

## UN Civil Society Conference 2024

Nairobi, Kenya, May 9-10

Shaping a Future of Global and Sustainable Progress in Support of the Summit of the Future



The objective of the conference was to come up with a hub for *ImPACT Coalitions* which will contribute to the broader processes in drafting the PACT of the Future. These civil society generated, diverse multistakeholder constituted coalitions agree to work towards advancing certain key reform initiatives leading up to and beyond the Summit of the Future.

The Brahma Kumaris delegation consists of Sabita Geer (USA), Pratibha Patel (Kenya), Dr. Dorcas Alusala (Kenya), and Ken-Andrew Gacheche (Kenya).





The opening ceremony was officiated by **Maheer Nasser**, Director of Outreach in the United Nations Department of Global Communications and Co-Chairs **Carole Ageng'o**, Global Initiatives Lead and Africa Regional Representative at HelpAge International, and **Nudhara Yusuf**, GGIN Executive Coordinator at Stimson Center. Welcome remarks were made by **Zainab Hawa Bangura** Director General United Nations Office at Nairobi.





Each speaker expressed solidarity with those affected by the devastating floods in East Africa. The conference hosted 20 ImPACT coalitions, 50 exhibits, an intergenerational hub, a media Zone, and many workshops – onsite, offsite, and virtual.

Among attendees were many senior UN officials, Civil Society Organizations, Youth, Academia, International media.



At the end of the two-days conference, the closing ceremony was graced by **H.E. Mr. William Ruto**, President of the Republic of Kenya, and **H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres**, United Nations Secretary General.



Out of the 20 thematic coalitions, the Brahma Kumaris delegation participated in 5 of them:

1. UN Charter Reform
2. Earth Governance
3. Artificial Intelligence
4. Faith-based solutions
5. Science and Policy Solutions for the Planet

To learn more about the objectives of these Coalitions, click here: <https://www.un.org/en/impact-coalitions-criteria>

## UN Charter Reform

Many of the reforms being suggested as a result of various conversations hosted by NGOs, require a reform of the UN Charter. Even though this discussion has been taboo for years, provisions of the Charter itself, such as Article 109, envisioned that Charter Reform is possible. The goal is to build a “coalition of the leading” Member States and others to begin the important conversation around Charter Reform, including the potential of invoking Article 109.

A diverse panel shared on key areas followed by input from the audience.

Panel consisted of

**Heba Aly**, former CEO, The New Humanitarian  
**Adam Day**, UNU CPR  
**Javier Surasky**, CEPEI  
**Diamond Spratling**, Girl Plus Environment  
**Solomon Dersso**, Amani Africa

Comments were shared especially from

Ambassador **Neville Gertze**, Permanent Representative of Namibia to the UN, NY  
**Silvio Albuquerque**, Brazil's Ambassador in Kenya.

Here are a few areas that need consideration in reforming the UN Charter:

- Address the veto power
- Revise the permanent representatives in the Security Council
- Relook at the use of the Trusteeship Council
- Include climate justice, human rights, and a global governance system

We need to ask ourselves: what would a better UN Charter look like? It is ok to be a visionary and work towards reducing humanitarian suffering. We need to ask for the impossible as the possible is not working. We have to keep in mind that most countries were not present when the current UN Charter was formed. The other concern is, can heads of state demand a change in the Charter? Who will give them the power to do so? Governments have to be ready to be held accountable. It is vital for decision-makers to listen to the voices of those who will be impacted by those same decisions.

The conversation concluded with making Heba Aly the Chair of this coalition for ongoing conversations.

## Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence and other cyber technologies offer powerful tools for global and local problem solving. Simultaneously, this poses equally serious challenges where unfettered, competitive action to exploit their rapidly developing potential can lead to a (tragedy of commons.)

Some of the most common and pressing debates were on Cobalt mines in D.R Congo. Microsoft laying off workers in Nigeria after closing operations at Africa Development Center.

There were proposals that Amb. Anna Karin and Amb. Chola Milambo to suggest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) be the eye of the Civil society to help voice concerns.

Given Global North sets up policy and Global South just adopts, proposals were fronted to strengthen clearer mechanism in Global Digital Compact.

## Earth Governance

Earth Governance is still in its early stages of formation. Suggestions made revolved around how earth issues can be addressed wholistically. It was observed that scientists speak only to scientists. It is a high time information is shared by all. Information should be broken down into a language that can be understood by all.

## Arts, Culture, Faith-based Solutions





This is an intergenerational alliance advocating for the integration of art and cultural expression into UN processes while promoting their representation and encouragement. Committed to amplifying diverse voices, including faith-based, indigenous, ethnic, linguistic, and artistic communities, enriching global dialogue with their unique cultural perspectives and traditions.

