

DECEMBER 2025

NEWSLETTER

the
green belt
movement



Message from our Executive Director



As we close 2025, we reflect on a year that has been extremely busy and deeply rewarding. It marked 20 years since Professor Wangari Maathai was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, a milestone that continues to guide and inspire our work.

This year, we celebrated an important victory for nature with our success in the Karura Forest case, stopping the proposed excision of part of Karura Forest for the expansion of Kiambu Road and affirming the power of public interest action. We also grew stronger as an organization, welcoming new staff members who have brought fresh energy and skills to the Green Belt Movement.

It was a privilege to host several of our long term partners and to deepen relationships with many others who stand with us in protecting the environment and communities. These partnerships remain central to everything we do.

On behalf of the Board, staff and volunteers, I thank you for walking this journey with us.

I wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a happy and fruitful New Year.

Warm regards,

Dorothy Aseyo
Executive Director
The Green Belt Movement



Programs

GBM Through the AFD Project plants 44,000 seedlings in Nandi North Forests



Some of the tree nursery growers carrying the trees to be planted

In October 2025, we partnered with local communities and the Kenya Forest Service in the North Nandi Forests to advance forest restoration efforts and renew our shared commitment to protecting these vital ecosystems. This collaboration brought together forest officers, community members, and partners who understand that safeguarding forests is essential for water security, biodiversity, and resilient livelihoods.

During the tree planting exercise, Judith Okapes, Assistant Forester for North Nandi Forest, reminded participants that the greatest inheritance we can leave our children is the protection of the trees we plant today. Her words underscored the long-term responsibility that comes with restoration work and the need for continued care beyond planting.

By the end of the quarter, a total of 44,000 assorted indigenous seedlings had been planted across the North Nandi Forests with support from AFD (Agence Française de Développement) through the Mau Restoration Project.



The community working with GBM staff to plant the trees in the forest

These indigenous species were carefully selected to strengthen forest regeneration, restore degraded areas, and enhance ecological balance within the landscape. This milestone builds on years of sustained planting and rehabilitation efforts that are steadily restoring forest cover and strengthening community stewardship of natural resources. The progress seen in North Nandi is a testament to the power of partnerships and the consistency required to achieve lasting environmental recovery.

Our work goes beyond planting trees. It is about restoring ecosystems, empowering communities to become long-term custodians of forests, and securing a greener and more resilient future for generations to come.



KFS and GBM Staff during the tree planting



GBM Fosters Partnerships Advancing Forest Restoration in the Mau Region



KFS, GBM and AFD staff during the monitoring visit

In November 2025, the Green Belt Movement hosted a development partners monitoring visit with Agence Française de Développement at Mau Forest Complex, covering Dundori and North Nandi Forests. The visit brought together the Kenya Forest Service, the Ndundori Community Forest Association and AFD to review progress in restoring degraded forest areas.

The partners noted the importance of community ownership in sustaining forest restoration efforts. The discussions reaffirmed GBM's grassroots approach to conservation and the value of collaboration in delivering measurable results on the ground.

The visit also included a courtesy meeting with the Mau Regional Forest Conservator, alongside the Nakuru County Forest Conservator, to reflect on restoration and advocacy work across Nakuru, Baringo, Nandi, Narok and Kericho counties.

Under GBM's 2021 to 2025 partnership with the Kenya Forest Service, over five million seedlings have been grown, more than 2,600 hectares restored and over 10,000 households supported. Current initiatives include AFD-supported seedling production in the Mau watershed, restoration work in Sururu Forest, capacity building with farmers in Dundori, nursery support in Baringo and community climate action in Narok.

The partners reaffirmed their commitment to continued collaboration to scale forest restoration and protect the Mau Forest Complex.



KFS, GBM and AFD staff during the visit to the Mau Regional Forest Conservator

Nurturing a Promise into a Living Forest in Chuka



In October, we returned to the soil in Chuka Forest for spot weeding at our restoration sites, continuing the care of trees planted in 2023 and 2024 with the generous support of Mainichi Newspapers Japan. Across Kirege, Muiku and Njuri, 35,000 seedlings are taking root because after care remains at the heart of our work.

The Green Belt Movement team worked alongside the Community Forest Association and the Kenya Forest Service during a site launch led by Forest Station Manager Silas Mutea and Inspector Faith Wairimu. Mr Mutea commended GBM's 10 steps model and called on all of us to protect and nurture the forest as our own.

