



The Brahma Kumaris at
UN Biodiversity COP16 in Cali, Colombia
October 21 - November 1, 2024

Report 3: October 27 to November 1

Making peace with nature

The second week of COP 16 provided The Green Team with many more opportunities for learning, sharing and networking - and contributing peaceful energy and support to all those negotiating and working for an ambitious and impactful implementation plan for the Kunming - Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Sunday October 27

Interfaith Retreat: Baha'i Natural Forest and House of Worship.

A beautiful afternoon was hosted by the Baha'i Community, an hour outside of Cali, on a large reclaimed sugar cane field. Working with the local Afro-Colombian communities, a temple has been constructed surrounded by a native forest of indigenous trees - fruiting, flowering, and timber varieties - that had been lost to the area for generations. About 24 people from different faith communities including Maria Paula, Valeriane, Anne-Christelle, Debbie and David enjoyed a talk on the history of the re-forestation project so far, a walk through the gardens where new plantings and lots of birds were visible, then lunch and music by a local band.



The space inspires contemplation and reflection, and offers opportunities to sit with nature in silence. The benefits to the local communities are numerous including revival of collective working groups, educational opportunities for children and soon, a farmer's market. This event was also a great opportunity for networking with other members of the Biodiversity and Faiths coalition.





BALANCE BETWEEN INNER SELF AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The BK Centre in Cali was full for this evening event, demonstrating not only people's curiosity and interest in the biodiversity COP, but also in the Brahma Kumaris, their work on meditation and personal transformation, and how that work is linked to Peace with Nature. Marcelo warmly welcomed more than 60 people to the event and introduced Maureen as the keynote speaker. Maureen spoke on the importance of balance between inner self and the environment. **One aspect she emphasized was the virtue of dignity, and that this is not something one gets from someone else, but a quality you have to cultivate in yourself.** The idea of self-dignity is linked to many other concepts that encompass self-worth and self-esteem, and enables one to develop the powers of tolerance, courage, withdrawal and decision-making, and to know when to use each power.



Maureen pointed out that if we do not have that dignity in our relationship with ourselves and with the choices we make, we will not be able to have dignified relationships with others, including other species and the elements of the natural world. Maureen's talk included a number of stories and practical examples, and the people in attendance really enjoyed it and asked a number of questions. Valeriane led a powerful meditation in Spanish to close the evening. The audience included a mix of women and men of many different age groups - some who had been to the centre before and some who were attending for the first time. Ligia, the BK Centre Coordinator in Cali, was very encouraged by the full house and invited all to come back to the Centre for a future program.

Monday October 28

Various side-events, caucuses and discussion groups continued at the COP on the first day of week two. Some of the events attended by the Green Team members included:

1. Biodiversity and Creation Justice. Maureen and Valeriane joined the World Council of Churches side event entitled 'Indigenous perspectives and ethical imperatives for Biodiversity and Creation Justice' at the Faith Hub.

In this side event, Jocabed Solano, an Indigenous woman from Panama, shared how in her Indigenous culture the moment the baby is in the womb, the grandmothers sing to the baby songs about the Creator Baba (God) and Nana (Mother Earth), so the baby is familiarised with them from very early on. Then when the baby is born, they sow a tree with the baby's umbilical cord, so when the child is having its birthday, it is also the birthday of his or her brother/sister tree. This was such a clear and simple example of a belief system that truly values a deep and spiritual relationship with nature - something we can all learn from.



2. Biodiversity: Agriculture as a Living System. Maureen and Valeriane also joined this event organised by the Temple of Understanding at the Faith Hub. To start with, Grove Harris shared a video, where environmental activist, Vandana Shiva, spoke about the importance of small-scale agriculture producing more than 60 % of the food consumed by the people. She explained further how petrochemical agriculture is destructive for the soils and harming human health. Grove quoted Vandana Shiva, who is also a friend of the Brahma Kumaris and has shared many platforms with Sister Jayanti, "This is all about soil not so much about oil". Grove then showed another video where economist, Anastasia Nesvetailova, was sharing about the structure of the global financial system and the trade around agriculture. The session was a good learning opportunity and challenged participants to think about agriculture as a living system, not an industry for producing commodities for sale.



