

[Earth-Friendly Vision Molded By 500 World Leaders at Global Forum, Kyoto, Japan](#)

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## Earth-Friendly Vision Molded By 500 World Leaders at Global Forum, Kyoto, Japan

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Gorbachev Launches the Green Cross and Hindus Lead a Prayer to the Earth Goddess at 4-day Summit

They do it every five years. Last time was in 1988, inside the damp stone enclaves of Oxford University in England. This year is Kyoto - amidst pink cherry blossoms, a sea of blue-tiled roofs, manicured tea gardens and jewel-like Shinto shrines - they did it again. The ritual each time is the same. Hundreds of the world's most potent spiritual, parliamentary and scientific minds gather to engage in reflections on human survival. They meet in a deeper-than-normal place where God, science and government are friends not foes and generate soulful and savvy messages on how to live more sanely on a small planet awakening from a greed to green mentality. The Global Forum for Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders of Human Survival, one of the most noble global intelligence efforts since the United Nations, convened in Kyoto, Japan, April 19th-23rd. The theme - Value Change for Global Survival. Nearly 500 delegates from dozens of countries attended. The religious tapestry was dizzying - Muslims in snow white linen; Shinto priests in woven silk robes; Buddhists in elegant ochre; the Hindu delegate, renowned statesman Dr. Karan Singh in fine linen kurta and religious leader Dada J.P. Vaswani in soft white robe; political giants Michael Gorbachev in dapper business suits; Native American Indians bedecked with sacred stone pendants; full-bearded rabbis in black; regal-looking Russian Orthodox priests with hooded caps; an Italian Franciscan monk in brown habit and Africans in bright, embroidered garb.

Gorbachev arrived first, several days early, triggering an avalanche of foreign press. Most delegates arrived on the 18th and settled into the super luxurious Prince Hotel (gratis the Forum) or doll-house-like, shoji-screened ryokan inns at their own expense. The guests then basked in the dramatic oriental charm of

Kyoto, Japan's cultural jewel - totally insulated from all the ecological and un-humanitarian horrors they assembled to arrest. Then it was an international dinner in the Sakura Room or tatami mat dishes of sweet/sour pickled radish, sashimi, green tea and sake. Vegetarian needs were gracefully met. After last minute speech-polishing, phone calls and a few jet-lag pills, delegates tucked in under beautifully patterned futon quilts.

### Opening Message: We Are One Family

Dawn came. From their rooms, Shinto delegates bowed to the sacred solar orb. Hindu delegates intoned Vedic mantras. Buddhists silently invited the Compassionate One's blessings for the event's success. Prayers to Jesus for feelings of brotherhood to prevail murmured on the lips of Christian delegates heading for breakfast. By 9 a.m., most delegates assembled for an optional morning meditation.

Though unable to be there, General Secretary of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros Ghali sent the opening message: "The issues of the international community that once seemed so different - economic democracy, peace and security and sustainable development - we now know are part of the same human endeavor." Former co-chair of the Global Forum, Sheikh Ahmed Kuftaro, Grand Mufti of Syria, challenged small-minded, big-business callousness: "Do we have the interests of global peace at heart, or the interests of the powerful, with different scales and values - one for the rich and one for the poor?" He avoided any reference to the Ayodhya crisis or deteriorating Muslim/Hindu relations. And no one expected it. Showing inter-faith harmony, not exposing the exceptions to it, is unspoken Global Forum protocol. So, for example, even though Buddhist organizations in Japan tangle occasionally with Shinto groups over governmental favoritism, ideas, egos and dollars, the Forum is decidedly not the place for airing grievances. It's a pageant, a serious and beautiful one, a display of friendship, togetherness, intelligence and mutual caring by representatives of faiths very different for a common home, earth. That alone is important.

But Gorbachev, like everyone, was demanding a lot more than a religious unity show. The Forum's bold adoption of the Green Cross - and Gorbachev's invitation by Forum founder Akio Matsumura to be its first president - gave the Forum more clout, earthiness, more means and muscle. But it also marked a shift to an environmental agenda. Some observers lament this re-orientation, and note that

while there are many international organizations serving environmental needs, the Forum was uniquely created to deepen communications between politicians and religious leaders. They hope the Forum re-adopts this original focus.

## Hindu Delegates Deliver Himalayan Vision

Dr. Karan Singh was, not surprisingly, among the most eloquent speakers. This senior Indian statesman, devout Hindu and ardent Global Forum promoter, could have read his speech to sitar accompaniment in a morning raga: "In the ancient Indian tradition, going back 5,000 years, a confluence of three streams, a sangam, represents an extremely positive and auspicious occasion. Today, I see here just such an occasion. On the one hand, you have the Global Forum with all of its multifarious, multifaceted activities, religious leaders, political leaders, spiritual leaders, artists and scientists. That is one stream, as it were, the Ganges. There is then a new stream which joined us today, and that is represented by the International Green Cross, based on spiritual principles. And the third is the great stream of Japanese culture manifesting itself in Kyoto. And the day is particularly auspicious because it is Earth Day. We have extraordinary synchronicity."

