



SPIRIT OF
HUMANITY
FORUM

REPORT

4th International SoH Forum

Reykjavik, Iceland

29 May to 1 June, 2019



‘Discovering harmony in a world of difference – spiritual resilience in practice’ was the theme of the 4th International Spirit of Humanity Forum, held in a beautiful sunny weather in Reykjavik, Iceland, from 30 May to 1 June, 2019 with an inaugural reception at the City Hall on the evening of 29 May.

It was a wonderful coming-together of around 200 leaders and changemakers from 38 countries, who participated in plenaries, workshops and contemplative dialogues to explore how personal transformation can lead to global transformation. And how, by learning to connect to our deeper spiritual values and aligning with them in our actions, a positive shift can occur in how we relate to ourselves, to others and the world at large.



We selected the title, ‘Discovering harmony in a world of difference – spiritual resilience in practice’, to promote a shift in human consciousness towards a rediscovery of harmony as an innate property of our being; a shift that can help us to perceive difference not as a threat, but as a creative driving force for collaboration and harmony. Harmony has spiritual qualities such as love at its core, which enables us to draw parts into an integrated whole and make systems work constructively, benevolently.

When we reaffirm our spiritual bond, we can start to re-weave the broken threads of our communities and our world into wholeness. Seeking ways to rediscover harmony in a world of difference, we invited leaders and changemakers to explore how spiritual qualities can strengthen our resilience and sustain us in an inner state of peacefulness, despite pressures and fears.

Space for reflection and sharing amongst participants becomes very important. We wish to create a spiritually-charged atmosphere that promotes personal realisations and helps us all to connect with each other more deeply.

Voices of gratitude

“The Spirit of Humanity Forum was once again a powerful experience with innumerable moments of inspiration, spiritual reflection, harmony and deep connection amongst the participants. These three days touched me deep inside, and I will take the spirit of humanity and harmony to my work and my community.”

“It was a wide embrace of different people, faiths, approaches and ideas, all united by a common wish to see improvements in the peacefulness of the world.”

“We are so many walking a spiritual path. We have a common language of love and so there is not much to explain when you feel that you are already connected.”

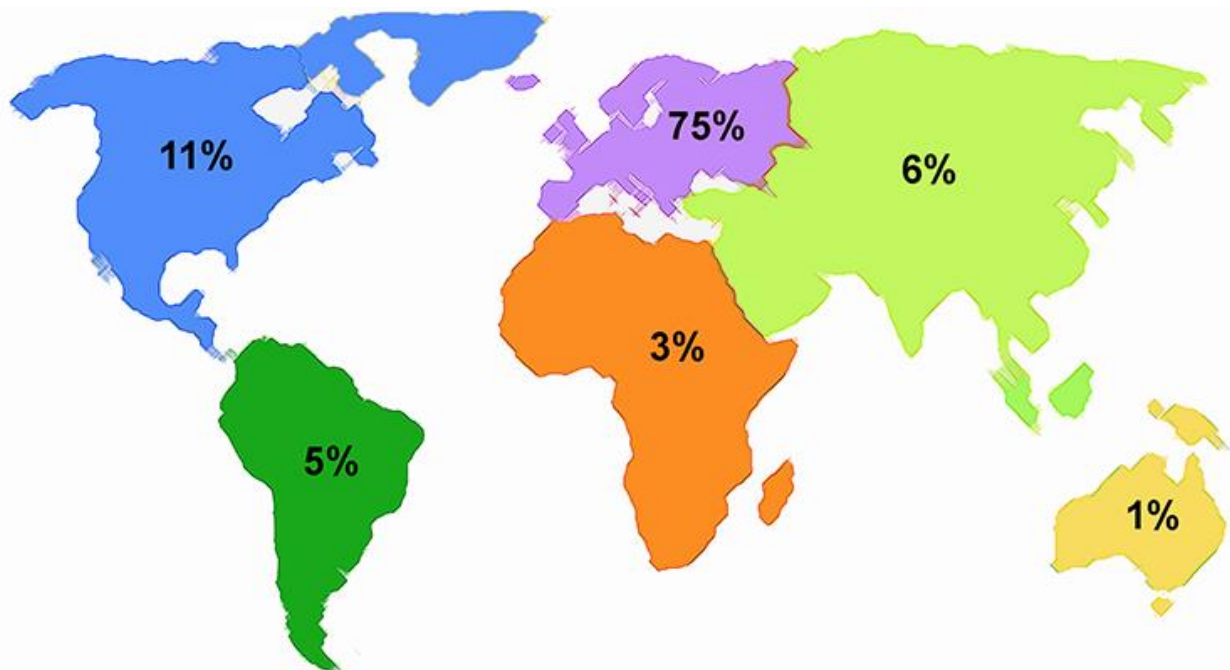
“Everything about the Forum moved me. I did not know that such a space existed. The environment was conducive, a safe space where you could expose your vulnerability and just be yourself. I was very touched by the panellists, sharing their experiences so vividly and, most of all, former UNFCCC Secretary, Christiana Figueres, and the statement she made about her stubborn optimism!”

“Thank you for organising such a wonderful three days, filled with knowledge, inspiration, sharing, love and hope. It was beautifully and thoughtfully organised. It takes a lot of hard work to have things run so smoothly, but you made it appear effortless.”

“An extremely nurturing experience, where the possibility of putting down our masks released an extraordinary atmosphere of harmony, allowing me to learn at every moment.”



200 participants
38 countries



Quotes

Bob Boisture, *president & CEO, Fetzer Institute, USA*

Leaders of the world need to commit to the inner work to be able to engage from a place of wholeness, solidarity and love. When I talk about love, I am not talking about something soft or something that is just between individuals in an intimate context – I am talking about a commitment to doing the hard work to create a society that starts from recognising the sacred dignity of every person, and builds the institutions and culture that can nurture a universal flourishing of every individual and the natural world. SoH Forum is precious because it draws leaders from all over the world who are brought together on the shared commitment of a world based on love.

Christiana Figueres, *former executive secretary, UN Convention on Climate Change, COSTA RICA*

We must awaken to the profound connection between the state of the world and the state of human consciousness. The natural world is in urgent need of regeneration in order to recover from the damage we have done. In equal manner, we are in dire need of regenerating our spiritual awareness in order to rekindle our profound capacity for good. It is time to stand tall in full recognition of our true selves.