3. Faith and Youth Engagement: Implementing the KMGBF - Bridging the gaps between faith engagement and youth mobilization for a better future. During an engaging panel that felt more like a conversation with the audience, Welsey Coccozello, Faiths for Biodiversity - US; Roaa, YOUNGO - Africa; and Peter Bulimo, Youth4Nature - Africa shared their personal journeys in advocacy. Each began in high school and continued nurturing the seed of consciousness inspired by their own faiths. "We're part of one body," Roaa explained, addressing the difference between faith and faith-based organizations. She noted how many young people may step away from organized practices, without abandoning their beliefs: "I left the church, but not God." This gap, she emphasized, reflects a broader disconnect between religion and life itself. **The unifying theme of the discussion was consciousness rooted in shared values.** Building on this context, the conversation then shifted to the future beyond COP16, emphasizing the need to move forward with a determined, positive attitude and to cultivate the energy required for change. It was inspiring to hear from these young people about the importance of faith in their lives and how it is a motivational driver for positive change.



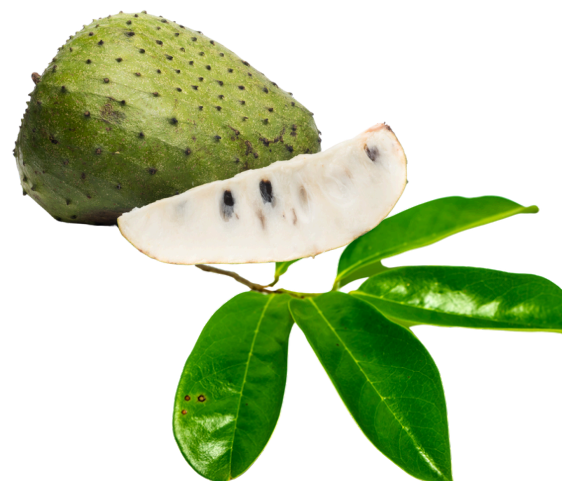
4. Creative Biodiversity Finance: PFPs in Canada

This was an interesting panel with speakers from Canada and the USA on indigenous-led mechanisms for financing biodiversity work on the ground. Project Finance for Permanence (PFPs) are comprehensive conservation strategies with far reaching goals inclusive of ecological, social and political elements plus the financial mechanisms to make the plans operational. Indigenous leaders from the Northwest Territories and the Great Bear Rainforest in Canada spoke about their pride in negotiating these agreements with different levels of Government and philanthropic organizations to establish endowment funds for sustaining biodiversity protection work in the future. They spoke about their dreams for their children's and grandchildren's relationship with the land and the capacity needed to get there - and how funding, jobs and businesses created today, is a positive step. What was unique about this session, was the presence of philanthropic organizations from Canada and the USA including the Enduring Earth consortium, who initiated the endowment funds with investments of tens of millions of dollars that were then matched by Governments. The session included a video message from the Minister of the Environment of Canada. People spoke about how these large, well funded initiatives provide hope to young people in small isolated indigenous communities and how they hoped the PFP process could be an approach that others could emulate.





6. **Successful Stories of ABS.** In this session, panelists heard stories of successful Access and Benefits Sharing (ABS) cases, some with international collaboration and others, in local domestic settings. The speaker's definition of 'success' ensured that Free Prior and Informed Consent, FPIC, was issued; mutually agreed terms (MAT) were concluded; collaboration had begun; and benefits sharing to the resource country had started (monetary or non-monetary). Successful agreements in Bhutan, Argentina, Japan, Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam told stories of perfume, seeds, and medicinal plants, where the criteria for success were met and this meant that local communities were involved in production, capacity building, cultivation, and harvesting. **In all these, building trust and personal relationships was very important among the companies, the communities and the National entity responsible for biodiversity. The values of honesty and respect for each other and nature were demonstrated amongst all stakeholders.**



Visiting the Green Zone: the Peoples' COP

The Green Zone was set up in three outdoor spaces along the river in central Cali. The greenery of the parks and the educational fair-like atmosphere was much appreciated. The free, educational exposure about biodiversity and what civil society was doing in Colombia and beyond was heart-warming.

