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**NAMING OF THE GARDEN IN FRONT OF THE AU CONFERENCE  
CENTRE AFTER PROFESSOR WANGARI MATHAI**  
*((Item proposed by the Republic of Congo))*

## HONOURING THE LATE NOBEL LAUREATE PROF. WANGARI MAATHAI

### Concept Note

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#### Overall Objective of the Concept Note

The overall objective is to highlight the work and achievements of the late Prof. Wangari Maathai and identify how best the African Union can continue to commemorate and celebrate her life.

#### Specific Objective of the Concept Note

To celebrate and honour the legacy of Prof. Wangari Maathai by naming the “**AU Garden**” under the name “**Professor Wangari Mathai Hall**”.

#### Introduction

1. Environment is very central to our daily lives. Yet, the world has today witnessed unprecedented destruction from human activities. As a result, today’s major global scale challenges include climate disruption, losing forests cover, pollution of fresh water sources and decline in maritime life. Very few people have taken initiatives to conserve environment. The Late Professor Wangari Maathai was one of the few people who have sacrificed in protecting and conserving the environment.

#### Professor Maathai’s Notable Accomplishments

2. This year, 2015, marks 11 years since the Late Prof Wangari Maathai, won the Nobel Peace Prize, becoming the first African woman and environmentalist to do so.

3. The late Prof. Wangari Muta Maathai was born in Nyeri, Kenya in 1940. As the first woman in East and Central Africa to earn a doctorate degree, Wangari Maathai obtained a degree in Biological Sciences from Mount St. Scholastica College in Atchison, Kansas in 1964. She subsequently earned a Master of Science degree from the University of Pittsburgh 1966. She pursued doctoral studies in Germany and the University of Nairobi, obtaining a Ph.D in 1971 from the University of Nairobi where she also taught veterinary anatomy. Wangari Maathai became chair of the Department of Veterinary Anatomy and an associate professor in 1976 and 1977 respectively. In both cases, she was the first woman to attain those positions in the region.

4. In the period between in 1976-87 the Late Prof. Wangari Maathai was also an active member of the National Council of Women of Kenya from 1976 to 1987, including its Chair from 1981-87. It was while she served in the National Council of Women that in 1976 she introduced the idea of planting trees with the people. She continued to develop the idea and soon become a broad-based, grassroots organization called the Green Belt

Movement” whose main focus is the planting of trees with women groups in order to conserve the environment and improve their quality of life.

5. To date, the Green Belt Movement has assisted women in planting more than 20 million trees on their farms, on schools and church compounds, all to improve environmental conservation and alleviate poverty. In the 1980s Wangari founded the Green Belt Movement International with offices in the US and the UK, to make this work widely known and seek support for it. In 1986, the Movement established a Pan African Green Belt Network and has exposed over 48 individuals from other African countries to the approach. Some of these individuals have established similar tree planting initiatives in their own countries or they use some of the Green Belt Movement methods to improve their efforts. So far some African countries have successfully launched such initiatives in Africa (Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Lesotho, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, etc.).

6. In September 1998, she launched a campaign of the Jubilee 2000 Coalition and played a leading global role as a co-chair campaigning for cancellation of the unpayable backlog debts of the poor countries in Africa by the year 2000.

7. Prof. Wangari Maathai was internationally recognized for her persistent struggle for democracy, human rights and environmental conservation. She has addressed the UN on several occasions and spoke on behalf of women at special sessions of the General Assembly for the five-year review of the earth summit. She served on the Commission for Global Governance and Commission on the Future. She and the Green Belt Movement have received numerous awards, most notably The 2004 Nobel Peace Prize. Others include; The Sophie Prize (2004), The Petra Kelly Prize for Environment (2004), The Conservation Scientist Award (2004), J. Sterling Morton Award (2004), WANGO Environment Award (2003), Outstanding Vision and Commitment Award (2002), Excellence Award from the Kenyan Community Abroad (2001), Golden Ark Award (1994), Juliet Hollister Award (2001), Jane Adams Leadership Award (1993), Edinburgh Medal (1993), The Hunger Project's Africa Prize for Leadership (1991), Goldman Environmental Prize (1991), the Woman of the World (1989), Windstar Award for the Environment (1988), Better World Society Award (1986), Right Livelihood Award (1984) and the Woman of the Year Award (1983).

8. Professor Maathai was also listed on UNEP's Global 500 Hall of Fame and named one of the 100 heroines of the world. In June 1997, Wangari was elected by Earth Times as one of 100 persons in the world who have made a difference in the environmental arena. She also received honorary doctoral degrees from several institutions around the world: William's College, MA, USA (1990), Hobart & William Smith Colleges (1994), University of Norway (1997) and Yale University (2004) and Syracuse University (2012) awarded posthumously.

9. The Green Belt Movement and Professor Wangari Maathai are featured in several publications including The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach (by Professor Wangari Maathai, 2002), Speak Truth to Power (Kerry Kennedy Cuomo, 2000), Women Pioneers for the Environment (Mary Joy Breton, 1998), Hopes Edge: The Next Diet for a Small Planet (Frances Moore Lappé and Anna Lappé, 2002), Una Sola

Terra: Donna I Medi Ambient Despres de Rio (Brice Lalonde *et al.*, 1998), Land Ist Leben (Bedrohte Volker, 1993).

10. The Late Professor Maathai served on the Boards of several organizations including the UN Secretary General's Advisory Board on Disarmament, Commission for Global Governance and the Commission on the Future, The Jane Goodall Institute, Women and Environment Development Organization (WEDO), World Learning for International Development, Green Cross International, Environment Liaison Center International, the WorldWIDE Network of Women in Environmental Work and National Council of Women of Kenya.

11. In December 2002, Professor Maathai was elected to parliament with an overwhelming 98% of the vote. She was subsequently appointed by the president, as Assistant Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Wildlife in Kenya's ninth parliament.

12. In recognition of her deep commitment to the environment, the United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki Moon named Professor Maathai a UN Messenger of Peace in December 2009, with a focus on the Environment and Climate Change. In 2010 she was appointed to the Millennium Development Goals Advocacy Group; a panel of political leaders, business people and civil society members, established to galvanize worldwide support for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

13. Professor Maathai was the Co. Chair of the Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF) with the Canadian Prime Minister, Paul Martin. The Fund finances the Green Belt Movement to reforest Africa.

14. Professor Wangari Maathai died on Sept. 25, 2011, at the age of 71 having lived a life full of determination to make the world a more peaceful, healthier, and better place.

#### **A point of Action by the African Union**

15. The late Professor Maathai was an African child who because of her persistent struggle for democracy, human rights and environmental conservation she won the Nobel Peace Prize. She brought the African continent a pride of being the first African Woman to win Noble Peace Prize. As a way to appreciate the achievements and also to honour this fallen gallant daughter of the African continent, the Republic of Congo is requesting the African Union to name the “**UA Garden**” under the name “**Prof Wangari Maathai**”.

2015

# Naming of the garden in front of the AU conference centre after Professor Wangari Mathai ((Item proposed by The Republic of Congo)

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