



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

*CITATION ON*

**PROFESSOR  
WANGARI MUTA MAATHAI**

*ON HER CONFERMENT OF  
THE HONORARY DOCTOR OF SCIENCE (D.SC)  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI  
AT NAIROBI, KENYA*

**ON 11TH MARCH, 2005**

## CITATION ON

### PROFESSOR WANGARI MUTA MAATHAI

BSc. (Mount St. Scholastica College, Kansas, USA),

MSc. (University of Pittsburgh, USA),

PhD. (University of Nairobi, Kenya), EBS, EGH MP,

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (2004)

**P**rofessor Wangari Muta Maathai was born to Muta Njugi and his wife Wanjiru Muta in Nyeri, Kenya on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1940. Professor Maathai started school in 1948 at Ihithe Primary School. She sat for the Kenya Primary Examination in 1951 and scored Grade One. She then proceeded to Mathari Intermediate School and did the Kenya African Preliminary Examination (KAPE) in 1955 and passed with distinction. Her sterling performance earned her a place in Loreto High School, Limuru, where she sat the Cambridge School Certificate in 1959 and passed with 1<sup>st</sup> Division.

Her academic excellence dates back to her years at Loreto High School where she received a prize for being first in all subjects during the four years of High School. The young Wangari was awarded a scholarship to study at Mount St. Scholastica College

Atchison, Kansas, in the United States of America where she obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology in 1964. After graduation, she enrolled for further studies at the University of Pittsburgh, United States of America where she graduated with the degree of Master of Science in Biological Sciences in 1965. Her thesis entitled "Developmental and Cytological Study of the Pineal Body of *Coturnix coturnix japonica*" was judged "excellent" by the examining board.

In 1966, she joined the Department of Veterinary Anatomy, University of Nairobi as an assistant lecturer; subsequently she registered for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD). In 1968, she was awarded a scholarship to Germany for her PhD studies under the Nairobi-Giessen Partnership Program. She completed her PhD project entitled "Early Development of Male Bovine Gonad" in 1970 and was awarded the degree in 1971 thereby becoming the first indigenous woman in East and Central Africa to earn a doctorate degree. In 1976, she was appointed Chair of the Department of Veterinary Anatomy at the University of Nairobi and a year later, Associate Professor in Veterinary Anatomy, again becoming the first indigenous woman in the region to attain those positions.

Professor Maathai's life has been one of many firsts, and though her entire life has sparkled with them, there are many who, for long, never appreciated the glitter. But when she was awarded the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize (2004), becoming the first African woman and the ninth African to be so honored, the entire world had to sit up and take notice. Besides being an accomplished scholar, Professor Wangari Muta Maathai has made a mark as an

uncompromising environmental conservationist, an ardent human rights crusader, a tireless Non-Governmental Organization net-worker, a champion for democracy as well as a principled politician.

She has emerged as a leader who thinks globally but acts locally, and one that knows the way and shows the way. Professor Maathai has also reasserted the place of Kenya on the global map and secured our pride as a nation. The University of Nairobi is indeed privileged to identify with such a high-flying achiever.

Her work on conservation of environment and human rights has earned her several honorary degrees. She was awarded Doctor of Law by William's College (1990), Doctor of Science by Hobart & William Smith Colleges (1994), Doctor of Agriculture by University of Norway (1997) and more recently Doctor of Humane Letters, by Yale University (2004). Other academic appointments include: Endowed Chair in Gender & Women's Studies named "Fuller-Maathai", Connecticut College (2000); Montgomery Fellow, Dartmouth College, USA (2001); and Dorothy McCluskey Visiting Fellow for Conservation, Faculty of the School of Environmental Studies, Yale University, USA (2002).

Professor Maathai has also participated in several international symposiums and conferences, the most notable being the Third International Symposium on Teaching of Morphological Science, Tel Aviv, Israel (1977), the World Conference on Faith Sciences & Future (1979) and the United Nations Conference on Decade for Women (1980).

Ever since she founded the Green Belt Movement, trees have been synonymous with Professor Maathai.

Indeed, for close to three decades the Green Belt Movement has been her way of life. Her clarity of vision, unflagging determination and lobbying skills have transformed the good idea of planting trees using ordinary people into a formidable movement. It is to her credit that she has used her unique skill to great effect combining and balancing science, social commitment and politics to protect the environment. Through the Green Belt Movement, Professor Wangari Maathai has helped women plant more than 30 million trees on their farms, school and church compounds across Kenya.

Encouraged by the success of its initiatives in Kenya, the Green Belt Movement established a Pan-African Green Belt Network in 1986. Over the years then, many people from African countries have warmly received the Green Belt Movement's community empowerment and conservation approach. To-date, initiatives have been successfully launched in Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Lesotho, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, among others. We have all witnessed how deforestation and loss of vegetation cover have led to desertification in Africa and threatened many other regions of the world. Protecting forests against desertification is a vital factor in the struggle to salvage the living environment of this planet. Professor Maathai has invested her life in the fight to promote ecologically viable social, economic and cultural development in Kenya and in Africa, and she has been rooting for sustainable development that embraces environmental conservation, democracy and human rights.