Green team members visited on different occasions. **The Parliament of Nature** was a big highlight - an immersive, multimedia experience - where animals and trees talked about their relationship with human beings. We heard about what humans can do to create equity with other living beings, and how they need to become humbler in their role. They spoke cautiously, but with some hope that humans could change.



The **Animal Cemetery** was another interesting spot to visit in the Green Zone. It was a kind of mausoleum set up with pictures of extinct species of animals, birds, insects and reptiles and the year they become extinct - many in the past 25 years. There was also a section on endangered species - and a reminder of what is happening for all living beings, if we do not change our ways.

The educational booths engaged people in different ways and focussed on solutions for working differently with biodiversity and supporting Indigenous people as the guardians of nature. There were herbal healing remedies, health and beauty products, organic produced fair-trade handicrafts, non-timber forest products, all sourced in sustainable ways. Music infused the atmosphere and it was lovely to see Colombian families and people of all ages, taking part in the wide variety of events.



Tuesday October 29

NATIONAL TV INTERVIEW

Maureen was interviewed by a well-known TV journalist and good friend of the Brahma Kumaris on National television. Maria-Paula, provided translation. Maureen emphasized humanity's deep interconnectedness with all life on Earth, stressing that personal inner peace is essential to healing both humanity and nature. She explained how our thoughts and consciousness influence our attitudes toward life and impact the environment. By cultivating inner peace and awareness, we are empowered to make more sustainable choices – reducing consumption, adopting mindful diets, and minimizing plastic use, which all contribute to preserving biodiversity.

Maureen advocated a shift from exploiting nature to a respectful, caring relationship that sees nature as a living entity. She called for integrating Indigenous wisdom and spirituality in global environmental strategies, asserting that diverse voices, from youth to women to Indigenous communities, must collaborate for a sustainable future. Together, she believes, we can restore balance and act as custodians of the Earth.

Many people commented they saw the interview and it made them think differently about the profound responsibility we have for how we interact with nature.



MEDITATIVE MOMENT IN FAITH HUB

Anne-Christelle led gentle stretching and a meditation open to all conference participants. It was sometimes difficult to lead such a session in the noise and busyness of the large conference venue but it was a very useful session for the handful of people who participated. The session was recorded and the video shared with others, to give them a taste of the conference atmosphere and how important it is to make the effort to find a quiet moment, and take care of one's self, whatever situation they find themselves in.



PEACE WITH NATURE: AN ETHICAL DIALOGUE

BKs participated in the official Peace with Nature program of the Green Zone at the Banco de Occidente. At this venue, in the heart of downtown Cali, civil society organizations and the general public got the opportunity to hear and choose among hundreds of programs concerning biodiversity made possible by the Government of Colombia.

Valeriane and Juan hosted the event 'Peace with Nature: an ethical dialogue to promote sustainable and peaceful communities'. During the session Valeriane shared about the power of Fijan Talanoa Dialogues making people reflect on where we are at, where we want to go, and how to get there. She also spoke about **the inner dimension of peace, sharing how spirituality and consciousness can guide concrete actions to create peaceful and sustainable communities as well as a pure and positive relationship with nature**. Juan shared about how much we can integrate peace, spirituality and action in the conservation of biodiversity, by practicing and learning from Indigenous wisdom. It was great to be able to offer an event in the Green Zone, the "Peoples' COP" and participants really enjoyed the discussions.



High Level Segment of COP16

The President of Colombia opened this segment of the COP16 negotiations in the company of six other Heads of State, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Heads of International NGOs, City Mayors, Civil Society, the delegates and media. He opened by saying that all human action is political and that currently we have a lack of action on the protection of nature. He proposed that we are entering an era of human extinction unless we re-orient to fair, democratic and peaceful decisions and actions, to create a new global society. "COP16 must be a turning point", he said and, "the factories of greed and exploitation that are destroying the Earth, biodiversity and human life must be changed". His impassioned and provocative speech called for more sustainable, efficient ways to protect human life and biodiversity that will require new methods to regulate and different relationships among human beings to begin the **"revolution of generosity and joy in life again"**.

