

Eating lunch with a delegate from Bangladesh at the COP 15 UN Climate Change meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark, I realize that being at this conference that my view of the world will never be the same. Perhaps the entire world will never be quite the same as we move into a new phase of planetary evolution. St. Francis line from the Canticle of Creation sang through me throughout the conference as a touch stone of truth. "Be praised to you my God through Sister Mother Earth who sustains and GOVERNS us..."

This was the first time in human history that so many individuals from civic society, NGO's, leaders in business and high ranking government officials from nearly 200 nations came together in one place. Climate change, perhaps the greatest challenge Earth faces, was the focal point of the two week meeting December 7-19, 2010.

Belle Center, the location of the gathering, powered by a windmill outside the doors, could house 15,000 people. Nearly 50,000 registered as official participants through the UN. Because I arrived at the beginning of the meeting, as a delegate with Franciscans International which has Non Governmental (NGO) status at the UN, I was able to participate until the last two days when there was only room for governmental officials.

COP 15, which stands for Conference of the Parties, was the 15th meeting since the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 when the world community first collectively agreed that climate change must be addressed. The task laid out for COP 15 was to facilitate world nations to agree to a new binding climate change treaty built upon Kyoto, which by 2009 was signed by 186 accounting for 63.9% of CO2 emissions from 1990 levels. The US did not sign the agreement and its CO2 emissions account for 36.1% of CO2 emissions on the planet.

As with many meetings many important things take place around the edges. Copenhagen showcased an excellent sustainable transportation system for their guests. Nearly 40% of the population bikes everywhere. What a joy to see all those bikers of every age. Trains, metros, and buses make it possible to travel almost anywhere in Denmark. Various venues revealed the hope of technologies for renewable, zero emissions homes, energy efficiency and systems that are the hope for a cleaner climate today.

Young people were another sign of hope. They were everywhere during the conference and were primarily responsible for organizing an amazing 100,000 person parade and march with music, floats, and signs processing en mass for a candle light vigil outside the Belle Center.

What a privilege to walk for two weeks with indigenous people, island people, women from developing nations and wise people such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, Mary Robbinson, Former Vice President Al Gore, Secretary of Energy Chu, the President of the island nation Tuvalu and many others.

However, accompanying others in the civil society from around the world is a visceral experience of solidarity that continues to walk with me. COP 15 was neither a success nor failure. It was another step along the path that set up a framework to address emissions reductions, funding for adaptation,

technology and mitigation for the poorest and most climate change affected nations and preservation and restoration of forests and trees. The citizens of the United States have a great deal of work to do to get a climate bill passed in order to move forward to a binding agreement later this year in Mexico City.

Our footsteps as we walk into a future for Mother Earth and all brothers and sisters carry a consciousness of St. Francis Canticle, "Be praised to you my God through Sister Mother Earth who sustains and GOVERNS us..." We also sing the song of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, "We want people to know that we belong to one family, the human family, God's family."

If you would like to get involved in helping Sister Mother Earth around the concern of climate change contact New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light www.nm-ipl.org.