

Report on World Environment Day

Theme: Connecting with Ways to Care for the Earth and Biodiversity

Inter-Religious Dialogue and Justice Peace Integrity Creation

World Environment Day in June was commemorated by the Missionary Society of St. Columban through their Inter-Religious Dialogue (IRD) and Justice Peace Integrity Creation (JPIC) ministries. On 15th of June 2024, these ministries joined hands to mark the occasion.

The event featured a speaker's panel convened to address the urgent theme of 'Connecting with Ways to Care for the Earth and Biodiversity'. Organized by the Missionary Society of St. Columban, through its IRD and JPIC ministries, the gathering aimed to raise awareness and catalyse action towards preserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable practices.



Members from different faiths attended.

The different faith attended this important and valuable topic were from the Shri Sanatan, Arya Samaj, Muslim communities: AAAIL and Fiji Muslim league, Latter Day Saints, Methodist and Catholic church, Evangelical fellowship and the Bhai Faith.

The session began with opening remarks underscoring the significance of World Environment Day and the overarching theme of biodiversity and ecosystem protection. The IRD Coordinator Pescila Magdalin commenced with an opening prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi and briefly shared on the IRD's initiatives. Ioane Nawaikula, JPIC Coordinator, also contributed by highlighting JPIC's efforts in promoting ecological justice. About fifty people attended this informative event.

In his role as Master of Ceremony, Ioane drew attention to the days of creation and humanity's stewardship responsibilities towards Mother Earth. He emphasized the critical need for adopting sustainable lifestyles and policies to safeguard our planet's natural resources, setting the stage for the panel discussions featuring expert speakers.

The Speakers Panel were divided into two Sessions where the first session featured speakers from both government and non-government sectors, each bringing expertise and insights into critical environmental issues. Mr. Krishneel Nand, Senior Environment Officer from the Ministry of

Waterways, Wilfer Rigamoto, Economical Enabler for the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), and Jay Nasilasila from the Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation (FDPF) shared their expertise in ecology, conservation, sustainable development, disaster risk reduction, and policy-making.

Krishneel Nand's presentation on 'Community Engagement and Environment Advocacy' underscored the importance of shifting mindsets towards environmental stewardship. He highlighted that individual actions determine the cleanliness and health of our environment, emphasizing that the power to make positive change lies within each of us. His insights resonated deeply with attendees, inspiring a renewed commitment to personal responsibility and community engagement in environmental advocacy.



Government and Cso's

A highlight of Wilfer's presentation was their focus on programs tailored for children and young people. In an engaging segment, Wilfer elaborated on how youths can actively participate in climate change activities through their initiatives. This emphasis underscored the importance of nurturing environmental awareness and action among the younger generation.

Additionally, the panel was enriched by the presence of Jay, who provided valuable insights into the impact of climate change on vulnerable communities, including those with disabilities. Jay emphasized that climate change affects everyone indiscriminately, highlighting the universal challenges and shared responsibilities in addressing environmental issues. His perspective brought a crucial dimension to the discussions, emphasizing inclusivity and resilience in the face of environmental challenges.

The Second Session included various religious leaders and representatives from various denominations. The list included Reverend Simone Tuni, General Secretary for Fiji Council of Churches, Dr Rajesh Maharaj from Hare Krishna, Fr Stephen Filipo, Fiji Catholic Archdiocese and also the Principal of Corpus Christie Teachers College and Vidya Singh, General Secretary from Arya Samaj.

Amazing to hear the quotes from texts and phrases in their religious beliefs that links to the protection and conservation of Mother Earth. During the session, the religious leaders captivated the audience with references from religious texts and phrases that underscored the imperative of protecting and conserving Mother Earth. They drew upon teachings and wisdom from various religious traditions, demonstrating and highlighting how these beliefs advocate for environmental stewardship.



Religious leaders and representatives.

The religious leaders highlighted passages that emphasize humanity's role as caretakers of the Earth, entrusted with the responsibility to preserve its beauty and resources for future generations. These quotes resonated deeply with attendees, illustrating the interconnectedness between spiritual values

and ecological ethics. By weaving these teachings into their presentation, they effectively conveyed the message that environmental conservation is not only a scientific and practical necessity but also a moral and spiritual imperative rooted in religious teachings.



Members from Shri Sanatan Dharma sharing through poem and song.

Attendees were inspired by the alignment of religious principles with environmental advocacy, recognizing that faith-based perspectives can play a significant role in promoting sustainable practices and fostering a deeper respect for the natural world. Religious leaders' insights underscored the universal call to action for individuals and communities to embrace practices that honour and protect Mother Earth, transcending cultural and religious boundaries in pursuit of a common goal: a thriving planet for all life forms and the care for our common home.

Emphasis was placed on the role of education, awareness campaigns, and sustainable development goals in achieving a harmonious relationship between humans and nature.

Participants left the event with a heightened awareness of biodiversity issues and a renewed commitment to contribute to global efforts in environmental conservation. The discussions and insights shared during the panel sessions are expected to inspire concrete actions and policy changes in favour of biodiversity preservation.

In closing, World Environment Day served as a platform to amplify the voices advocating for a sustainable future where biodiversity thrives, reminding everyone of their responsibility to act as stewards of the Earth. The event concluded on a hopeful note, highlighting that collective efforts can make a significant difference in protecting our planet's biodiversity for future generations.



Youth from Bahai Faith sharing scripture text quotes

Special thanks were extended to all speakers, participants, and organizers who contributed to the success of the event, reaffirming their commitment to caring for the Earth and biodiversity. This report captures the essence of the speakers panel on World Environment Day, illustrating the dedication and passion shared by individuals and organizations worldwide in preserving our planet's precious biodiversity. The day concluded with delicious meals, group pictures and building good relationship.



Group picture after session on protecting our environment.



Our responsibility to act as stewards of the earth.

Columban Coordinators: Pescila Magdalin - Interreligious Dialogue.

Ioane Nawaikula - Justice Peace Integrity Creation.