Planting is a promise. After care is the pledge that turns that promise into a living forest. Spot weeding may seem modest, yet it determines which seedlings survive to become shade for homes, shelter for wildlife and steady water for our rivers. This is the quiet, patient work that makes restoration real.



We are grateful to Mainichi Newspapers Japan for making this care possible and to every farmer, forest manager and neighbour who shows up to tend these trees. When a community looks after its forest, the whole landscape breathes easier.



KFS, GBM and Community members during the spot weeding

GBM Hosts The Mainichi Newspaper Team for a Field Visit of Mt Kenya Project



KFS, GBM and Mainichi team during the monitoring visit

In early December 2025, The Green Belt Movement conducted a field visit to our Mt Kenya projects in Chuka with a delegation from Mainichi Newspaper led by Mr. Ssatohi Takagi, President of the Mottainai Campaign Secretariat. The team assessed progress in our long-term partnership by revisiting trees planted since 2008, reviewing tree-survival data and discussing project updates under the Mount Kenya Project.

We also met with Mr. Mungai, Tharaka Nithi County Conservator of Forests, the area forester and the Community Forest Association leadership, who provided valuable insights into community-driven conservation and restoration efforts.

The Mottainai Campaign, rooted in a Japanese concept that means “don’t waste” and emphasises reduce, reuse, recycle and respect, was championed globally by Professor Wangari Maathai after her visit to Japan in 2005. GBM adopted the campaign to address environmental issues in Kenya, including reducing plastic waste and promoting sustainable use of natural resources. Maathai integrated Mottainai into GBM’s values to deepen awareness of environmental stewardship and responsible resource use.

The Mainichi-GBM partnership, established in 2005 through the Mottainai (Montanai) Campaign, has supported the planting of over 4 million trees in Kenya, strengthening grassroots action for restoration, conservation and responsible environmental practice.

This visit reinforced the value of sustained partnerships, rigorous monitoring and community leadership in achieving lasting impact for Kenya’s forests.



Mr. Takagi shares a social moment with the Chuka CFA Chairperson Mr. Simon Kamanda



The Mainichi team at one of the mature forests in Chuka

The Mottainai Campaign, rooted in a Japanese concept that means “don’t waste” and emphasises reduce, reuse, recycle and respect.

Communities Step Forward for Restoration in the Rift Valley



Capacity building session with Nyandarua tree nursery growers



Capacity building session with Nakuru tree nursery growers



Capacity building session with Makueni tree nursery growers



Capacity building session with Baringo tree nursery growers

The The Green Belt Movement with support from the Bezos Earth Fund begun implementing a five year project on capacity building, good governance and leadership for restoration across Kenya's Great Rift Valley. The project seeks to strengthen community led restoration by linking environmental recovery with accountable leadership and sustainable livelihoods.

To mark the project inception, GBM held community awareness barazas in Nakuru, Nyandarua, Makueni, Baringo, and Narok Counties, bringing together women, youth, tree nursery groups, community leaders, and county officials. Communities received the initiative with enthusiasm and emphasized the need for strong governance, transparent leadership, and skills training to sustain restoration efforts.

Participants also highlighted the importance of connecting tree growing to income generation, water conservation, and value addition. Communities identified opportunities in organic farming, agroforestry, beekeeping and honey value addition, fruit tree farming, bamboo, ecotourism, and small livestock, with calls for aggregation centers in fruit producing areas and added support for honey value chains.

The barazas strengthened trust and local ownership. Next, GBM will roll out governance, leadership, and financial literacy training, profile tree nursery groups for targeted support, and work closely with county governments and community leaders to support effective implementation, nurturing resilient communities alongside restored landscapes.



After training photo with Narok tree nursery growers

Community Led Restoration and Livelihoods Support in Makueni County



A farmer receives agroforestry tree seedlings to plant at her farm



Community members prepare planting holes in the forest in readiness for tree planting



A tree nursery grower inspects some agroforestry tree seedlings to purchased by GBM market teams



A community member digs holes for planting at Nzaui Forest

As part of our continued commitment to landscape restoration and community empowerment, the Green Belt Movement implemented a World Resources Institute funded project in Makueni County, focusing on on-farm restoration and strengthening local livelihoods.