For four days, discussions and talks circumnavigated the globe, putting its environmental and social problems under scrutiny so all could see the need for greater spiritual cooperation and global hand-in-hand, not hand-in-pocket, economics.

The most public and helpful criticisms came from Global Forum leader the Very Reverend James Parks Morton, Dean, Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York in his closing address. Although a Philipina woman, Senator Leticia Shahani, was chosen as a new co-chair of the Forum, Reverend Morton, like others, wondered about the otherwise near absence of women delegates. He proposed the next Forum should be half women. He also requested youth be on the board, more focus on the indigenous peoples and that accommodations be more modest. He proposed that the Global Forum convene again in 1995.

## HINDU DELEGATES

The turnout of Hindu delegates was, in numerous, disappointing. Only two made it as opposed to ten at the 1988 Oxford Forum. Nevertheless, the highest ideals of 800 million Hindus were admirably represented by Dr. Karan Singh and Dada J.P. Vaswani. Excerpts of their talks below:

Dada J.P. Vaswani, head of Sadhu Vaswani Mission, Poona, India: "There is but one life that flowers into all. There is one life that sleeps in the mineral and the stone. There is but one life that stirs in the vegetable and the plant. There is one life that dreams in the animal and that is awake in man. Until we realize this, we will not be able to awake anything."

Dr. Karan Singh, statesman, president of the People's Committee on Environment and Development in India and member of the Global Forum Steering Committee: "I would like to give something to the Green Cross today. Not money, a prayer. A prayer for mother earth. A prayer that has been resounding down through the corridors of time for thousands of years. Envision in your mind that beautiful photograph of planet earth taken from outer space. And on that, the great dear Goddess is seated on a white lotus - a lotus because it grows out of the muck and mire of the underworld and comes out clean and glistening. And on that, the World Mother is seated, dressed in spotless white. She is full-breasted and deep-naved because She is the World Mother. And Her eyes are like lotus petals, and in each hand She has a lotus flower, a symbol of the human spirit. And She is being bathed on either side by six tusked elephants. So you have this marvelous symbolism of the Goddess, the earth, the plant life and the animal life. And it is to that Goddess I pray: May She give all of us here the power, wisdom and compassion to undertake this tremendous task that we have now embarked upon."

## OTHER DELEGATES

Phil Lane, Chief of the Dakota and Chikisa Tribe: "We have preserved in our hearts of our tribes the seed crystals of the sacred relationship with our sacred Mother Earth. I would ask the very beloved council of elders before us and the Green Cross and the Global Forum to please support the healing going on in our indigenous communities across North America and throughout the world so our tribal communities and that sacred land that we hold and trust on behalf of the Creator and future generations can become the centers of the healing of the education of the young people of Mother Earth."

Italian monk of the Franciscan Order: "You must forgive us, Lord, for being unkind not only to one another, but to the whole of Creation because we did not look at the sun as Brother Sun, the earth as Mother and Sister Earth, the sea as Brother and Sister Sea."

A Bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church: "We must educate children to the fact that the responsibility is in their hands. They must be the ones to preserve the forests: they must be the ones to salvage our planet."

### Green Gorbachev

Green Cross president Gorbachev arrived at the Forum four days early. He was there for some major green power-brokering, not spiritual chit-chat with world religious figures. Breaking only for rest and food, he hammered out closed-door deals and signed up allies for his Green strategies. A backbone supporter of the Global Forum, he nevertheless identified his own agenda, the International Green Cross.

The Global Forum, already emerging as more green than theological or scientific, likes Gorbachev and the Green Cross addition. Gorbachev is an astonishing mind and his "green" bent is not only heartfelt but loaded with political force. Kyoto schoolchildren welcomed the popular statesman with a song "Dear Mother" about Mother Earth. Gorbachev responded: "Their song, Dear Mother, Mother Earth, gives me hope that our children will lead us in the value change which is so necessary if we are to save our earth, Our Dear Mother."

Many asked the Russian statesman, "Why not hand the United Nations the job that the International Green Cross has undertaken?" Green Cross founder indicated that the United Nations is bound constitutionally to being a nonsectarian body. To function without the formal input from and discussion with the world's spiritual leaders handicaps its vision. Also, it is impossible for the UN to transcend politics and without this transcendence, necessary measures for dealing with environmental problems would be impossible.

## History of the Green Cross

At the conference on Environment and Development held in Moscow by the Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders in January, 1990, ex-President, Michael Gorbachev announced his dream of an "International Green Cross" - a global, non-governmental agency dedicated to primarily protect the vast array of precious, defenseless endangered life forms - plants and animals being erased from the planet due to rapacious economics and destructive technologies. Like the United Nations, it will serve as a forum and umbrella to both collect, digest and disperse the world's most comprehensive information on environmental destruction and solutions.

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