Dr Thomas Bruhn, *senior research associate, Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies, Potsdam, GERMANY*

The SoH Forum provides unique opportunities to explore resonances between inner transformation and sustainability. A forum like SoH is a precious gift that provides a safe space for building and experiencing strong relations among change agents committed to a humanitarian future. In my experience, many people of good intention live in marginalised spaces or even in a hostile context and need to experience that they are part of a strong emerging community. The SoH Forum is a crucial catalyst for this.

Sister Jayanti, *European director, Brahma Kumaris, UK*

Each one of the Forums has generated such an intimate and safe atmosphere that leaders, who are playing key roles in bringing agreement in politics, the environment and other discussions, have been able to speak openly from their heart. They have shared stories of their success at bringing in the components of their own faith and spirituality. Harmony begins inside and then reaches out. If we can create harmony inside ourselves, we can appreciate differences and, at the same time, maintain our own inner dignity, and treat others with dignity and respect also.

Dr Imad Karam, *executive director, Initiatives of Change International, UK*

When what divides people seems to be more important than what unites them, the SoH Forum becomes a wonderful space to meet and share with inspiring leaders from all over the world. Coming together in this way gives me what I need to remain hopeful and keep working for change in the world.

Anne Bahr Thompson, *managing director, Philanthropy at Synergos, USA*

For me, spirituality isn't a practice. It's a way of being – of harmoniously connecting with myself, other people and the natural world, every day and in every moment. The Forum is an opportunity to unite with others who are also focused on living harmoniously— on creating a society in which, regardless of race, religion or ethnicity, people are focused on our common humanity and bond with nature.

Mike Hardy, *chairman, International Leadership Association; founding director, Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University, UK*

Being the chair of the board of the International Leadership Association, which is an association which is making demands on leadership to step up, there is no surprise that I am attracted to come to the Forum. I came to the SoH Forum in 2017 and that experience was quite transformational. There is such a challenge out there, and the thoughts of bringing our sense of being and our knowledge of self out is really important. SoH Forum is a trusted and safe place, which encourages and supports the sharing of experiences and open dialogue.

Nicole Schwab, *director of international relations, Last Wild Places, National Geographic Society; advisor, Education 4 Peace Foundation, SWITZERLAND*

We need a fundamental shift in how we view ourselves, and how we relate to each other and nature. Like the caterpillar changes into the chrysalis, the Spirit of Humanity Forum is a place where we can share our journeys and stories so that we can inspire each other, because I believe global transformation starts within ourselves first. So, it is about finding that sense of harmony and peace within. And then it can spread to how we relate to others, how we embrace our differences and how we respect each other – and little by little that is where the change will come from.

Tomas Björkman, *applied philosopher and social entrepreneur, SWEDEN*

The Spirit of Humanity Forum in Reykjavik was an excellent opportunity to connect and reflect with people from all over the world, all committed to co-creating a more conscious society. Thank you all, organisers and participants, for creating such a powerful gathering of dedicated souls as a manifestation of the signs of our time!

Sylvie Berti-Rossi, *director, book festival; publisher; editor, SWITZERLAND*

I am very touched that a platform like this exists, where leaders from all over the world share and talk about our mutual values. Love is the most powerful tool for changing the world. We need to start with ourselves – if we are not willing to do that ourselves, how can we think that others will?

Kenneth Gergen, *president & CEO, Taos Institute, USA*

What really inspires me is the diversity of people coming together from all the different backgrounds here, from politics, arts, business, religion – the combination of different voices, everyone with the vision of creating a peaceful world through applying the spiritual element.

Hellen Mugo, *director for research and partnership, Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA), KENYA*

In a world with so many challenges and so much hopelessness, we need to get together through such forums to share, reflect and motivate each other. This Forum reminds us and gives us encouragement that there is hope for a better world, and enables us to support each other in sustaining that hope. This way, we can contribute more towards a better world!

Prof Michael West, *senior fellow, The King's Fund; professor, Work and Organisational Psychology, Lancaster University Management School, UK*

The mystery and wonder of our existence is often lost in our involvement with human affairs. Humanity, I believe, is rooted in a sense of wonder and gratitude for our existence. The SoH Forum is an opportunity individually and collectively to become more profoundly and enduringly rooted in **humanity**. It is an immense source of power in reflecting on the wonderful mystery of our existence, and that gives us strong spiritual base and a strong sense of connection that gives us power to begin to have the courage to have a difference in the world.

Lori Halverson-Wente, *instructor, Communication Studies, Rochester Community and Technical College, USA*

I have attended many conferences, but this was something different! The sessions and speakers were outstanding, but also the audience and the general tone really touched me. I will forever use the, "Shall we take 30 seconds of silence?" moments which we had. I teach public speaking and have not seen such a level of compassion being expressed in presentations before - the feelings were electrifying, re-charging and relaxing all at once. I felt part of a movement. I will be forever grateful for having participated and would love to help in organising a SoH Forum in the US!

Dr Toufic Hakim, *executive director, Foundation for Self Leadership, USA*

We embrace the Forum's ambitious vision and deep values. Hosting meaningful dialogues and shared experiences around topics critical to our common humanity is an effective model to energise our collective work and sustain a movement that counterbalances undesirable forces around us.

Dr Garrett Thomson, *CEO and research director, Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace; Compton professor of philosophy, College of Wooster, USA*

I am inspired by the SOH because we (humanity) need spiritually-sensitive governance and political institutions shaped by non-economic and non-competitive conceptions that value well-being.

Ólafur Stefánsson, *teacher; former captain, national handball team, ICELAND*

The world we live in is mirroring ourselves - so let's be peaceful with ourselves.

Cees Hoogendijk, *co-creator, Learning Organizations – OrgPanoptics & AI Academy, THE NETHERLANDS*

My core mission is humanisation of organisations, through appreciating their potential generativity. Always excited to meet new or old friends. Fully in support of the SoHForum values and aspirations. I admire the energy of the organisers and feel proud to co-create.

Mashekoe Thato Liemo Likoti, *senior soil and water conservation officer, Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, Department of Conservation, LESOTHO.*

The Spirit of humanity was my beautiful beginning. It transcended all the mental boundaries I had as a person, and just like a beautiful butterfly emerging from a chrysalis, I felt my wings flap for the first time. Coming from the African soil, I know that we are not different we are simply unique and part of one race, the human race.