Professor Maathai is internationally recognized and acknowledged for her unwavering struggle for democracy, human rights and environmental

conservation. In September 1998, she launched a campaign that stemmed from the Jubilee 2000 Coalition. She played a leading global role as Co-Chair of the Jubilee 2000 Africa Campaign, which advocates for cancellation of the back-logged, non-repayable debts of poor African countries. Her campaign against land grabbing and the allocation of forestland has received much attention both in Kenya and abroad. One of her most memorable undertakings is the struggle to save Uhuru Park in 1980s and Karura Forest in the 1990s. Professor Maathai clearly demonstrated her resolve to protect our environment at all costs - including risking her own life. That kind of sacrifice reflects a lot of courage, faith in her mission, patriotism and love for mankind.

Besides founding and co-ordinating the Green Belt Movement, Professor Wangari Maathai has been playing crucial roles in a host of other organizations. She was active in the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK) from 1976 to 1987 and was its Chairperson from 1981 to 1987. In 1985, she co-founded GROOTS International (Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood). She also served as a director of the Kenya Red Cross (1973-80). Professor Maathai is also serving as a member of several local and international boards, among them: United Nations Advisory Board on Disarmament, USA; United Nations Commission on Global Governance, USA; Advisory Board, Democracy Coalition Project, USA; Earth Charter Commission, USA; Selection Committee, Sasakawa Environmental Prize; United Nations Environmental Program, Kenya; Women and Environment Development Organization (WEDO), USA; World Learning for International Development, USA; Green Cross International;

Environment Liaison Center International, Kenya; The Worldwide Network of Women in Environmental Work, USA; and the National Council of Women of Kenya, Kenya.

Professor Wangari Maathai has addressed the United Nations on several occasions, for instance at the five-year review of the 1992 Earth Summit and the special sessions of the General Assembly she spoke on behalf of women. She also served on the Commission for Global Governance and the Commission on the Future.

Professor Wangari Maathai has traveled a unique path of international awards and engagements. For instance, with the Green Belt Movement there have been numerous awards. These include Woman of the Year Award (1983); Right Livelihood Award (1984) Better World Society Award (1986); The Windstar Award for the Environment (1988); The Woman of the World (1989); The Offeramus Medal (1990); United Nations Africa Prize for Leadership (1991); Global 500 Hall of Fame, United Nations Environment Program (1991); The Goldman Environmental Prize (1991); The Jane Adams Leadership Award (1993); The Edinburgh Medal (1993); The Golden Ark Award (1994); International Women's Hall of Fame (1995); One of 100 in the world who have made a difference in environment, Earth Times (1997); The Juliet Hollister Award (2001); Outstanding Vision and Commitment Award, Bridges to Community (2002); WANGO Environment Award (2003); Sophie Prize (2004); Petra Kelly Environment Prize (2004); Excellence Award, Kenyan Community Abroad (2004); J. Sterling Morton Award (2004); Conservation Scientist Award (2004); Elder of the Burning Spear, Republic of Kenya (2004), Elder of the Golden Heart,

Republic of Kenya (2004) and more recently the Nobel Prize for Peace (2004).

A prolific scholar and author, Professor Maathai recently published a book entitled: *The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience* (by Professor Wangari Maathai, 2004). Further, the Green Belt Movement and Professor Maathai are featured in several publications including: *Speak Truth to Power* (Kerry Kennedy Cuomo, 2000), *Women Pioneers for the Environment* (Mary Joy Breton, 1998), *Hope's Edge: The Next Diet for a Small Planet* (Frances Moore Lappe and Anna Lappe, 2002) and *Women Pioneers for the Environment* (Mary Joy Breton, 1998).

Professor Maathai's work has been featured in several films and documentaries such as *Naked Earth, Sustainable Development* (1991), British Broadcasting Corporation for *One World Women; Information and Empowerment: Dr. Wangari Maathai* (1994), AFSC Video & Film Library; *Africa, The Uncovered Continent* (1995), Chip Taylor; *Africa, Search for Common Ground* (1997), Common Ground Productions, USA; *South Africa: Eritrea/Kenya: Democracy or Disruption - W. Maathai & Green Belt* (1998), Common Ground Productions, USA; *A Quiet Revolution* (2001), Earth Council, United Nations Environmental Program; and *The Quest to Save Turtle Island*, Carol Mary Scott.

In December 2002, Professor Maathai was elected to Kenya's parliament with an overwhelming 98 percent of the vote. She now represents the Tetu Constituency in Nyeri District. Subsequently, in January 2003, President Mwai Kibaki appointed her Assistant Minister for Environment and Natural Resources in Kenya's ninth parliament, a position she currently



holds.

It is, therefore, in recognition, acknowledgement and appreciation of her distinguished and selfless service to this nation and all mankind, especially through her outstanding work in environmental conservation, the honor she has bestowed upon the people of Kenya and Africa as whole, that the University of Nairobi, her *Alma Mata*, is greatly honored to confer the Degree of Doctor of Science (*Honoris Causa*) of the University of Nairobi upon Professor Wangari Muta Maathai, PhD. EBS, EGH, M.P.