The Secretary General of the United Nations spoke next and opened with "nature is life and we are at war with nature." We need a world coalition to restore, sustain, conserve and be at peace with Nature. Requirements to turn this around include - finances for biodiversity, national plans, nature positive activities, monitoring frameworks, and promises kept with all parts of society working to respect Indigenous Peoples, who are guardians of nature. He challenged all parties present to speed up the process with the necessary resources.

There were many other highlights in this opening session, from the President of Suriname speaking of the "symphony of life continues to echo through the ages" to the Bolivian President's introduction of Mother Earth as the great geneticist, and stating that if birds and rivers could speak they would charge humanity with matricide on Mother Earth and that now is the time to return to balance, complimentary and harmony and "thinking, policy making and governing in a way that acknowledges our roots in nature". Suriname is also a carbon positive country, having high forest cover and low deforestation.

It was an inspiring start to the High Level Segment and really gave the feeling that this COP could be different from others, as the leadership articulated a vision of doing things differently.



Intersection of Environment, Social and Economic Goals. Key figures of this event, including Jerome Cochet from Generation Forest, Andreas Eke from GoodCarbon, and Mauricio Cárdenas, leader of the Green Chamber of Latin America. These speakers participated in an innovative panel, where they discussed the intersection of environmental, social, and economic goals. Their efforts center on developing scalable models for sustainable development that address both climate mitigation and biodiversity conservation. The panel emphasized that climate action without integrating biodiversity is insufficient, as ecosystems and biodiversity are essential for climate resilience. Biodiversity plays a key role in carbon absorption, ecosystem regulation, and risk mitigation. Additionally, they highlighted that reforestation efforts focused solely on carbon capture can inadvertently harm biodiversity by displacing essential ecosystems like grasslands and wetlands. Instead, forests should be permanent, diverse, and productive, delivering multiple ecosystem services –such as water filtration, soil health, and habitat preservation–while aligning with broader climate objectives. This was a very informative discussion with many technical aspects, and is similar to some of the work the Brahma Kumaris Rural Development wing has started in India.



CULTURA DE PAZ (CULTURE OF PEACE) SESSIONS

Manuel had the opportunity on four afternoons to present a session on the Culture of Peace on a main stage in the Green Zone of “the Peoples’ COP”. His presentations - **each of which attracted approximately 25 people, rain or shine** - was a highlight in the work the Green Team was able to do at COP16. Manuel used a beautiful powerpoint presentation to help people understand who they are, in order to be peaceful - and he conducted a short meditation at the beginning and end of the program. This was a really positive activity for the Green Zone.





Protecting Indigenous Rights and Food Sovereignty.

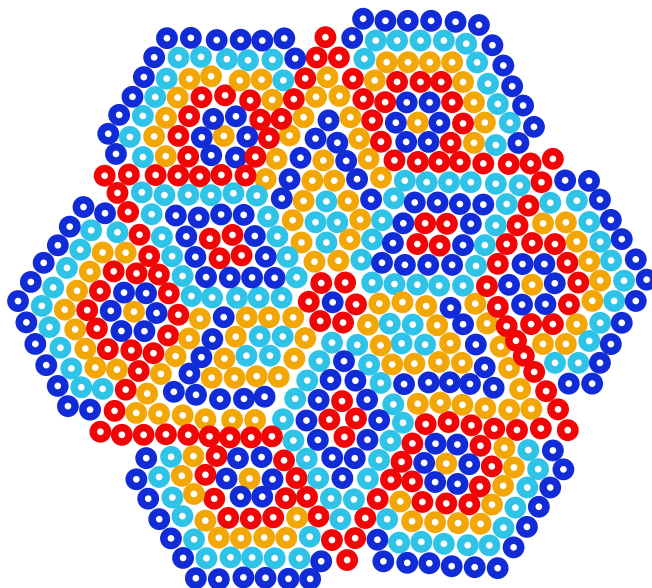
This stimulating panel, officially titled Biodiversity 2.0: protecting Indigenous Rights and Food Sovereignty to Halt Biodiversity Loss launched a new policy brief based on research by the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA).