Opening

Hafrún Arna Jóhannsdóttir,
Vésteinn Sigurgeirsson,
Júlía Ósk Steinarsdóttir, *children of ICELAND*

“Iceland has many unique things like clean water, beautiful nature and peace. We have no military here and our children can be safe playing outside. But we should not take those things for granted, we need to reduce pollution and recycle better. In school, we have learned about children’s rights and that we are capable of making a difference. We need to learn more about how to take care of the environment. We wish that we had peace all over the world, that all children knew their rights and that all children had education. Here is an important lesson: if you point a finger at someone else, asking them to change, there are always three fingers pointing back at you. That means, you have the responsibility.”



Jóhanna Vilhjálmssdóttir, *director, Spirit of Humanity Forum, ICELAND*

“For many it is not an appropriate topic for a serious conference to talk about love – that is not a serious academic topic. But it actually should be – because love is the most powerful transformative power. Politics, business, healthcare, education – all of those activities are about us and between us – so why should love not be one of the serious solutions in bringing about positive changes in all those different sectors?”



Katrín Jakobsdóttir, *Prime Minister, ICELAND*

“We also feel the increased polarisation in politics in Iceland and have created a coalition government consisting of a left-wing party, a centre party and a right-wing party. Many people wonder if this can work, but it is my firm conviction that we have to prove that different parties can co-operate. It is of course a very different project compared to being one party with one clear political agenda, but our present political agenda is to work against polarisation; to introduce dialogue as something very important in itself. It can be a challenge to politicians who want to keep their ideology completely ‘clean’ so to say, but I believe that in these times, when the use of social media and technological changes has increased polarisation and conflict, that increased understanding and dialogue is a political goal in itself.”



Hjörtur Magni Jóhannsson, *pastor of Fríkirkjan, Reykjavík, ICELAND*

“I have been working with inter-religious dialogue for several years, to discover harmony in a world of religious differences. This very day is, according to the Christian church calendar, the day when Christ ascended into Heaven, and was no longer bound by the constraints that time or space sets us. I see it as an encouragement to all of us to ascend spiritually and beyond everything that binds us, constrains us or divides us. To go over and above our differences, particularities, our different traditions, customs, cultures, and even over and above our religions and religious traditions. We are but a small part of nature, not sent to dominate or misuse, but to preserve, nourish and sustain life in all its plurality and diversity. I do believe that coming together here in Reykjavík will help us to create the spiritual resilience in practice that is needed.”



Sr Jayanti, *European director, Brahma Kumaris, UK*

“Everything starts within. When I am able to align my moral compass with my feelings, I can have harmony within myself and then I can have harmony with each of you. Then together we can form a nucleus that can actually bring about harmony between humans, with nature and all forms of life. This harmony is generated by spirit, springing forth from the power of silence, bringing about creativity and a better world for each and every one.”



Gabriela Michetti, *Vice President, ARGENTINA*

A video message:

“Thank you so much for listening to me, I would have loved to be with you all there in Iceland, but Argentina is having elections very soon and our President has asked me to stay by his side. I definitely wish to participate in the next Forum - that beautiful event which is so necessary. If politicians are not aware and able to represent the change that is happening in the consciousness of people, then we are in real trouble. People do not want any more lies; they want peace, positive and constructive relationships; they do not want the old things anymore. Politicians, all over the world, need to realise that power is a means to construct, to love and to give. Although there are so many resources available, self-interest becomes the obstacle which creates separation and fragmentation. We need to find ways to work together. I am so grateful for you all being there. We need to work for aligning the consciousness of leaders and their peoples.”



Plenary 1: Harmony and sustaining peace

Introduced and moderated by **Scherto Gill**, *senior research fellow, Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace, UK*



Presenters:

- **Bob Boisture**, *president & CEO, Fetzer Institute, USA*
- **Kenneth Gergen**, *president & CEO, Taos Institute, USA*
- **Pia Hanson**, *director, Institute of International Affairs; director, HÖFÐI Reykjavík Peace Centre, the Centre for Small States Studies and the Centre for Arctic Policy Studies, ICELAND*

Questions to reflect on:

- What is the relationship between harmony and sustaining peace?*
- How might the idea of harmony inspire values-based governance, from the local to the global?*
- What might leaders (at all levels) do to cultivate harmony and a culture of peace in the world?*



Bob Boisture explained that disharmony and conflict arise from rational, scientific and dualistic thinking that fails to recognise spirit and the sacredness of all things. In order to transform systems that today create disharmony (education, health, political,

economic systems), we have to connect to the inner life with a fierce determination. Religions tell us about an interconnected system with love at its core. The appropriate human response is the shared affirmation of the sacred reality, and to embrace and protect the natural world as a gift of the spirit. We need to break out of our 'bubbles' and learn how listen to each other from a place of real openness and humility. Children will learn to care about the world if we love them, since our capacity to love is dependent on the amount of love we have received. The worth of our children has to be affirmed in very concrete ways from a very early age. The family has a critical role to play in this, but also the systems we create. I see love as an organising principle, not just in personal relationships but also for our common life together. An expression of that is to create educational systems based on an holistic understanding of human flourishing, with the recognition that social, emotional and spiritual development is more important than just giving them competence for work.



Kenneth Gergen said we all have different perspectives on things and, as our different perspectives often create conflict and division, could we come together and create new perspectives that would have new meaning? If we could come together and, in co-ordination, re-story the world, look at it in a different way, at the positives and inquire into what we share, we could create a different relationship and a different way of seeing the world which we could agree upon. However, we are very well trained in arguing, bargaining and defending our positions. So, it is a challenge to go beyond that habit and instead look at how I can build on what someone else offers and ask can we build something together. But we all have the potential, so how do we do it? It becomes a matter of education. We have to find new narratives and new visions to overcome our divisions and change the systems we have built, which position us in competition and encourage self-interest. We must recognise that life is co-creation; harmony comes out of co-creation. We need to engage young people and change our competitive educational systems, in which children and young people are not asked for their vision, but everything is already laid out for them in advance. They should be asked for their vision.