The project brought together our partners and the community, including local chiefs, village elders, tree nursery owners and the different households across the community. Their collaboration played a key role in ensuring smooth implementation and strong community ownership.

At the core of the project was the distribution of 66,000 fruit and agroforestry tree seedlings, supplied through GBM's procurement team, who sourced the seedlings directly from local tree nursery owners. This approach ensured that both the community and the nursery owners benefited. Farmers received high quality seedlings for their farms, while nurseries experienced increased income through seedling sales.

This project supports climate resilient livelihoods and strengthens local ecosystems through agroforestry. By planting fruit and multipurpose trees, the community is better positioned to improve food security, diversify household income and enhance long-term environmental sustainability.

This project marks a strong step forward in WRI and GBM's shared direction of promoting community-led restoration and building resilient landscapes in Kenya.



Strengthening Community Forest Associations in the Mau Forest Complex



Tinderet Community Forest Association



Nandi North Escarpment Community Forest Association.



Dundori Community Forest Association.

In November 2025, the Green Belt Movement carried out a post-needs assessment across three Community Forest Associations in the Mau Forest Complex: Nandi North Escarpment, Tinderet, and Dundori. The evaluation focused on governance, forest protection, livelihoods, and relationships between communities and the Kenya Forest Service following earlier support under the AFD project. This process forms part of GBM's broader commitment to strengthening Community Forest Associations not only in the Mau, but across the country, as frontline custodians of Kenya's forests.

In response, the Green Belt Movement is designing a phased, community-driven support model focused on restoring functional leadership, strengthening accountability and bookkeeping, rebuilding trust between communities and the Kenya Forest Service, and unlocking sustainable livelihoods through nursery scaling and beekeeping. Community-based surveillance and protection of whistleblowers are also being integrated to strengthen grassroots forest protection, to develop scalable models that can be replicated nationally.

This approach is designed to stabilize vulnerable associations, improve tree survival rates, increase household incomes and strengthen long-term community ownership of forest conservation. By centering governance, livelihoods, and trust, GBM is reinforcing Community Forest Associations as a nationally important pillar for climate resilience, environmental protection, and sustainable development.



It is the little things citizens do. That's what will make the difference.
My little thing is planting trees.
Prof. Wangari Maathai

GBM participates in the Closure of the EnDev GCF Clean Cooking Project



GBM Staff receiving the appreciation award on behalf of the organization.



Our Executive Director, Dorothy Aseyo together with the GIZ-Kenya Country Director, Bodo Immink during the event



A group photo of all the partners who were part of the project

The Green Belt Movement joined partners at the Closure Workshop of the EnDev Green Climate Fund Project on the Promotion of Climate-Friendly Cooking in Kenya and Senegal, marking the culmination of a powerful multi-country effort to expand access to clean cooking while reducing emissions.

In Nyeri and Laikipia counties, GBM's partnership with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH delivered tangible, people-centered impact through the sale of 73,930 improved cookstoves to households by trained distributors and last mile entrepreneurs, the capacity building of 110 new distributors and entrepreneurs, and the planting of 60,000 indigenous trees to directly link clean cooking with ecosystem restoration.

Beyond the local footprint, the wider project demonstrated the power of collaboration at scale by achieving 3.94 million tonnes of CO₂e emission reductions, supporting 2.69 million households to adopt low-emission cooking solutions, creating 4,026 jobs, and expanding improved cookstove sales sixfold between 2020 and 2024.

At GBM, we are proud to have strengthened livelihoods, empowered women, and restored ecosystems while advancing clean energy access, and we remain committed to driving Kenya's leadership in clean cooking and climate action across Sub-Saharan Africa.



Representatives of various partner organizations take a photo next to one of the vehicles that were handed over to the ministry of energy.

GBM Marks Mazingira Day 2025 with a Walk and Tree Planting in Nakuru



Part of the procession in action during the Mazingira Day walk



The Nakuru County, Deputy Governor, Hon. David Kones addresses participants during the event



Participants display messages to duty bearers on why the forests must be protected



Our Programs Manager, Kevin Majuek joins other delegates in tree planting during the event

The Green Belt Movement collaborated with Art space 254, the Egerton University Environmental Club, and the County Government of Nakuru to organize the Mazingira Day 2025 celebration. This national environmental holiday took place on October 10, 2025, at the Egerton University Main Campus in Nakuru County. The event was held under the inspiring theme, “CITIZEN CENTRIC TREE GROWING AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP”. The core purpose was to strengthen collaborations for sustainable climate action, mobilize citizens in conservation efforts like tree planting, and raise awareness on green innovation to build climate resilience.