Edward Porokwa, Tanzania opened the panel and spoke about the arrest, torture and forced evictions of 100,000 Maasai pastoralists. “Your conservation areas are a war zone for us”, he said. He was followed by Ruth Kihui, Tanzania who provided a more hopeful Maasai vision for the future of land pastoralism and coexistence with wildlife, but still emphasized the need for human rights in that region today.

Anne Maina, Kenya followed and spoke of the threat to Kenyan food systems from pesticides, GMOs and biodiversity loss, and Faris Ahmed, Kenya, shared about the benefits of agroecology, when we can get governments to support such practices and enabling policies, rather than working against them.

The panel was then joined by **Juan-Felipe Martinez, and an Indigenous woman leader from Colombia**. They both spoke from the viewpoint of Amazonian Indigenous knowledge and spirituality, and emphasized the moral and ethical responsibility to protect biodiversity. It was a contrast to the rights-based and advocacy approach promoted by the other speakers, yet was clearly appreciated and complemented what had already been presented.

Overall, the session emphasized the need for protecting ecosystems and sustaining diverse food systems, for promoting human rights issues and securing land and food sovereignty rights and for connecting with a deep cultural understanding of traditional values, in order to build a just, sustainable future.





Together for Tomorrow: Building Cross-Constituency Collaboration

The event "Together for Tomorrow: Building Cross-Constituency Collaboration," held on October 30th at COP16, focused on fostering partnerships among different constituencies. Gopal Patel, Faiths for Biodiversity, moderated the panel of Neddy Astudillo - faith; Jocabed Solano Miselis - Indigenous communities; Sandra Sanchez - women; and Daniela Arredondo - youth. The questions asked of the panel were: What are practical ways we can foster cross-constituency collaboration in support of GBF advocacy and implementation? What are the values and principles that should underpin such collaboration?

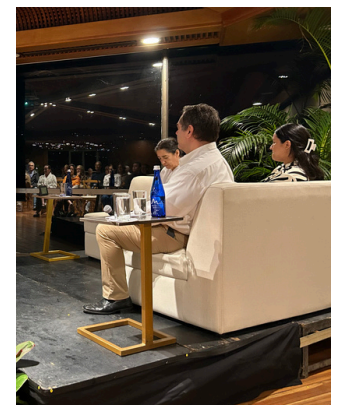
Speakers emphasized the importance of practical actions, shared values, and principles such as empathy, transparency, and respect in guiding collaborative efforts. Discussions highlighted the need to restore relationships between people and nature, engage youth in capacity building, and integrate holistic approaches that connect science, faith, and biodiversity. Participants stressed the importance of intersectionality, responsible investments, and addressing funding challenges while encouraging humility and reciprocity in conservation efforts. The event also underscored the role of women in defending biodiversity, the connection between climate justice and biodiversity, and the potential of eco-spirituality to inspire meaningful change.

Maureen moderated one of the groups and was part of a final panel moderated by Allen Ottaro, Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa, to feedback from the groups together with Bishop Cathleen Chittenden, Bishop of Kansas and Flore Ghetti, Soka Gakkai International. Maureen, Pastor Neddy and Bishop Cathleen shared some final reflecting thoughts and prayers. **Maureen shared how love, wisdom and peace are spiritual gifts from the Divine that can be used at the service of world and humanity.**

MANAGING THE SELF: A STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Maureen was invited to the very prestigious and beautiful **golf club of the Club Campestre to give a talk**, thanks to a very good friend of the Brahma Kumaris, Juan Felipe. We arrived at sunset, and Maureen was invited to give an interview to the monthly newspaper of the Club. The journalist wanted to know how to manage oneself at such an accelerated time as we are living in right now. Maureen shared with him, as she did in the talk later in the evening, that one of the tricks to managing oneself was to pay attention to one's thoughts and emotions, and that giving oneself time in the early morning was going to make a big difference on the quality of the day ahead.

Juan Felipe then opened the event with a lovely introduction and we viewed a stunning video introducing the Brahma Kumaris in Colombia. Then Marcelo interviewed Maureen on her experience with Dadi Janki, and Maureen shared how Dadi was using her time and thoughts in such a positive way, that she was always able to manage everything she wanted to do. Maureen explained how not wasting her time or the energy of her thoughts was the secret of Dadi's success.





