

Introduction

During the 2012 Session of the General Assembly of the African Union, the Assembly decided to recognize Prof Wangari Maathai's numerous achievements in her capacity as the first Presiding Officer of the African Union's Economic, Social and Cultural Council (AU ó ECOSOCC), African Union Peace Ambassador, Founder of the Green Belt Movement, Goodwill Ambassador to the Congo Basin Forest Initiative, UN Peace Messenger for Environment and Climate, and UNEP Champion of the Earth. In so doing they designated 3 March as **Wangari Maathai Day** to be observed in conjunction with Africa Environment Day, each year beginning in 2012. The Wangari Maathai Institute, the Green Belt Movement and the United Nations Environmental Program have planned to celebrate this day on 3rd March 2014. The theme of the day will be the role of youth and higher education in securing our common future.

Further, the UN General Assembly has recently proclaimed 3 March as World Wildlife Day, to celebrate and raise awareness of the world's wild fauna and flora. In so doing, the UN General Assembly reaffirmed the intrinsic value of wildlife and its various contributions, including ecological, genetic, social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, recreational and aesthetic, to sustainable development and human well-being, and recognized the important role the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) plays in ensuring that international trade does not threaten the survival of the species.

The 2014 Wangari Maathai Day theme is drawn from Wangari Maathai's 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Lecture:

“Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own – indeed, to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder. This will happen if we see the need to revive our sense of belonging to a larger family of life, with which we have shared our evolutionary process. 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.

I would like to call on young people to commit themselves to activities that contribute toward achieving their long-term dreams. They have the energy and creativity to shape a sustainable future. To the young people I say, you are a gift to your communities and indeed the world. You are our hope and our future.”

The 2014 Wangari Maathai Day seeks to promote Environmental Education and Community empowerment amongst the Youth and Institutions of higher education; by re-affirming the importance of all levels of education and training towards sustainable development in Kenya and the continent of Africa