The commemoration saw a significant turnout, with over 2,000 participants actively involved including students, community members, county officials and environmental advocates. The celebration was hosted by His Excellency the Deputy Governor of Nakuru County, Hon. David Kones, and graced by Mr. Nelson Maara, the CECM for Environment. The engagement highlighted the growing recognition that environmental stewardship is essential for Kenya's sustainable future. The planting of 1,000 fruit trees at Kilimo Primary School and the surrounding community was a key outcome.

This initiative directly contributed to Kenya's 15 Billion Trees Initiative while enhancing local biodiversity and strengthening food security. The success was a true reflection of the power of partnership, with the County Government of Nakuru, the Green Belt Movement and Art space 254. The event also provided a crucial platform for youth empowerment, with young innovators showcasing sustainable energy solutions, recycled art, and organic farming technologies.

These innovations were discussed during an engaging policy dialogue session that featured experts and emphasized the need for policy support and funding for youth-led green enterprises. Moving forward, the partners plan to ensure post-event continuity by establishing innovation hubs, creating community climate clubs, and ensuring sustained monitoring and nurturing of the planted trees.



GBM Joins #DrawTheLine March to Demand Forest Protection and Climate Justice



Participants including GBM staff take part in the march

The Green Belt Movement stood shoulder to shoulder with Kenya Wildlife Service, Greenpeace Africa, 350.org, Laudato Si’ Movement, GreenFaith Africa, and many other environmental and community organizations at the #DrawTheLine march, a powerful demonstration calling for action against climate injustice. Together, we raised our voices against practices that benefit a few while putting communities and ecosystems at serious risk.

This march reflects GBM’s approach to environmental justice, which connects community power, citizen action, faith voices, and institutional accountability. Our work goes beyond planting trees. We defend ecosystems, protect the rights of communities, and advocate for policies that prioritize people and nature over profit. Conservation and social justice are inseparable, and effective climate action must address both.

For GBM, the message was clear: Kenya cannot continue to promote ambitious tree-planting targets, such as 15 billion trees by 2032, while existing forests are being degraded or destroyed. Protecting the forests we already have, both public and community forests, is the most immediate and necessary step for any credible climate action. Without safeguarding what already exists, planting new trees alone will not address the underlying problems.

Through the march, GBM also renewed a direct call to the Ministry of Environment and the Government of Kenya to demonstrate real commitment to forest protection. The future of Kenya’s natural heritage and the well-being of generations to come depends on the choices we make today. Promises alone are not enough. Decisive action is needed to confront climate injustice, preserve biodiversity, and secure a sustainable future for all.



Some pictorials from the march

GBM Strengthens Community Climate Leadership at Climate Reality Africa Training



A group photo of all the climate leaders trained



Participants enjoy a dance during the training



Nana Mariam from Climate Reality Ghana facilitates a session during the training



Our Advocacy Manager, Job Mwangi (left) rewards a participant during the training

The Green Belt Movement participated in the Climate Reality Africa Training held on 28 August 2025 at Karura Forest's Amani Gardens. Our Executive Director, Dorothy Aseyo, attended the training, and Advocacy Manager, Job Mwangi, was part of the panel discussion on strengthening community led climate action. The panel also featured Nana Mariam, a trained Climate Reality Leader from Accra, Ghana.

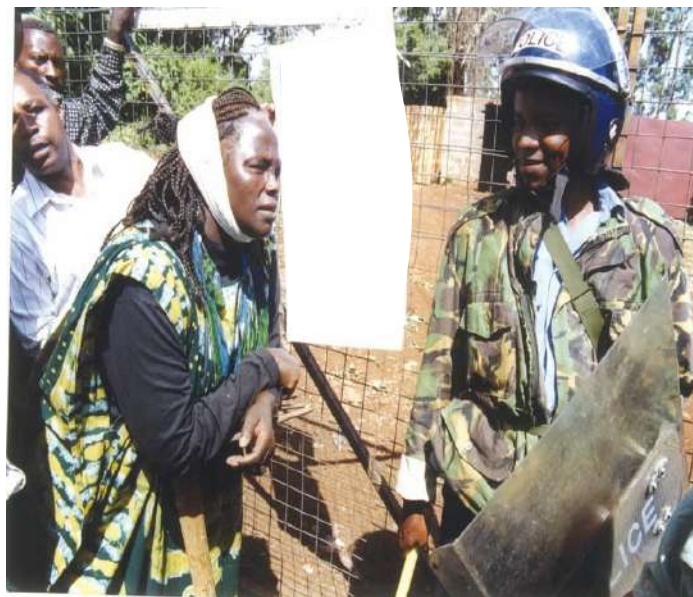
Fresh from the Nairobi Reality Tour Training in June, ACRP also hosted a Climate 101 workshop and a tree-planting activity in partnership with GBM. The workshop equipped newly trained Climate Leaders with foundational knowledge on the climate crisis, effective campaign strategies, and practical adaptation approaches.