Then Marcelo presented a power point about the **eight attitudes** that are helpful in managing oneself: courage, cooperation, tolerance, accommodation, discernment, decision-making, withdrawal and packing-up.

Maureen was then able to take the topic deeper and she shared how one can care for one self by paying attention to the quality of goodness in one's thoughts and mind. She explained how important it is if we want quality of life, to be able to pay attention to others and really try to understand them, respect them and see their qualities. She also shared about the importance of creating a good atmosphere, and only to do the best one can and then give one's action to God and stay peaceful about the results.



After a short question and answer session, she concluded the evening by conducting a meditation to give peace. The 25 business leaders and club members who joined the talk really appreciated it, and appeared thoughtful about their own activities in self management.



Thursday October 31

NATIONAL RADIO INTERVIEW ON CULTURE OF PEACE



Manuel was interviewed on National Radio about the Culture of peace events he was facilitating in the Green Zone. He was able to **share a message about the art of living which includes cultivating peace with the self, peace with others, and peace with nature.** This is the message, he explained that the Brahma Kumaris want to share to change the world. He also explained that the culture of peace initiative is not only for institutions and governments but for people in general. "The idea is for people to change their consciousness" he said, "everyone needs to change themselves, in order to help change the world."

NGO Caucus

The NGO Caucus, coordinated by the CBD Alliance, is chaired by Nelle Miren of Friends of the Earth, Denmark. NGOs were well represented at COP16 and worked hard for the inclusion of human rights issues, highlighted the problem with offsets - allowing companies and governments to pollute and destroy biodiversity in one ecosystem if they pay to protect biodiversity in another ecosystem, and **supporting the creation of a subsidiary body to ensure voices of Indigenous people and African-descendant people are formally involved in future COP deliberations.** The Caucus coordinated the publication of a number of ECO newsletters at the conference that provided important analysis of the issues being negotiated and they held a number of actions to ensure their views on issues were brought out into the open. David joined the Caucus meetings several times and joined an action on Tuesday "Stop Offsets Now".

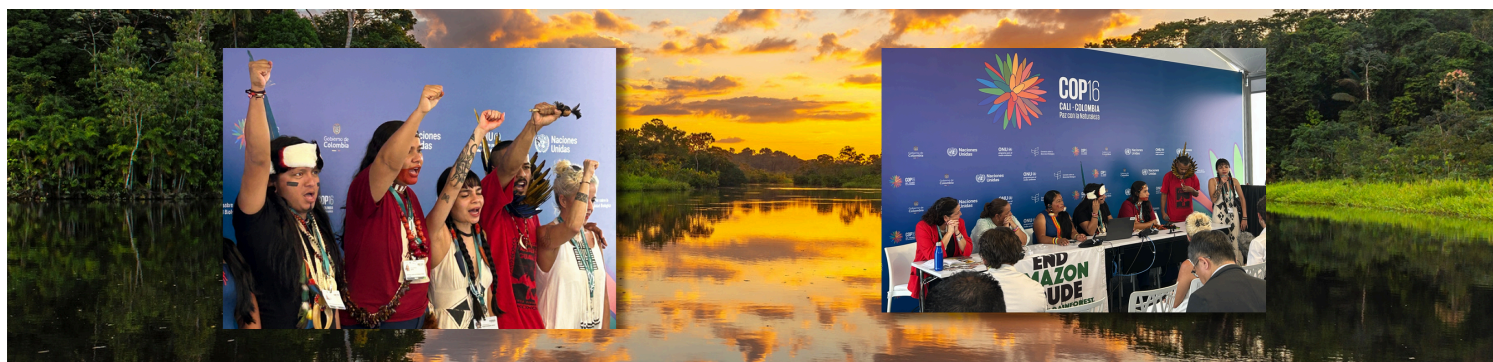
He also learned of the action planned on that day to honour and remind negotiators of environmental and human rights defenders who have lost their lives. The action was a silent walk of a couple hundred metres in the Blue Zone while carrying signs and photographs of 50 environmental defenders who lives were taken as they defended their ancestral lands and territories. It was an impactful action. David was also able to connect the ECO newsletter editor with Wesley, the Faith and Biodiversity communications lead, about publishing an article on "tomorrow together - cross constituency dialogue". All the constituency groups deserve gratitude for their hard work and good wishes for moving forward in harmony and peace.



