

NGOCSD General Membership Meeting Minutes

Friday, May 15th 2015 1:30-5 PM

2nd Floor of Church Center for the UN at 777 United Nations Plaza

Special Note: Photos of Professor Wangari Muta Maathai with world leaders and other Nobel Laureates were projected onto the screens while Kenyan music (provided by the Mission of Kenya) played from 1-1:30PM.

Co-Chairs Margo LaZaro and Ms. Yvonne O'Neal commenced the meeting by thanking individuals and distinguished guests for attending this dynamic meeting centered on Nobel Laureate Professor Wangari Muta Maathai and her legacy as an environmentalist and energetic civil rights leader. Next, the co-chairs moved for a motion to approve the minutes for the April 22nd meeting. All motions on the floor were accepted.

Co-Chair Margo recognized Secretary Modou Cham to deliver his report.

Secretary Modou Cham delivered his report. Co-Chairs Margo and Ms. Yvonne welcomed a motion to accept Secretary Modou Cham's report. All motions of the floor were accepted. The Co-Chairs invited up Treasurer Martha to share her report regarding finances and updates. Treasurer Martha reiterated that membership dues would be rising from \$25 to \$35 a month starting from the month of June and noted that she looks forward to receiving additional membership forms and applications.

Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne asked for a motion to accept Treasurer Martha's report. All motions on the floor were accepted.

Co-Chair Margo introduced everyone to our new website: www.ngocsd-ny.org and with assistance of Papa Dembele. Together they took everyone on a tour of the various NGOCSD pages of the website: Home, About, NGOCSD Team which includes the Executive Board, our Honorary Advisers & the Program Project Directors; our Meetings from Feb. 2014 to present; NGOCSD Co-Sponsored Events 2014-2015; Articles; Links & References & Contact. Appreciation to Bobby Andishmand for starting the website and thanks to Lindsay Ashby for completely the work and design with Co-Chair Margo. (www.ngocsd-ny.org)

After we finished our NGOCSD regular business - The Co-Chairs introduced a short 7 min. film of Wangari's Life called - Taking Root -

The Co-Chairs delivered remarks centered on the phenomenal lessons imparted by Wangari Muta Maathai and posited that her legacy has empowered future generations of environmentalists, social justice leaders and civic activists. They stated that this year we are planting seeds for Wangari's Legacy to continue. Co-Chair Margo briefly shared her own personal reflections of her friend with everyone

Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne introduced the first speaker, Arthur Amaya Andambi, Minister Counselor of the Permanent Mission of Kenya to the United Nations and they thanked the Mission of Kenya for their kind support of our Celebration to Professor Maathai. Mr. Andambi offered his sincere thanks to the NGO committee for choosing to celebrate the life and legacy of Wangari Maathai, as her actions continue to influence policy and practices in Africa and beyond. Focusing on Wangari Maathai's invaluable contributions to Kenyan society, he stated that the fruits of her struggle are self-evident, as her efforts have led to millions of trees being planted in Kenya.

Citizens of Kenya will be forever grateful for what Wangari accomplished and her determined resolve. Wangari Maathai's meaningful work encompassed social justice, gender equality and sustainable development, which are all essential tenets of a sustainable world. It is worth noting that Wangari Maathai not only revolutionized the notion of conservation, but also increased infrastructure and services to enhance women's livelihood.

Following Mr. Andambi's remarks, Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne introduced Ms. Lopa Banerjee, Chief of the Civil Society Section at UN Women. Wangari Maathai's initiative, the Green Belt Movement, has planted more than 50 million trees in Kenya and has spread awareness worldwide. The distinct efforts of Wangari Maathai allowed for measures promoting gender equality and female empowerment to be brought into mainstream discourse. Additionally, Ms. Banerjee expressed the sentiment that Ms. Banerjee noted that Wangari Maathai emphasized the importance of recognition and regard for the environment, self-empowerment and the significance of respecting the earth's resources. It would behoove the international community to adopt Ms. Maathai's stance on countering environmental degradation and deforestation by promoting a peaceful and sustainable society.

Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne called Mia MacDonald, Chair of the Green Belt Movement International to read a statement on behalf of Wanjira Mathai, the daughter of Wangari Maathai and Chair of the Green Belt Movement. Additionally, Wanjira Mathai serves as the Project Director for the Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies. In her statement, Wanjira Mathai offered her sincere appreciation to the Co-Chairs and the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development for recognizing and contributing to the legacy of Wangari Maathai, who cherished the role of NGO's in facilitating social change. Speaking about the origins of the Green Belt Movement, an initiative conceived and managed by Wangari Maathai, Wanjira Mathai stated that her mother sought to reverse the trend of deforestation and its implications on the livelihood of women. Through the work of the Green Belt Movement, thousands of women have been empowered and have joined in the fight against deforestation. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Wanjira Mathai pledged their commitment toward bolstering the participation of women in civil society. She stressed that, together, the international community can plan for the future and ensure an equal world.

Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne introduced Dr. Margaret (Peg) Synder, the Founding Director of UNIFEM and Co-Founder of the African Centre for Women and Head of the Voluntary Agencies Bureau of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Dr. Synder elucidated that Wangari undoubtedly promoted prosperity and peace for women in Kenya and all around the world. Wangari herself influenced Dr. Synder in establishing UNIFEM, the United Nations Development Fund for Women. Additionally, she mentioned that Wangari's fierce belief in bringing women to the forefront of society transformed many paradigms.

Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne recognized Mia MacDonald, Chair of the Green Belt Movement International. Ms. MacDonald recalled her valuable time with Wangari and spoke volumes about how purposeful she was in every aspect of her life. During Ms. MacDonald's tenure at the Wangari Institute of Peace and Environmental Studies, she emulated the drive and ideals of Wangari Maathai. The extraordinary legacy of Wangari Maathai is embedded within several initiatives ongoing in India and Tanzania. Finally, Mia MacDonald was proud to announce the establishment of a new initiative titled the Wangari Muta Maathai house, which will serve as a tribute to her lauded efforts.

Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne invited up Mr. Ochoro E. Otunnu, Board Member of the Green Belt Movement International, US. Mr. Otunnu framed the discussion on Wangari Maathai's significant efforts to secure undeniable human rights in Kenya and beyond. While Wangari Maathai's vision was seen as newfound during those times, it presented an egalitarian approach to development. Throughout her times, Wangari Maathai fervently supported and preserved civil and political rights for women while battling adversity and embracing humanity.

Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne introduced Ms. Eleanor Blomstrom, Program Director/Head of Office, Women Environment & Development Organization. Ms. Blomstrom introduced the mission statement of Women Environment & Development Organization as working for a just world that promotes and protects human rights, gender equality and the integrity of the environment. She noted that WEDO influences policy and coordinates political action by supporting stakeholders and pushing for advocacy. Next, Ms. Eleanor Blomstrom proclaimed her commitment toward developing the women's caucus and creating a space for women to overcome barriers that they may collectively face.

Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne invited up Ms. Hadia Sheerazi a youth representative to read a statement on behalf of Julie Ojiambo, a student at Hunter College. As an individual who personally interacted with and was inspired by Wangari Maathai, Julie Ojiambo conveyed her deep appreciation and satisfaction with the progress made in Kenya to date. Ms. Ojiambo stated that the determination and passion possessed by Wangari Maathai spread to the entire country of Kenya and inspired individuals to transform their life and the environment around them. She underscored the importance of how the Green Belt Movement is a constant reminder of Wangari Maathai's commitment and desire of conserving the environment and offering the children of future generations a great world.

Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne recognized Ms. Rita Henley Jensen, Founder and Editor-in-Chief of Women's eNews. Ms. Henley stated that Wangari Maathai singlehandedly altered the women's rights paradigm and diversified the perspective that many individuals previously possessed. By encouraging an inclusive dialogue between individuals of all parts of society, Wangari was able to urge everyone to think about the concept of peace and our responsibility on Earth. Ms. O'Neil took the opportunity to urge individuals to appreciate the Earth's resources and to manage these resources effectively and responsibly to ensure sustainability across the board.

Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne introduced Jonathan Granoff who had his own deeply personal reflections of Wangari to share with everyone and he proudly introduce is son, Imli Granoff, a Senior Research Fellow at Overseas Development Institute. Mr. Granoff spoke via a televised webcast from London and began by stating that Wangari inspired him in a plethora of ways. As his mentor at Yale, Wangari enabled him to understand the necessity to uphold environmental conservation and sustainable development. The environmental movement spearheaded by Wangari Maathai was indeed an agenda for political empowerment for a wide variety of citizens. The Green Belt Movement served as an outlet for political empowerment and transformation, as social change and political empowerment are inextricably intertwined. Mr. Granoff concluded by noting that Wangari has not only inspired him, but an entire global movement.

Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne invited up Ravi Karkara, Co-Chair, World We Want 2015 Policy and Strategy Group: Global Advisor on Youth + Partnership with United Nations Millennium Campaign and UN-Habitat. Mr. Ravi Karkara recognized the many contributions that Wangari Maathai instilled, primarily those relating to human rights. The efforts of Wangari Maathai secured essential human

rights for each and every citizen. Additionally, he stressed that the social movement authored by Wangari Maathai not only facilitated social change, but economic change and political change. Mr. Ravi Karkara concluded by mentioning that Wangari serves as an inspiration to policy-makers, non-governmental organizations and citizens.

Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne recognized Ms. Emilie McGlone, the Director of the New York-based office of Peace Boat US. Ms. McGlone commenced her presentation by delivering remarks on the purpose behind Peace Boat US, which is a non-profit organization working to promote peace and sustainable development through a passenger ship that travels the world on peace voyages. Ms. McGlone welcomed the introduction of initiatives similar to Peace Boat US that can offer innovative solutions and generate greater awareness on sustainable development related issues.

Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne introduced Reverend Canon Petero A. Sabune, Chaplain, Ministerial, Family and Volunteer Services for the Episcopal Church. Reverend Petero A. Sabune affirmed the phenomenal progress made by the Green Belt Movement and urged individuals to contribute to the environment by planting trees everywhere. The tide of deforestation can only be fully stemmed if individuals collectively work together to mitigate threats relating to the environment.

Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne invited up Vivian Adhiambo Onano, Youth Advisor to the UN Women Global Civil Society Advisory Group, Women Deliver Young Leader and a Global Youth Advocate for the Mara Mentor Program. Ms. Onano began her statement by relaying the importance that Wangari Maathai had on her personal life, as Wangari inspired her to become the woman that she is today. Despite the many struggles that Wangari had to face to ensure a peaceful and sustainable world political order, she consistently pledged her commitment toward her values and morals. She concluded by urging individuals to contribute to Wangari's legacy and draw inspiration from it by acting locally in their respective communities.

Following the presentations, several distinguished youth leaders and representatives read quotes from Professor Wangari Muta Maathai.

Throughout the meeting whenever a speaker was not using PowerPoint - there were wonderful photos of Wangari on the screens behind the speakers.

Co-Chair Margo invited everyone to share further reflections and Muta Mathai, Wangari's son joined a few people at the front tables. Muta shared how deeply moved he was to have experienced being with so many people you cared about his Mom.

The final gesture in celebration was a song written about Wangari and sung by Aloud - which the Co-Chairs asked to be played as Muta finished his reflections.

Co-Chairs Margo LaZaro and Yvonne O'Neal encouraged everyone to join the NGOCS D

The meeting was adjourned at 5PM.