Pia Hanson spoke about the need to focus on 'positive peace', where we feel comfortable, content and happy in the space we are in and not just the absence of war. In 2016, Höfði Reykjavík Peace Centre was established. Höfði was chosen because it was there that Reagan and Gorbachev met with their differences on a neutral ground and had a dialogue which eventually led to the ending of the Cold War. Her institute also has a 'social innovation accelerator programme', an opportunity for someone with a good idea to come into a setting where they get support, mentorship and guidance for a period of eight weeks, trying to make whatever idea they have sustainable. An example would be the idea of using mushrooms to clean up contaminated earth. She also said it is easy to live in a 'bubble', to have an exchange only with like-minded people and believe that the vision we have of life is the correct one, except it is not. It is important to come out of that, connect and take any opportunity to cross a border to work together with people from a different background. She emphasised that, in order to engage young people for the world, the education system needs to be changed to project-based education. To affirm the worth of children, we need to stop talking at them and instead with them, and also listen to them and learn from them.



Plenary 2: Harmony within ourselves and in our communities

Introduced and moderated by **Mark Milton**, founder & CEO, Education 4 Peace Foundation, SWITZERLAND



Presenters:

- **Imad Karam**, international director, *Initiatives of Change*, UK
- **Dina Shoman**, founder & CEO, *inherQuests*, USA
- **Boris Cyrulnik**, award-winning author, doctor, ethnologist, neurologist and psychiatrist, FRANCE
- **Caroline Casey**, founder & visionary, *Binc*, IRELAND
- **Mary Gordon**, founder & president, *Roots of Empathy*, CANADA

The presenters were invited to reflect on these questions:

- What does harmony within ourselves mean and feel like? How might inner harmony contribute to peacefulness in our communities?*
- What practices might we foster to appreciate our difference and deepen our interconnectedness?*
- How might spiritual resilience help sustain generative relationships and harmony?*

The speakers shared their personal history, moments of great difficulty and crisis, and ways of overcoming their challenges and building up spiritual resilience.

Imad Karam shared how he has had many difficult experiences of disharmony from growing up in Gaza and now being separated from his family there. He underlined the importance of not becoming prisoners of our experiences, but to be able to free ourselves and find purpose in our life. You will need to look inwards and start to put right what is not working in your life, and this will invite a sense of purpose. His religion and spirituality has helped him with his journey of acceptance and freedom, to focus on what can be changed and not what is beyond his control. Many Palestinians have died for Palestine, but how can I live for Palestine? How can I be good for myself, and at the same time be good for my family, my region and the world? There should not be any contradiction.



Dina Shoman shared her very personal story of her breakdown, loss of identity and depression after the dissolution of her family's banking business, and how she found strength in a very challenging, humbling, life-changing experience climbing to Mt Everest basecamp. She felt afterwards that, if she could do this, she could probably do anything she sets her mind to and soon found a new passion in creating an NGO that teaches children throughout the world about financial literacy. Sometimes you really have to step down to step up in a different way.



Boris Cyrulnik described spirituality as feelings related to sacred invisible strengths or the ability to keep a representation of what you take support from in your mind. He feels our individual ability to embrace difference and to be resilient is related to our fundamental sense of security, which starts as a baby. A baby that experiences a close bonding develops a sense of security and is able to feel safe even when the figure of support is not in front of them, by keeping them in their mind. A baby, which is left alone and deprived of a close bonding of safety, will develop deep personal insecurities, vulnerability, overreactions and an inability to trust. Their world will become egocentric; they will be afraid of difference and constantly need concrete elements of security in front of them to feel safe. Spirituality, inner resilience and embracing difference to live in harmony all require the development of a fundamental sense of safety, and it starts early.

Caroline Casey gave a powerful account of how she was able to disguise being legally blind for 11 years, because she was unable to accept being disabled. When she came out of the closet in 2010 and shared her story, she became a very popular inspirational speaker, but, in reality, she chose that platform to make amends for what she realised had been her own discrimination against her own tribe. Resilience comes from accepting one's personal challenges, being honest about them and using them as opportunities for growth. Grief broke her heart open when her father suddenly passed away two years before, but it was also in this grief that she found the courage to do something she had always wanted to do: to launch a global campaign for disability-inclusion. This is the time for our heart revolution!



Mary Gordon grew up in a very loving family who set a marvellous example of caring for others. Her resilience and path in life was very much formed by the years spent at home. Her mother lived every second of life serving the community wholeheartedly, helping people in need, and everyone was respected no matter what social status. Her father gave away most of his money, visited lonely people at the hospital and the old age home, and taught his children about other parts of the world, caring for their conditions too. Both set an example of respecting the dignity of each person in life. I learned that you can make a difference in the world and the family is most important institution, the bedrock of society, and then comes education. Mary has worked a lot with families suffering domestic violence and she learned that the common thread in all that violence was the absence of empathy. They were not monsters, they just did not have the ability to understand what the other one is feeling and to feel with them. The early bonding relationship as a baby is where the empathy blooms or fades. Love and empathy are the foundation of resilience.



Plenary 3: Harmony among nations and global institutions

Introduced and moderated by **Kurian Thomas**, *program director, Fetzer Institute, USA.*



Presenters:

- **Mike Hardy**, *chairman, International Leadership Association; founding director, Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University, UK*
- **Katherine Marshall**, *senior fellow, Berkley Centre for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, USA*
- **Christiana Figueres**, *former executive secretary, UN Convention on Climate Change, COSTA RICA*
- **Lord Andrew Stone**, *House of Lord, UK*
- **Michael Wernstedt**, *founder, Initiative; board member, Raoul Wallenberg Academy, SWEDEN*

The presenters were invited to reflect on these questions:

- How can there be harmony amongst the diverse national interests?*
- In what way might spirituality and human values help shift global political systems and transform international institutions?*
- What practical steps might civil societies and institutions take to enhance harmony amongst nations?*

Mike Hardy shared how his relationship with his grandson, that is based on unconditional love and understanding, has taught him more than most of the scholarships he has been involved with in universities. It taught him a lot about the work he is doing with international institutions – that if we could move away from relationships based on conditionality and judgment, the world would be a better place. Mike gave up anger in 2017 and that has changed his relationships in personal life and work. How can we inject more harmony at the level of nation states and international organisations? We cannot move forward without respecting the past but, by looking only backwards, we go nowhere. The best generation to back our prospects is the now generation, all generations working together. We must take responsibility for holding leaders to account, not just deriding them or being hopeless, corrupt or ineffective. The same for international organisations that come together; we must create harmony in the flow of their inter-relationships.



