

**SPEECH BY THE FIRST LADY OF KENYA, MARGARET KENYATTA,
DURING THE CELEBRATION OF WANGARI MAATHAI AND AFRICA
ENVIRONMENT DAY, AND THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE
WANGARI MAATHAI HALL.**

AUGUST 7TH MEMORIAL PARK, 3RD MARCH 2019, NAIROBI.

Good morning!

This is a truly special day where we mark the 6th year of the Wangari Maathai Day in honour of heroine and great icon Professor Wangari Maathai.

We are also gathered here to and celebrate the Africa Environment Day, a day that is commemorated on each 3rd March, by the Africa Union, as a tribute to our Noble Laurette for her great legacy in environmental conservation.

Let me also recognize and congratulate the August 7th Memorial Trust for honouring Professor Maathai by dedicating the conference hall that we opened earlier in her name.

This space we are in today symbolises hope, reconciliation and peace in memory of the victims of 7th August 1998 terrorist attack, which took the lives of many innocent people and traumatized the nation.

This park stands as an oasis of peace. The green landscapes and peaceful setting resonate with Professor Maathai's fight – to live in peaceful harmony with the environment. We will forever be indebted to her for her relentless advocacy campaigns to preserve public lands and forests that we enjoy today including Uhuru Park, Karura Forest and Jivanjee Gardens.

The Wangari Maathai Hall will serve to extend her legacy as the first African woman to gain attention and recognition in 2004 for her work through the Green Belt Movement. Because of what she taught us, we now appreciate the underlying links, that we so often miss, between environmental democracy and peace.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Promoting peace, justice and an inclusive society is one of the global goals enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This day reminds us of the work that we still need to be done to make our planet safe for our children.

This day urges us to call for a concerted effort at continental, regional, national, and community levels towards addressing the critical challenges posed by climate change. It urges us all to consider what we can do to contribute towards a peaceful and tranquil planet.

We are reminded of the many environment challenges that this continent faces – extreme weather conditions and human displacement that ultimately increases the risk of conflict, hunger and poverty. We are reminded to do whatever we can to promote sustainable environmental management.

We have visible evidence that climate change is not a distant or imaginary threat, but rather a growing and undeniable reality.

I am therefore pleased that we have come together to join as one voice, along with many brave men and women like Wangari Maathai, to celebrate Africa Environment Day.

I pledge to lend my voice and work tirelessly to support both environmental and wildlife conservation and preservation, and to promote peaceful co-existence. I encourage us to embrace her values as we celebrate hers and many other heroes – for their bravery and determination to make a better world. They all deserve to be honoured and recognised for those sacrifices.

I hope that the same spirit will carry over to our daily lives.

God Bless you!