Free from Extractivism

The Amazon Watch organisation organised this side event entitled '[Amazon Free from Extractivism: Time to end the oil, gas and critical minerals exploitation in this key biome to address the climate crisis, protect biodiversity, and guarantee Indigenous Rights](#)'.

In the event, five young and active Indigenous leaders from different territories of the Amazon region shared how the deforestation and forest degradation have pushed the Amazon to the brink of ecological collapse. The extractive industry is a major driver behind this destruction, as oil and mining concessions open up large swaths of rainforest and Indigenous territories, to drilling and excavation – felling forests and contaminating land, water, and air along the way. This leads to biodiversity loss, increases human health risks, and exacerbates the climate crisis and feedbacks within the biome. They also explained the vulnerability of the human rights situation of the Indigenous peoples in this area. Major disasters caused by different industries endanger the people and ruin their lifeways.



The life threats, as well as the physical and psychological violence caused by these individuals and situations, pushes many young Indigenous people to commit suicide. This was a powerful discussion about how dangerous the situation can be for people wanting to protect their land and rights and the rights of nature.



The LandMark Platform: Mapping Indigenous Peoples' and Local Communities' Land Rights to Support the Implementation of the KMGBF

This side event demonstrated the global platform developed by LandMark to map lands and territories owned or claimed by Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IDLC). Its mission is to make sure IDLC's respective lands and territories are recognized, making it clear to all parties that these lands are not vacant, idle or available for outsiders to use as they wish. We heard from Surinam, the Philippines, and Global Forest Watch about their experiences of using LandMark's tools and data to secure land rights, improve tenure security and highlight communities' critical role in biodiversity targets. This collaborative mapping platform and process can help increase community ownership and make governments and business interests accountable to the communities and the KMGBF. This process will help create and build much needed respect, cooperation and a stronger voice for IPLC in maintaining their legitimate right to their lands and life ways and practices of sustaining their land.

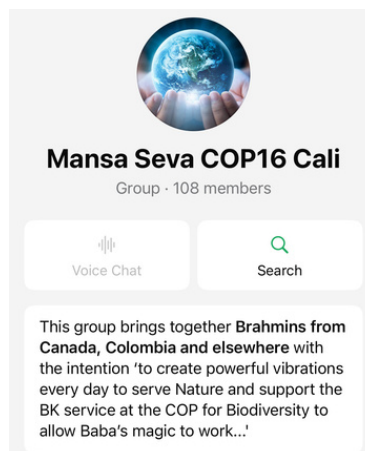



NATIONAL TV INTERVIEW – IMPORTANCE OF SPIRITUALITY

Juan, as a Brahma Kumaris representative to United Nations, was interviewed by Narda from Señal Colombia, and invited to share about the importance of consciousness and spirituality in this kind of conferences. Juan started by saying that there is another dimension that is often left out in the conversations, which is the inner dimension, we have to start the process by working on oneself, the process of transforming our thoughts, our feelings, our attitudes and how this power can harness, peace, harmony and satisfaction. This is how we cultivate our wellbeing which allows humans to feel complete and to feel happy and, therefore consume less, only using what is necessary. Our personal wellbeing and our lifestyles based on inner peace, can have a direct impact into the world. We must understand that all of us are part of this intricate web of life and that all of the services that we have are thanks to biodiversity. Juan also reminded us of the ancestral wisdom of Indigenous people, who are true Guardians of the Planet, for which we need to offer our respect. There is so much we still need to learn from them about how to live in harmony with Nature. Narda continued and asked Juan what message would he want to give to the world. Juan ended by sharing that **the greatest gift that we can give to the world is the gift of our own transformation for a more beautiful world to be reflected in life.** The protection of our diversity is ultimately linked to the quality our awareness - our spiritual life is a powerful mechanism for change!



It is important to note three important ongoing events that were also a big part of the Green Team's involvement at COP16.