The group divided into arts and culture, and faith-based traditions. Faith-based traditions was chaired by **Dr. Liberato C. Bautista, President**, CoNGO, and **Ivy Koek**, Soka Gakkai International. Everyone was invited to share their thoughts on what needs to be in the document, paying careful attention to using inclusive language.

As much as values are common in all faiths, they can differ across cultures. Accordingly, three values were suggested – compassion, mercy, and love. It was highly noted that our world is dire need of love and faith-based traditions are known for expressing this.

If we want to reach the masses, then it is important to acknowledge that they will mostly be found in their respective places of worship. Faith leaders are asked to cooperate in educating their congregation in global issues such as respect for all, human rights, inclusivity, service to humanity.

### **Science and Policy Solutions for the Planet**

Issues discussed included how scientists can work with communities for the benefit of mankind. It was suggested that there should be strong collaboration between scientists and social scientists. It was also suggested that scientists and social scientists should work closely with politicians to influence policy especially when political parties are making their manifesto.



### **Future of Power: Shifting the Conscience of Humanity**

The Brahma Kumaris organized an offsite parallel event during the conference entitled, *Future of Power: Shifting the Conscience of Humanity*, on Friday, May 10 at the Brahma Kumaris Retreat Centre in Nairobi.

Presentations were made by BK Dr. Dorcas Alusala, BK Ken-Andrew Muthui Gacheche, and Rosleny Ubinas, Youth representative of the Baha'is Community at the UN, with BK Sabita Geer as moderator. BK Pratibha welcomed all and led everyone in the closing meditation.



Power was looked in three areas of interest: leadership, gender-equality, and intergenerational, from the current perspective and what may be a “new” approach to power that can promise better choices, improve intercommunications, inclusive, and unified. Participants were invited to reflect on a specific question and share from their personal experiences their perspectives on power now and in the future.

Here are some highlights from the presenters and participants:

Everyone has access to the most powerful power and that is, power of the self. We use this power in everything we do daily, be it power of position, power of information, when making choices, and more. Many times, this power can be seen as adversarial, oppositional, aggressive, resulting in conflict, negative feelings, and anger. However, the more aware we are of this power, the more we will be able to shift our inner compass to one of love, strength, resilience, joy. Then power will be seen as courage, compassion, tolerance. The expression, *“Let your conscience be your guide”* is the voice or inner compass that points us in the right direction. Since we all possess a conscience, why not use this power to guide us in the decisions we make, no matter how big or small. Decisions coming from an enlightened conscience will bring positive outcomes for all.



The strength behind intergenerational power is the mentorship across generations, forging closer relationships to leverage talents and build stronger interconnectedness. Elders uphold traditions and possess wisdom while younger generations bring innovation and creativity. Intergenerational mentorship within the Brahma Kumaris is a culture of honesty, integrity and accountability and positive impact, which inspires mentees to transferring of power from self-serving towards a power of serving humanity.

*“Consciousness influences leadership.”* What we are conscious of impacts our awareness and determines our attitude which directly affects the way we see things and the decisions we thereby make. Trustworthy leaders are aware of this spiritual trajectory. They create safe environments where everyone can meet and listen to each other, bringing all voices to the table. There is respect and inclusivity in relationships as we see each other outside of social status or religion or nationality. Such enlightened consciousness creates an elevated awareness resulting in social justice and policies that benefit all involved. We can learn this from the legacies of Mother Theresa and Nelson Mandela who used divine power to lead and bring meaningful change in the world.



When we have women at the table, we can guarantee that there will be inclusivity in the decisions made. They bring the much needed qualities of compassion and inner strength required for sustainability and transformative leadership. Since they make up half of the population, it is only practical that they be provided these opportunities. Attention also needs to be given to education for girls. Mutual respect among all genders fosters healthy boundaries and creates openness and safety.



Participants left after committing to experiment with the art of listening - to their conscience especially before making decisions, and to others. Many showed interest in continued conversations on the subject of “Future of Power.”

Event was co-sponsored by Baha’is International Community at the UN and the NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values, and Global Concerns, NY.



### Interviews and networking:

The BK delegation networked with many NGOs and members of the local community – meeting old friends and making new ones. Srs. Sabita and Pratibha had a few interviews including Haki FM Radio, a popular radio station.







The BK booklet on “Human Rights Spiritual Rights” was presented to Co-chair of the conference, Nudhara Yusuf. Brief but meaningful interaction took place between BK Sabita and the second co-chair of the conference, Carole Ageng’o, where she expressed her interest in knowing that faith-based organizations are having a voice in the conference.

Read more about the conference here: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/05/1149566>

The Brahma Kumaris Serve Africa Retreat Centre offered full support during these few days. We extend heartfelt appreciation for the wonderful hospitality provided with lots of love and smiles.