Katherine Marshall spoke about the challenge of making people see what is outside their frame of reference. How do we make people see what they don't want to see? And how can we deal with the inequality of opportunity that we see in the world? 84% of people of the world have some religious affinity, yet there is enormous religious illiteracy, and religious leaders and people are mistrusted by secular institutions. Co-operation between religious and secular institutions is needed, and religious leaders and people also need to learn about and respect secular spirituality. Also, the patriarchal structures of religions need to change to be able to accept the modernisation of women's roles.



Christiana Figueres spoke about the power of consciousness using the example of working with the Paris agreement. The world had fallen into a deep hole of desperation, distrust and hate about climate change, and the people in the area did not want to talk with each other. She saw the need to step back, and see who we are being and what are we are bringing. It became clear that they were in a mindset of impossibility and that sentiment needed to change into an attitude of stubborn optimism, against all odds, as a choice and an input. That change of mindset began to pervade everyone who was working on this and slowly impossible changed to maybe, then probable, then likely and then unstoppable! She also shared a striking realisation of how we as individuals influence the world around us with what we hold inside of us and that we really have an individual responsibility if we want change on a global level.



Andrew Stone brought up the power of authenticity, saying that if we could all have the courage to connect within, and be and act from our authentic self, from who we really are, instead of hiding parts of ourselves behind the acting we do when we meet, we could save the world. He shared how meditation has helped him overcome challenges in his life and dealing with low self-esteem. In meditation, he becomes authentic, but he now wishes to learn how to be to be completely authentic in connection with everyone. We must stop categorising ourselves as either spiritual or mundane; we are both and we must find harmony between the two. In the same way, when we meet someone different from us on the other side of the fence, we are both and we must work it out together,



Michael Wernstedt shared how Raoul Wallenberg, who saved tens of thousands of Jews from the Holocaust, was his grandmother's brother. Since his disappearance, the family had spent so much time trying to find out what had happened to him, but had to give up. Instead, they built up Raoul Wallenberg Academy to inspire more people to make a difference in the world. He learned about the power of clarifying your purpose and values after having faced a crisis at 26, which forced him to question his beliefs and clarify his motivation in life. Tuning in with his purpose and values, and also with the heritage and healing of the old family wounds, things started to flow. He started a political party in Sweden, inspired by a Danish party, started when Trump was elected. A party where everyone could come to the table, where listening, empathy and co-creation were the core of the work. His biggest learning was that all went well as long as they were in sync, but as soon as they wanted more control and strategy, things got difficult and struggles came in. I hope we have sown a seed for a new political democracy where we listen to understand, put ourselves in someone else's shoes, and build on others' ideas and try to co-create together.



Plenary 4: Harmony with nature

Plenary 4 on the last day, Saturday 1 June, was entitled **Harmony With Nature** introduced and moderated by **Nicole Schwab**, *director of international relations, Last Wild Places, National Geographic Society; advisor, Education 4 Peace Foundation, SWITZERLAND.*



Presenters:

- **Tomas Björkman**, *social entrepreneur, author; founder, Oak Island Foundation, SWEDEN*
- **Sr Jayanti**, *European director, Brahma Kumaris, UK*
- **Halldóra Geirharðsdóttir**, *actress, director, author; professor, Icelandic University of the Arts, ICELAND*
- **Hellen Mugo**, *director for research and partnership, Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA), KENYA*
- **Thomas Bruhn**, *senior research associate, Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies, Potsdam, GERMANY*

The presenters were invited to reflect on these questions:

- What does it feel like when we live in harmony with nature? How might we achieve that?*
- How might we apply the practices of harmony to the economic, social and political dimensions of sustainable development?*
- What else might we do to shift our way of being from living at the expense of Nature to living in harmony with Nature?*



Thomas Björkman shared his conviction that in these turbulent times of old systems collapsing, we need to find our inner moral compass, encourage others to do the same and become co-creators of a new system. He referred to the unique transformational process which the Nordic countries went through 150 years ago when changing from very poor, non-democratic, agrarian societies to the most stable industrial democracies in the world. It was achieved by empowering people to become co-creators, independent of outer authorities, able to judge for themselves. Lots of retreat centres were opened where people, after working maybe five years, could stay up to six months, supported by the state, to reflect, to find their inner compass, to become grounded and hold the complexity of the changing times. The transition was fast.



Sister Jayanti spoke about her spiritual journey, and her work to introduce values into the UN and bring about the Earth Charter. Having been deeply involved with work for the environment since 2009, she emphasised the need for a change of consciousness, “The only way things can change is through a change of consciousness. When our consciousness is spiritual, we see the world as sacred, and we care and want to protect. But when I forget my own spiritual identity and connect only to matter, my body and the matter around me, the materialistic view takes over, the sacred values are forgotten and consumerism takes over. If the sacred is my priority, then I need to simplify.”



Halldóra Geirharðsdóttir shared a realisation she recently had when working on a film ‘Woman at War’, where she played the roles of twin sisters working with very different energies. One is a determined environmental activist, fighting her battle with righteous anger, while the other is a yoga teacher, coming from love. According to the yoga tradition, righteous anger falls in the category ‘rajas energy’ (passion) and when activated always attracts ‘tamas energy’ (darkness). The other sister worked with love, ‘sattva energy’ (light). Halldóra realised that you can actually not sustain any good work in an energy of anger, it does not matter how ‘right’ you are, you will always invite darkness. Only love endures.



Hellen Mugo wants to raise the consciousness amongst youth about climate change, which causes terrible droughts and floods in many African countries. Youth have so much energy and they just need to be told where to start. She has the impression that people don’t know how serious it is. If we recognise that all is interconnected, our awareness about the importance of protecting nature will be raised. Every spiritual tradition talks about care for creation. She concluded with a quote by Wangari Maathai, “In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now.”

