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Kenyan Environmentalist Wins 2004 Nobel Peace Prize - 2004-10-08

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Kenyan environmentalist Wangari Maathai has won the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize, becoming the first African woman to be given the prestigious award. The Norwegian Nobel Committee praised Ms. Maathai for leading a campaign to plant tens of millions of trees across Africa to slow deforestation.

Committee chairman Ole Danbolt Mjoes says this is the first time that the jury has made improving the environment a factor in awarding the peace prize. Speaking through an interpreter in Oslo, Mr. Mjoes lauded Ms. Maathai for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace.

"Peace on Earth depends on us safeguarding the environment," he said. "She has stood in the forefront for the work of preserving the environment. Both with regard to economic and cultural development in her own country, Kenya, sustainable development has been the key in her work, and she has also worked for the rights of women. She has worked internationally, but she has always protected her own country and worked locally."

Ms. Maathai's Green Belt Movement has planted more than 30 million trees across Africa in an attempt to stem the deforestation that has turned parts of Africa into desert. The committee praises Ms. Maathai for enlisting poor women to take part in the tree-planting effort. The citation notes that Ms. Maathai's strategy to combat deforestation combines education, family planning, nutrition and the fight against corruption.

The Kenyan activist, who is today a deputy environment minister in her country, was not among those being touted for the peace prize this year. She was chosen

from among 194 nominees. The peace prize, the only one of the Nobel awards to be given out in Norway (the others are presented in Sweden), is accompanied by a \$1.3 million cash award.

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The winner of this year's Nobel Peace Prize, Kenyan environmentalist Wangari Maathai, is in New York to call attention to her message linking environmental protection and peace. Ms. Maathai says the Nobel Peace Prize will give greater legitimacy to environmentalists across the globe and help her Green Belt movement overcome obstacles. "Now with the Nobel Peace Prize, we feel that many people will be willing to support us, including governments, which have a lot...

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Kenyan ecologist Wangari Maathai has been formally awarded the Nobel Peace Prize at a ceremony in Oslo, Norway. Ms. Maathai urged her audience at Oslo's City Hall to recognize that protecting the environment and promoting peace and democracy go hand-in-hand. Wearing a bright orange African-style dress and a matching ribbon in her hair, the 64-year-old Ms. Maathai was welcomed by about one thousand people, many of them waving small Kenyan flags....