- **Learning from Indigenous Leaders.** The Green Team was blessed to spend quality time learning from and sharing with three Indigenous leaders during COP16. Pacha, a Colombian elder who was present and brought a spiritual energy to numerous events in both the Blue Zone and the Green Zone, had a number of interactions with Juan and others. Pacha took the time to share his wisdom and priorities for the COP and then checked in with us a number of times and negotiations evolved, inviting us to silent protests and other events. He received a blessing and good wishes from all members of the Green Team on a regular basis. Jacobed, an Indigenous leader Co-founder of “Memoria Indigens” (Indigenous Memory) from Panama and a long time friend of Valeriane, recorded a video of her initial hopes for the COP, was involved in numerous events in the Faith Hub and elsewhere, and was a sounding board for Green Team members though out the COP. Her commitment to human rights and her faith were inspiring and we were also able to support her in her efforts. Maria-Paula, Juan and Valeriane met with Shirley Krenak an Indigenous woman from the Krenak People Brazil, who is an educator and advocate, and was actively engaged in the youth caucus. She made time to sit with Green Team members after lunch, to share her history, ancient wisdom of plants, living in harmony with nature and her passion for educating people all over the world and promoting hope. She inspired Maria-Paula and others with her clarity and deep knowledge and will be an important relationship to maintain in the future. She offers programs at many universities and is always looking for links to share her deep knowledge, from the heart of the Amazon, with others.

- **Powerful Good Wishes from a Distance.** It's important to note the “Mansa Seva Group” that supported the work of the Green Team and the efforts we were making at the COP. This group, with 110 active souls from Montreal to Mauritius and Colombia to Africa, who were connected in a WhatsApp group, offered their good wishes and pure vibrations to the success of COP16, through focussed meditation during the week leading up to the COP and the two weeks the COP was underway. The souls took reflective moments to send wishes for positivity, harmony and cooperation for “making peace with nature”, collectively viewed specially prepared meditation videos on our relationship with nature in Spanish, English and French, and engaged with the evolving nature of the COP as benevolent, detached observers. Their energy was certainly felt, and although not measurable, definitely contributed to the success of COP16. We express our gratitude to them.

- **Social Media Work.** Maria-Paula, Juan and others created beautiful and illuminating video posts informing souls about the COP, highlights of events and the activities engaged in by the Green Team. They contributed to extensive Social Media work throughout the COP. Instagram, Facebook, X and Youtube channels in Colombia, South America, Canada, the United Nations Brahma Kumaris site and the Environmental Initiative of the Brahma Kumaris, were all used to keep people informed and raise their awareness about the happenings at COP16 and the important relationships we all need to revitalize with Nature. The creative form of many of the posts were designed to appeal to young people and initial feedback has been positive.

Team Reflection, Debrief and Wrap-up

The nine-member Green Team debriefed after COP16, reflecting on achievements, challenges, and future improvements. Key themes included gratitude for our work together, connections with Indigenous peoples and successful spiritual engagements. Suggestions emphasized refining communication, simplifying themes and how we advertise sessions, and enhancing collaboration with stakeholders to create links and engage more proactively with Biodiversity COP systems. Team members proposed creating dedicated space at events, expanding partnerships, and improving logistics for upcoming biodiversity COPs. Continued focus on themes like "Peace with Nature" and proactive engagement, such as early planning and cross-group partnerships, was recommended for deeper impact at future conferences.



Historic Success - and Still Much Work to Do

The Convention on Biological Diversity COP 16 has come to an end! The COP achieved significant progress towards "making peace with nature". The conference saw active engagement from Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and Afro-descendant groups, amplifying diverse voices in biodiversity governance. Key accomplishments included establishing a permanent body for Indigenous communities, securing a global levy for sharing benefits from genetic data, and recognizing Afro-descendants as essential biodiversity stewards. Although consensus on funding was delayed, COP16 demonstrated an enduring commitment to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, sparking renewed momentum towards protecting 30% of global ecosystems by 2030. Leaders emphasized that this "People's COP" (over 900,000 people attended events in the green zone over the 12 days) serves as a call to continue working towards renewing our relationship with nature - a relationship led by values of caring, respect, peace, love and responsibility. This transition underscores the need for continued cooperation and local actions to meet pressing biodiversity goals, and for values-led organizations to continue to bring their voices of hope to the conference.



Om Shanti