Funded by Climate Reality, the training brought together over 50 climate leaders from across Africa, offering sessions on impactful campaign design, strategic messaging, audience targeting, and effective media engagement. Participants also reflected on the Green Belt Movement's grassroots legacy, exploring how community-driven initiatives can inform policy and inspire national and global action.

Breakout sessions allowed participants to identify major environmental challenges such as deforestation, water pollution, unregulated mining, and policy gaps and develop localized, community-centered solutions. These included awareness campaigns, clean-up activities, policy advocacy, research based recommendations and partnerships with local leaders and institutions. The training achieved its purpose by building capacity, strengthening networks and empowering climate leaders with the tools to advance evidence based and inclusive climate action. GBM remains committed to the movement's shared vision of a just, inclusive and climate safe Africa.



GBM Joins Legal Action to Protect Karura Forest and Community Conservation



Our founder Wangari Maathai fighting for Karura Forest in the 1990s.

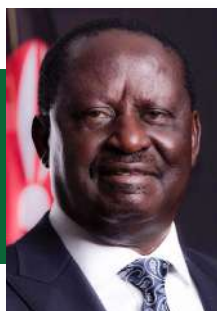
The Green Belt Movement (GBM) has joined Petition 035, which challenges the proposed tarmacking through Karura Forest, and Petition 036, which contests the unlawful takeover of Karura Forest from the Friends of Karura Community Forest Association (FK-CFA). GBM has joined both petitions as an interested party, reaffirming our longstanding commitment to defending Kenya's public forests and community-led conservation models.

Karura Forest is more than a green space. It is a national symbol of environmental justice and community involvement in conservation. As one of Nairobi's largest urban forests, it provides essential ecosystem services, supports biodiversity and offers millions of urban residents a space for recreation, wellbeing and connection with nature. Its protection is central to GBM's mission to safeguard Kenya's natural heritage.

Karura also holds a special place in the history of GBM and the legacy of Prof. Wangari Maathai, who led courageous, community-driven resistance to protect the forest from destructive development in the 1990s. Her leadership strengthened national awareness about the value of public forests and affirmed the power of citizen action. By joining these petitions, GBM continues to walk in her footsteps, defending green spaces not just as ecological assets, but as symbols of democratic participation and environmental rights.

GBM remains steadfast in its commitment to uphold the integrity of all public forests and urban green spaces. We will continue working with community forest associations, civil society partners, and environmental defenders to ensure that Kenya's forests are protected, lawfully governed, and accessible to present and future generations.

Protecting Karura is protecting our collective future and GBM will remain at the forefront of that fight.



"We cannot allow our forests to be destroyed. This is about the survival of the country."

Raila Odinga

GBM Joins IUCN to Strengthen Global Conservation and Community-Led Climate Action

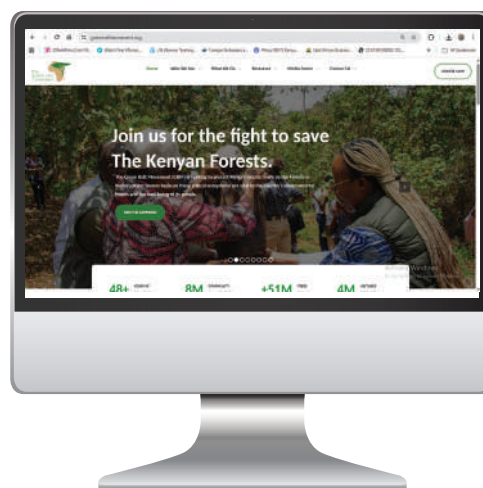


The Green Belt Movement is proud to close the year by joining the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as its newest member, a milestone that affirms GBM's growing global footprint in climate action, community-led conservation and environmental governance. This membership places GBM within the world's largest and most influential conservation network, alongside governments, UN agencies, scientific institutions and leading civil society organizations shaping the future of nature and people.

