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**GREEN KUMBH YATRA**

***“THE GREEN KUMBH YATRA IS LIKE AN OLYMPIC TORCH FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION”.***

**KUSAM VYAS, FOUNDER OF THE GREEN KUMBH MOVEMENT**

Dr Kusum Vyas, the founder of the Green Kumbh Movement and GYAN initiatives of Living Planet Foundation, will be bringing with her to the First International Jerusalem Symposium on Green and Accessible Pilgrimage the Green Kumbh. Since its launch, the Green Kumbh has traversed several thousand kilometers through rural routes of Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, Kenya, Allahabad, the site of the 2013 Maha Kumbh Mela, Banaras, Delhi and Nepal. The Yatra will continue to travel across continents and countries and will ultimately arrive in South Korea for COP12 (Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity) in 2014.

**What is a Green Kumbh?**

A Kumbh – which means a clay or brass pitcher or “kalash “ as it is known in Sanskrit – is an integral part of all sacred activities in Hindu culture. In the context of environmental and biodiversity conservation, it is aptly named “Green Kumbh” – a symbol of the “web of life” and the ecosystem that includes all animals, humans, plants, microscopic creatures and their habitats on the planet.

**What is a “Yatra”?**

‘Yatra’ is a journey usually to spiritual places.

**What is the Green Kumbh Yatra?**

“Green Kumbh Yatra”, has no modern precedent – it is an environmental pilgrimage dedicated to environment and biodiversity that was formally launched on October 14, 2012 at COP11 – Eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity at Hyderabad, India. Green Kumbh Yatra was introduced by Living Planet and GYAN at COP11 as a launching point to engage the hearts and minds of the local communities with the beauty and significance of the natural world and the critical habitat upon which they depend.

However, the main aim of the Green Kumbh Yatra is to mobilize the masses at grassroots and raise public and political awareness by highlighting the conservation of Sacred Natural Sites, Greening Pilgrimage Sites and emphasize the profound connection between the collective

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wisdom and resources of the faith traditions and their role in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Pilgrimage sites may include sacred groves, rivers, mountains, temples, churches, mosques, synagogues, etc.

Green Kumbh Yatra is an initiative of GYAN and Living Planet Foundation of USA. It is a faith-based response to climate change and biodiversity conservation which the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) describes as “the world’s largest civil society movement on climate change”.

Events connected to the Green Kumbh Yatra will be broad public affair/s focused on a bottom-up approach to creating awareness by local people themselves. Therefore, local organizations, communities and local governments in providing on-the-ground and on-site participation, are essential components of the Green Kumbh initiative. The Yatra was organized in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, DiversEarth, Sacred Natural Sites Initiative, IUCN, WCPA Specialist Group on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas and Vikasa Tarangini.

See separate backgrounder on Kusum Vyas.