Thomas Bruhn underlined how harmony is a quality coming from inside that needs to be cultivated and expressed. His interest, in how we can embody and live in a harmonious relationship with each other and everything around us, brought him to the issue of sustainability. His observation, however, was that so many have very strong convictions of what needs to be done but the way they fight for these ideas is disharmonious itself. He wants to support people in listening to each other, instead of talking at each other and trying to convince one another; to identify our common denominators, from our many different perspectives, instead of trying to make others see our own perspective only. Thomas feels that, when we talk about the world as something separate from us to be saved, it is in direct conflict with harmony as an expression of equality of relationship. We must realise that we ARE nature. He feels that we live in a world based on fear, and that exploiting and using nature is basically to pacify our own fear, constantly trying to create a sense of safety. However, I also have a sense of harmony in my own nature, so how can I cultivate that quality and let it manifest in all the relationships I have with everyone at every moment?



Plenary 5: A new opening

Introduced and moderated by **Maureen Goodman**, *programme co-ordinator, Brahma Kumaris, UK*, and **Óttarr Proppé**, *musician, entrepreneur, former Minister of Health, ICELAND*.



Intergenerational Dialogue

Chaired by: **Mashekoe Thato Liemo Likoti**, *senior soil and water conservation officer, Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, Department of Conservation, LESOTHO*.



Presenters:

- **Isabella Lenarduzzi**, *director, JUMP, BELGIUM*
- **Anne Bahr Thompson**, *managing director, Philanthropy at Synergos, USA*
- **Ndapile Bwanausi Kabuye**, *research assistant, Environmental Management Department, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, MALAWI*
- **Marta Magnúsdóttir**, *Chief Scout, ICELAND*

The presenters were invited to reflect on these questions:

- Taking the Forum as a whole, what has been most meaningful for me/us at this time?*
- In what ways have my/our awareness and practices been challenged and expanded?*
- What might be the contribution of the Forum to the world?*

Isabella Lenarduzzi shared how she started JUMP to help create equality between men and women at work, and that it is really about helping to shift our society of domination to a society of collaboration. She said that the resistance to this in the world is however growing and it frightens her. She realised at the Forum that to be able to protect herself and also protect others, an inner change is necessary. "I need to transform myself into a more loving being." She said she understands that it is a difficult journey and that she was feeling very humbled.



Anne Bahr Thompson said that it had been extraordinary at the Forum not to sit in groups not knowing people's backgrounds, not seeing the difference on the outside, but to connect with each other on the inside. She perceived a new way of thinking about harmony, which is about belongingness, to feel connection, and that to feel connection we need to find the sacred piece within ourselves. She said we are part of nature, not separate, and if we can recognise what is sacred inside each of us then we can come back to the light and bring Gaia back to the light.



Ndapile Bwanausi Kabuye said that, as human beings, we have become disconnected in so many ways. We are talking about environmental degradation, but failing to see human degradation. We are growing in numbers, but shrinking in terms of connection, compassion, the values that we should uphold. We see life only in the frame in which we live, but we must strive to connect to more than what we know. She said that we should be moved by what others are going through so we can see where we can help. To be more connected to ourselves, each other and to nature.



Marta Magnúsdóttir brought up the need for common guiding values for humanity and the importance of strong values-driven characters, when facing the future challenges which we soon can expect. She said that values statements in organisations are often empty words and in the youth sector you also see a lot of youth who are just trying to fit in, and not bring out their own character, own ideas and own values. She said we must bring it forth now and encourage youth too. We cannot wait, we must do it now!



Workshops

Envisioning our harmonious co-existence as leaders in a world of trust and peace - unleashing positive energy and enabling collective commitment

Dr. Markos Perrakis



Founder and managing director, Fractality; leadership development and process facilitator, psychologist and speaker, GREECE.

Discovering a path toward harmony within us and among us

Harley Goldberg



Retired physician executive, The Permanente Medical Group/Kaiser Permanente, Northern California; chair, Board of Directors, Foundation for Self Leadership, USA.

Toufic Hakim



Executive director, Foundation for Self Leadership; senior founding principal, Group i&i Consultancy; former university executive and professor of physics and engineering, USA.

Mark Milton



Founder and director, Education4Peace; founding partner, Spirit of Humanity; board member, Foundation for Self Leadership, SWITZERLAND.

Exploring the relational core of transformation

Dr. Thomas Bruhn



Research group leader, 'A mindset for the Anthropocene', Institute for Advanced Sustainable Studies (IASS), Potsdam, GERMANY.

Carolin Fraude



Research associate, 'A mindset for the Anthropocene', Institute for Advanced Sustainable Studies (IASS), Potsdam, GERMANY.

Writing together towards harmony - from personal stories and dialogue to shared expressive text

Freema Elbaz-Luwisch



Emerita professor in education, University of Haifa, ISRAEL.

One Humanity Institute - The EnVisionarium - a museum of the future

Dr. Nina Meyerhof & Domen Kocevar



Nina: President, Children of the Earth, One Humanity Institute. A visionary thought leader recognised for a life of advocating for children and youth, USA.

Domen: Co-founder, One Humanity Institute, SLOVENIA.

Circle for transformative exchange

Astrid Ståhlberg



Business consultant, changemaker, entrepreneur and art therapist, SWEDEN.

Spiritual ecology and resilience - coming into harmony with our true nature

Emilie Parry



Completing research degree on climate change, ecology and interfaith engagement, University of Oxford, UK.

The hero's journey

Vanitha Chandrasegaram



Drama therapist, MALAYSIA.

Spiritual resilience: how my spiritual journey fosters transformation of self and society

Dr. Michelle A Scheidt



Program Officer at the Fetzer Institute, USA.

Calm, resilience and compassion - the key to creativity with climate change

Professor Kristin Vala Ragnarsdóttir



Professor of Sustainability Science, University of Iceland, ICELAND

Mike Parker



Developer and practitioner, Liminal Coaching, UK.

Liberate and trust yourself to flow in a rational world

Marcel Gasser



Nomad, exploring both the outer and the inner world, SWITZERLAND.

Creating inner and outer harmony through living a life of consciousness and integrity

Olivier Onghena-'t Hooft



Founder and chairman, Global Inspiration and Noble Purpose Institute, Wisdom Encounters and Young Leaders-Inspiring Mentors, BELGIUM.

How can we find harmony in education?

Richard Dunne



Headteacher, Ashley CofE Primary School, London, UK.

Harmony embodied - an exploration of harmony in the body and in our environment

Una Nicholson



Group facilitator and somatic practitioner having studied dance and movement theatre, the Feldenkrais Method and Amerta Movement, UK.

