

Living Water: Towards a Water-secure World

Some impressions, by Jan de Jongh

On 20 March 2013, an international meeting was organized in The Hague, on initiative of Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp and Mr Huib Klamer of the Dutch Employers Association: VNO-NCW, where religious leaders, business people, youth and civil servants came together to take part in an interactive dialogue on water collaboration, as preparation for the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Water in the Post 2015 agenda, to take place on the 21st of March, in the International Peace Palace. Although the Millenium Development Goals for drinking water have been reached before 2015, there are still approx. 800 million people without acces to clean drinking water and 2.5 billion people without proper sanitation. Undersigned and Ms Safa Fanaian were present as representatives of the Dutch bahaí community.



Spiritual leaders and business people sitting side by side on the back row.



Mr Dick van Ginhoven, from the Dutch Ministry of Trade & International Cooperation addressing the Group.

Some 50 people were present from all parts of the globe. From very young, like a group of youth members of the World Youth Parliament for Water, as well as 2 elder grannies of the International Council of 13 indigenous grandmothers, from all over the world, who share their wisdom to advance the world's civilization.

From Holland we had as prominent wise elders, Ruud Lubbers, former prime minister, Mr. Onno Ruding, who was specially requested by the Vatican to be present at this meeting as member of *Justicia & Pax*.

Important religious leaders were Dr Husna Ahmad, islamic Faith Regen Foundation, from UK, Dinesh Suna, Work council of Churches, Imam Ilyasi (chief imam of India, with 200 million followers)

Rabbi Soetendorp guided the whole group in a very charismatic way, resulting in an uplifted atmosphere, bringing forth positive attitudes from the group. The general opinion emerged that everybody should play a role in safeguarding water and that clean water should be provided to everybody in the world in the near future. And also that polluted rivers should be cleaned up, especially the rivers sacred to large groups of Hindus, Christians, Jews and Muslims like the Ganges and the River Jordan.

All religions have water in some ceremony, like for baptism, or ablutions before praying.

Mrs. Mona Polacca, Hopi elder granny from Arizona told us, all living things are sacred, e.g. it is a daily spiritual practice for the Hopi's to pray for nature, eg when planting corn they pray calling the rains to come. Water is a spiritual holy element; Spiritual connection begins with the four sacred foundations of life, water, air, sun (fire) and earth. All beings belong to mother earth, not only humans.

Religious leaders agreed that humanity comes first (above religion) and that no one group alone could solve the water problems, we should all work together.

The World Youth Parliament of Water, presided by Bart Devos from Belgium, is a strong and very motivated network of enthusiastic youth. In their consultations, youth asked themselves the question: If you were a waterdrop, what would you say to the World?

Rabbi Soetendorp mentioned that the meeting showed a magnificent diversity, we are one family-one earth community with one goal. The representatives of the Group that were part of the feather ceremony given by the Hopi elder granny clearly demonstrated this, see picture.



The start of the feather ceremony in the Jewish Synagoge Beth Jehuda in the evening. Rabbi Awaraham Soetendorp, Mrs. Mona Polacca Hopi elder from Arizona, two youth representatives from Europe and Africa, and Mrs. Pauline Tangiora, Maori Elder.

Mr Ruud Lubbers concluded with hindsight, that the enmity between business and NGO's had disappeared, and also that religions now have also taken on the care for the planet itself, as one of their religious tasks.

The end conclusion was that water should definitely be placed on the agenda of the after 2015 goals, which design will be the responsibility of Mr Ban Ki Moon, head of the UN.