By joining IUCN, GBM is strengthening its ability to influence global conservation policy while amplifying the voices of Kenyan communities on international platforms. This opens new opportunities for technical collaboration, access to cutting-edge conservation science, policy advocacy spaces and partnerships that directly strengthen our work on forest restoration, climate resilience, community forest governance and sustainable livelihoods.

Most importantly, this membership deepens GBM's capacity to scale impact at home. We aim to leverage IUCN's global knowledge systems, funding linkages, and innovation networks to strengthen Community Forest Associations, enhance ecosystem restoration, support policy reforms and elevate Africa's lived conservation experiences into global decision-making spaces.

As we celebrate this important step, we do so with renewed purpose. Joining IUCN is not just a recognition of our legacy, but a powerful platform for the next chapter of impact, collaboration, and bold climate leadership rooted in communities and carried to the world.



Inaugural Wangari Maathai Hackathon 2025

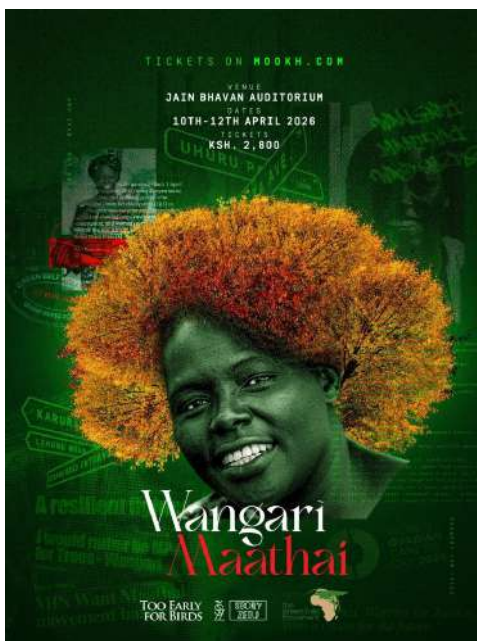


Some of the winners of the hackathon with the judges.

As part of celebrating 20 years since Wangari Maathai was awarded with the Nobel peace prize, the Inaugural Wangari Maathai Hackathon was held on 29th November 2025, convening over 240 young innovators and 20+ partners from civil society, academia, and the technology sector to co-create technology-driven solutions for forest protection, community empowerment, and environmental governance. Held under the theme “Protecting Forests. Empowering Youth. Advancing Wangari Maathai’s Legacy,” the hackathon was a flagship event of the Wangari Maathai Nobel+20 Commemoration. Participants developed solutions across forest monitoring, data-driven impact measurement, and community engagement, supported by a month-long pre-hackathon program of training, mentorship, and access to conservation data. Some of the partners in this initiative include Wangari Maathai Foundation, Antugrow, Adamur, Alliance Francaise Nairobi and Amnesty International. Fifteen teams pitched their innovations, with Jua Msitu, Green Future Society, and Msitu Bora emerging as the top three, and Eco-Elimu and BUNDI receiving honorable mentions. The hackathon demonstrated the power of youth-led innovation to deliver scalable, community-centered solutions and laid a strong foundation for continued prototype development and long-term impact in forest conservation.

Watch out for a special bulletin with more details on this as well as other events such as the 2025 Wangari Maathai Gala.

Wangari Maathai The Play



The Green Belt Movement is partnering with Too Early for birds and Story Zetu to bring to you a play on Wangari Maathai. The play will be running from 10th to 12th April 2026 at Jain Bhavan Auditorium. Tickets are already on sale. Grab yours at [Mookh.com](https://mookh.com).

Pictorials

GBM at the 2025 United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 7)



Various UNEA 7 delegates sign environmental commitments at the Wangari Maathai booth at Restoration Lab Exhibition Space



Various UNEA7 delegates led by Kenya's CS for Environment, UNEP Executive Director, Norway's Minister for Climate and Environment and Wanjira Maathai during commemoration of Professor Wangari Maathai's Nobel Peace Prize. Photos courtesy of WRI Africa



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