The role of the heart in promoting harmony and spiritual resilience: how the qualities of the heart help us grow spiritually and connect with others

Judith Nelson



Physiotherapist and Heartfulness teacher, UK.

Sylvie Berti-Rossi



Co-founder and artistic director, book festival 'Le livre sur les quais' in Morges; publisher, Publishing House Infolio, SWITZERLAND.

When the heart is at peace, the world is at peace - Zen meditation for harmony and resilience

Dr. Maria Reis Habito



International program director, Museum of World Religions, USA.

Leading from within – exploring inner power



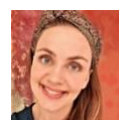
Stefanía Ólafsdóttir

Vice-president, Lótushús, Brahma Kumaris, ICELAND.



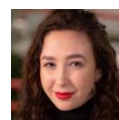
Sara Barðdal

Health coach, online trainer and owner, www.HIITFIT.is, ICELAND



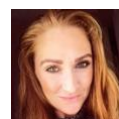
Guðrún Birna le Sage de Fontenay

Life coach, yoga teacher, founder, www.ahamoment.is, ICELAND



Elísabet Brynjarsdóttir

Nurse, harm reduction team, Red Cross, ICELAND.



Ása Inga Þorsteinsdóttir

CEO, Stjarnan sports club, ICELAND.



Eva Mattadóttir

Trainer at Dale Carnegie, host at Normið podcast and an entrepreneur at heart, ICELAND.

Contemplative Dialogues

For many, the Contemplative Dialogue sessions were a most significant experience during the Forum, where friendships were deepened and seeds for future collaboration were sown. The rich diversity of the facilitators' approaches to leading the dialogues added to the beauty of the Forum's tapestry of activities.

The dialogues were one-hour session at the end of each day, with two facilitators in each group of 30-40 participants. All dialogues included elements of silent reflection, compassionate listening and deep discussion.

The aspiration was to:

- reflect and share personal perspectives and stories
- listen non-judgmentally and openly, with compassion and care
- enter another's inner world or subjective reality
- use dialogue as a shared inquiry for transforming ourselves and (re)discovering pathways to harmony, peacefulness and well-being

Questions to reflect on:

General:

- What has moved me today?
- What are the highlights?

Day I:

- How do I now make sense of harmony, following the day's discussions?
- In what ways are these stories, conversations and experiences meaningful for me?
- What questions might I contemplate upon for the world?

Day II:

- What new inspirations, perspectives or visions might I draw from today's Forum?
- e.g. how might I strengthen my spirit resilience?
- e.g. how might I transcend barriers to reach greater harmony?

Day III:

- In the light of today's conversations, how might I perceive my relationship with Earth? What is it like for me to be and to live in harmony with all that is?
- Taking the Forum as a whole, what has been most meaningful for me at this time?
- In what ways have my awareness and practices been challenged and expanded?



Facilitators:



Dr Miriam Subirana – PhD, Founder of IDEIA Institute for Dialogue and Appreciative Inquiry. Coach PCC, Author and writer.



Cees Hoogendijk - Co-creator of Flourishing People and Organizations. Representing OrgPanoptics, Appreciative Inquiry Academy (NL) and Instituto IDEIA (ES).



Sarah Eagger - Consultant Psychiatrist, Mindful Self-Compassion teacher and Chairperson at the Janki Foundation for Spirituality in Healthcare



Michael West - Professor of Organisational Psychology at Lancaster University Management School, Senior Research Fellow at The Work Foundation, and Emeritus Professor at Aston University.



Michelle Scheidt - Program Officer at the Fetzer Institute in Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA working towards Fetzer's mission of helping build the spiritual foundation for a loving world.



Dr Garrett Thomson - CEO and Research Director of the Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace. Compton Professor of Philosophy at the College of Wooster. Author.



Una Nicholson - Facilitator and group host working for a healthcare social enterprise in the UK called Here.



Olivier Onghena - Founder of Global Inspiration & Noble Purpose Institute, Wisdom Encounters and Young Leaders-Inspiring Mentors. Entrepreneur-advisor-author.



Living in Harmony - collaboration with elementary schools in Iceland

During spring 2019, we collaborated with Hólabrekkuskóli and Laugarnesskóli elementary schools on a project where the students worked with the theme of Harmony within ourselves, Harmony with others and Harmony with Nature.



On the second morning, children gave their own presentation with photos from their activities during the weeks leading up to the Forum: participating in nature camps and walks, planting seeds and trees, cleaning up streets and beaches, visiting the elderly - singing and reading with them, participating in the yearly UNICEF-organised run to raise money for less fortunate children, creating peace birds with messages and other art work.

Brynjar and Aldís from Hólabrekkuskóli



“It is important to stand up for those who are not as fortunate as us and we can make a difference even though we are still young.

It is not OK to disregard human rights. It is not ok to pollute the earth. Every life matters and this is our earth and it deserves better from all of us. There is no planet B. To

live together in peace and harmony, we need to be the best versions of ourself every day.”

Felix Skapti and Sóldís Erla from Laugarnesskóli



“We have to take care of nature and do things ourselves, instead of waiting for others to do it.

It is good to work with people and give our best effort - it feels good to help other people.

Many little things create one big thing. Making other people happy also makes you happy.”

Art exhibition

At the Opening Reception in the City Hall, we had a beautiful art exhibition and displayed some of their work.



A piece of more than 500 different diamonds – one made by each student of Laugarnesskóli – to reflect harmony in diversity.



By students from Hólabrekkuskóli, “We need to be the best versions of ourselves!”



The younger children created peace birds with messages.

Being true to yourself - exploring the power of authenticity in leadership

A pre-event for young leaders and potential changemakers was held in Hannesarholt Cafe in downtown Reykjavik on 29 May on the theme 'Being true to yourself – exploring authenticity in leadership'. It was facilitated by Mark Milton, Anna Steinsen and a group of young Icelandic women leaders. The aim was to bring together like-minded young people who want to make a difference in their own life and in the world through self-transformation. The seminar provided practical tools for self-growth and consisted of talks, reflective activities, group sharing and guided meditation.

