



## **BRAHMA KUMARIS WORLD SPIRITUAL UNIVERSITY**

### **When We Change, The World Changes**

Statement to the

### **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development**

June, 1992, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The convening of this Conference, and the scale of the activities and events that it has prompted, are a clear acknowledgment of the severity of the multiple ecological challenges facing the world today. As has been indicated in its statements to the UNCED Preparatory Committee meetings, the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University is of the view that the global crisis constituted by these challenges is, at root, a spiritual crisis calling for solutions based on spiritual principles.

Humanity's immense mental and intellectual faculties are such that its potential to alter the environment and influence the course of events on earth is greater than that of any other life form. The present level of scientific knowledge and technological capability is unprecedented and nearly every day further proof is given of our unquestionable ability to develop and exploit our natural resources in extremely sophisticated and effective ways. Recent years, in particular, have shown that this includes the ability to develop more caring and eco-friendly lifestyles. However, this ability is irrelevant unless and until it is put into action. The way in which our potential is exercised is as crucial to our survival as the potential itself. This in turn depends upon the perceptions that we hold of the people and the planet, our attitudes towards them and the values that we live by.

Attempts to understand the wonder of the world around us have tended to involve dividing the earth's myriad different forms of life and inanimate matter into separate and self-contained categories. In recent years however, as scientists have delved more deeply into the origins of life on earth, the biosphere has been seen as a whole made up of many interdependent parts. Studies of changes in the land, seas and skies have helped to prove this point and indicate that every event or action has a relevance to and effect upon parts of the whole. An understanding of this interconnectedness leads to the awareness that the health and welfare of any one of those parts is dependent on the health and welfare of the other parts.

It has also become apparent that it is human activity which has most interfered with the complex interrelationships that sustain the ecological systems and natural processes upon which human life depends. The future of life on earth as a whole is now in question as a result of unhealthy human activity. This pollution of the original purity of the very substances of Mother Earth has often occurred as a result of well-intentioned, but

misguided or ill-informed, courses of action. For example, the short-sighted or over-demanding use of agricultural and forest lands has often made them into barren and eroded wasteland which is then a burden on the community it is intended to serve rather than a benefit to it. Development, in the sense of improving or uplifting the overall condition of humanity as a whole, is of course desirable but too often the ultimate consequences of efforts undertaken in the name of development have not helped serve this purpose.

Today the family of humanity faces a potential disaster at least as great as the now diminished spectre of nuclear annihilation; that is, the threatened destruction of the family home -- the earth.

It is often in times of crisis that a divided family will pull itself back together and the same is also true in the wider sphere of human relations as can be seen in the case of communities throughout the world when faced with a common disaster or threat. Now the family of the world community must rally together in response to the worldwide environmental crisis.

Awareness of the risk of catastrophe has risen and throughout the world, amongst peoples of every culture, age, nationality and belief, countless men, women and children are already expressing their concern in their words and by their actions. Dedicated committed individuals are giving of their time, energy and money and moderating or changing their resources, consumption or use, often with a selfless concern for other peoples or future generations. The message that this give us is that we need not consider ourselves helpless victims and therefore abandon hope. Each one of us can do something.

However, the severity of the crisis is such that still more is required of humanity. Increased evidence of environmental deterioration means that the need for an immediate change in human activity is undeniable. Whether or not this call will be met depends upon the principles and values which we hold and which are the basis of our decisions and actions. As well as acknowledging that Nature's disastrous condition has arisen as a result of human activity we must also accept that the underlying, or root cause of this state of affairs is inappropriate attitudes and values. It is these which determine the quality of human activity and so there must also be a change in those values. We must transform the way we think, re-evaluate our priorities and principles and revive abandoned but more caring respectful attitudes, values and lifestyles, in relation to Nature and to humanity as a whole. There will be no end to the pollution of Nature until we have put an end to the pollution in our minds.

As members of one human family we are each endowed with the same inherent worth and integrity. As a result of our shared spiritual identity, and as members of the same family, each one of us is connected to the others by a subtle and invisible spiritual thread. Although our awareness of this connection may sometimes be so subtle that it remains in our sub-consciousness, it is because of this connection and because we all belong to one family we have love, concern, and respect for others. No one is an island and, although we are all individuals in our own right, we are as connected to one another as are the earth, wind, fire, ether and water.

Much has already been done towards saving the earth and many bold and inspiring plans have been made for the future. If these plans are to fulfill their promise they will need a very sound and deep foundation. The quality, durability and eventual outcome of any action to a great extent depend upon the conviction or motivation behind it, the reason for which it is performed. So what is the foundation upon which we are building the future?

Ultimately the source of our concern for the welfare of others is our spiritual brotherhood and sisterhood. Unless we first learn to have more care and respect for the other members of our family we will never truly be able to care for and respect our environment. The successful outcome of our efforts to save the world therefore depends upon a deeper understanding and greater awareness of the universal brotherhood of humanity.

Scientists have already demonstrated that all parts of the world are interconnected; it is now up to the people of the world to demonstrate in their lives that we truly are one family. We must have the wisdom to accept that an eternal spiritual brotherhood links all of humanity and must bring forth the courage and compassion to live by this understanding.

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## **Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University**

The BKWSU is a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and in consultative status with UNICEF. The University was founded in India in 1937 and has branches in over 100 countries worldwide. It has been affiliated to the United Nations Department of Public Information since 1980.

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