need to work together in order to bring about the changes needed. It is important to keep the pressure up on governments and keep ramping up expectations of countries as we approach COP27 in Egypt. Giles also highlighted the importance of prayer and meditation, and holding the climate in our hearts and asking the Divine to give us the power to make things happen.

Maureen Goodman, Programme Director of Brahma Kumaris UK, speaking on Fair and Just Climate Transition, said that there have been many changes in society over time, but any lasting or effective change must be accompanied by a change of mindset and attitude. There is an intimate connection between what is going on inside of us and how we act in the world. Change needs to be accompanied by a change of worldview to one that is respectful, compassionate, fair and just. We need to learn to live with simplicity, consider the long-term effects of our actions and address existing environmental and social inequalities to give a voice to all those involved. To make these transitions we need a servant style of leadership, where the goal of the leader is to serve and enhance the well-being and growth of local communities in the face of change. On a personal level, change always requires resilience so we can handle the inevitable emotions that come up. Maureen ended by emphasizing three things: stay with a bigger vision of the sustainable world we choose;

be calm and patient with those who just don't get it yet and do something to nurture your spirit every day such as prayer or meditation.

John Ndiritu, Professor of Water Engineering at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa, did the final talk on Restoring our Sacred Relationship with the Land. He spoke about how traditionally in Africa, caring for the environment has religious and spiritual roots. So, there has



always been a deep respect and reverence for nature along with a commitment to conserve and enrich nature. Non-living elements such as rain are deemed as sacred and seen as powerful spirits, needed to sustain life. In South Africa the Department of Water and Sanitation urges its citizens to include rain in their prayers. The traditional African farming methods have resilience and care for the land 'built into' them with practices such as fallowing and agroforestry. John finished by speaking about a natural experiment conducted at Princeton University in the 1990s called Wishing for Good

Weather: a natural experiment in Group Consciousness.

They wished for good weather for Princeton University reunion days and found that they had significantly less rain on those days, than on days before and after. John said that this demonstrates that our consciousness is always impacting the climate in ways we may not know.

Below are some of the main themes from the feedback provided by the dialogue group facilitators:

- The need to return to a simpler, less consumerist lifestyle, that does not come at the expense of others or animals.
- Actively increasing our love and respect for nature whilst being more in tune with its natural rhythms.
- Taking responsibility for changing ourselves and our lifestyle first so that we inspire others to do the same. To walk the talk, not preach or teach but be inspiring examples of how much better the world could be.
- Finally, the importance of education and communication was highlighted, especially in connection with young people, passing on the message through our own behaviour.



The evening ended with some closing comments by Maureen and Canon Giles. Canon Giles said we must affirm the groundedness and importance of spirituality to ensure that all our actions are imbued with a deep sense of our unity with the earth. Maureen said that what she was taking from the session was hope and also connection; whether it is the connection with each other, or the connection between what we use and eat, and the lives this might be

affecting in another corner of the world. Canon Giles finished with a beautiful prayer and Maureen with a meditation.