Thirty young people participated in a very powerful and inspiring atmosphere. Some deep reflection and conversations, as well as a light approach, made the event

very meaningful to many. Some of the participants expressed afterwards how enriching the event had been and found it very encouraging to meet with other young like-minded people to explore deep aspects of self-transformation. Many were also touched by the sense of unity that was created within the group, which allowed participants to express themselves very openly and honestly.

There was a lot of interest in continuing this exploration and a follow-up plan has now been made with the aim of creating small groups of spiritual practitioners who can become examples of how to 'lead from within'.



The Chrysalis - an experience of transformation in silence



At the Forum, the first human-sized Chrysalis was being crafted in silence. It was the initial moment in an evolving world journey of the Chrysalis, an immersive art installation and a movement that invites people into an experience of transformation. The

journey of a caterpillar is followed as it disassembles and surrenders to the Imaginal Cells, which divide inside the Chrysalis to form the butterfly.

The Chrysalis is at once a space and a metaphor. From our legacy as caterpillars, focused on growth and consuming the Earth's resources, we are being called to enter the Chrysalis, and re-emerge with an awareness of ourselves as part of nature and the web of life. To accompany the birthing of the first Chrysalis and to open a space of silence, the participants of the Spirit of Humanity Forum were invited to join in with their own meditation practice.

The Chrysalis was created by Sonja Schenkel and Nicole Schwab, and curated by Kristin Olafsdottir.



*'Chrysalis' by Sonja Schenkel
Photo: Christian Schnur*

'The Man who Built Peace' - open event for the people of Iceland



Screening of the documentary and conversation with the director **Dr Imad Karam** and producer **Kelly Burks**

The Man Who Built Peace captures the life and peace-making legacy of a man you may never have heard of - and who changed the world. Following a personal experience of transformation, Frank Buchman set out to pass on that experience to the world and helped shape the course of history. He was a revolutionary thinker and leader whose trust-building, reconciliation and peace efforts greatly influenced the 20th Century. His vision and legacy are a powerful answer to the growing mistrust, injustice and extremism facing the world today.

Watch Frank Buchman help to build peace between the enemies of World War II and discover how to apply this in your own life and community in today's politically fractious climate. The film shares a message of hope and conviction from a man who believed that everyone, and therefore anyone, can change the world - and that it starts from within.

"Thank you so much for inviting us to screen 'The Man Who Built Peace' at the SoH Forum. It was great for us to see the film on the venue screen where the visual quality was absolutely superior. The interaction with the audience was excellent - it is very meaningful for us to hear people's reflections and comments. So, thank you for allowing us to share the film with the Forum and also the members of the public who attended."

Kelly Burks

Artists at the Forum



**Children's choir of
Laugarnesskóli
Conductor:
Harpa Þorvaldsdóttir**



**Clarinet players from the bands of Árbæjar- and
Breiðholt elementary schools
W.A. Mozart: Allegro from symphony no 25.
Conductor: Gunnar Kristmannsson**



**Girls' choir of Reykjavik
and Aurora young women's choir.
Conductor: Margrét Pálmadóttir**



**Guðrún Eva
Mínervudóttir, author**



**Ragnheiður
Gröndal, singer**



Herdís Anna Jónsdóttir, violinist, Steef van Oosterhout, percussionist

Venues

- **Háskólabíó** – Conference Centre and Cinema, University of Iceland
- **Veröld – Vigdís’s House**, University of Iceland
- **Hotel Radisson Blu Saga**

The main venue was in Háskólabíó where we had the hall for plenaries, lunch and refreshment breaks. Workshops were held in break-out rooms in Háskólabíó and in Veröld – Vigdís’ House, next door. The final session was held at Hotel Radisson Blu Saga across the street.

Special Thanks

Volunteers

The work of the Spirit of Humanity Forum could not be possible without the immense help from volunteers in Iceland and all over the world. Special thanks to:

- **Lótushús Brahma Kumaris** in Iceland. Their team took care of all the work at the venue and took part in organising all logistics.
- **Stefania Olafsdóttir**, organising the youth event ‘Being True to Yourself’.
- **Friðrikka Geirsdóttir, Hulda Bjarnadóttir** and **Sigríður Arnardóttir**, interviewers.
- **Lynn Henshall**, Oxford, UK, proofreading
- **George Edwards**, Adelaide, Australia, design.
- **Toots Beckett**, London, UK, our technical manager at the venue.
- **Nik Haddadi**, London, UK, technical assistant.

Staff

We are grateful for the spirit of collaboration we experienced, everyone really giving their best.

- **Steingrímur Þórðarson**, producer and cameraman.
- Heartfulness social media team who helped us make interviews and live-stream the plenaries and interviews on Facebook:
Hélène Camilleri, Sylvie Berti-Rossi, Madeleine Olive, Judith Nelson.
- **Þorvarðar Goði Valdemarsson**, helping with Facebook live - This is the first time we have posted the plenaries live on Facebook.
- **Yves Leresche**, photographer.
- **Þorvaldur Kolbeinsson**, CEO, Háskólabíó.
- **Agnar Hermannsson**, technician, Háskólabíó.
- **Birna Ketilsdóttir**, social media assistant.
- **Elín Jakobsdóttir**, logistics manager.
- **Valgerður Jónasdóttir**, manager of Veröld, the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute and International Centre.

Partners

Brahma Kumaris, Lótushús Iceland
lotushus.is

City of Reykjavík
reykjavik.is/en

Education 4 Peace
education4peace.org

Fetzer Institute
fetzer.org

Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace
ghfp.org

HÖFÐI Reykjavík Peace Centre
fridarsetur.is/en

Icelandair
icelandair.com

Icelandair Hotels
icelandairhotels.com

Pureland Foundation
purelandfoundation.com

Supporting organisations 4th International SoH Forum

Foundation for Self Leadership
foundationifs.org

Initiatives of Change UK
uk.iofc.org

Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha
nishkamcentre.org

Heartfulness Magazine
heartfulnessmagazine.com

Executive Circle

Overall responsibility and co-creative force behind the Forum. Ragnar Ångeby, Maureen Goodman, Mark Milton, Scherto Gill, Óttarr Proppé, Stefania Olafsdóttir, Thór Barðdal, Miriam Subirana, Kurian Thomas, Pia Hansson, Eythor Gudjonsson, Catherine Allinson, Michelle Scheidt, Barbro Esbjörnsdóttir

