

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the death of Wangari Maathai, distinguished citizen and devoted member of her community

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to citizens of the State of New York whose lifework and civic endeavor served to enhance the quality of life in their communities and the great State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Wangari Maathai of Kenya died on September 25, 2011, at the age of 71; and

WHEREAS, Environmentalist Wangari Maathai began a movement to reforest her country of Kenya by paying poor women a few shillings to plant trees; she went on to become the first African woman to win a Nobel Peace Prize; and

WHEREAS, Born on April 1, 1940, in Nyeri, Kenya, in the foothills of Mount Kenya, Wangari Maathai was a star student, winning a scholarship to study biology at Mount St. Scholastica College in Atchison, Kansas, receiving a degree in 1964; she subsequently earned a Master of Science degree from the University of Pittsburgh; and

WHEREAS, Wangari Maathai went on to obtain a doctorate in veterinary anatomy at the University of Nairobi, becoming the first woman in East or Central Africa to hold such a degree; and

WHEREAS, This remarkable woman distinguished herself in her profession and by her sincere dedication and substantial contribution to the welfare of her community; and

WHEREAS, Wangari Maathai's commitment to excellence, and her spirit of humanity, carried over into all fields of enterprise, including charitable and civic endeavors; and

WHEREAS, One of the most widely respected women on the continent, Wangari Maathai played many roles - environmentalist, feminist, politician, professor, human rights advocate and head of the Green Belt Movement, which she founded in 1977 with the mission to plant trees across Kenya, fight erosion, create firewood for fuel, and create jobs for women; and

WHEREAS, Wangari Maathai won the Peace Prize in 2004 for what the Nobel committee called "her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace"; it was a moment of immense pride in Kenya and across Africa; and

WHEREAS, Her Green Belt Movement has planted more than 30 million trees in Africa and has helped nearly 900,000 women, according to the United Nations, while inspiring similar efforts in other African countries; and

WHEREAS, Wangari Maathai toured the world, speaking out against environmental degradation and poverty, which she said were intimately connected; and

WHEREAS, Wangari Maathai received many honorary degrees, including an honorary doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh in 2006, as well as numerous awards, including the French Legion of Honor and Japan's Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun; she authored several books, including UNBOWED: A MEMOIR, published in 2006; and

WHEREAS, Wangari Maathai is survived by three children, Waweru, Wanjira and Muta, and a granddaughter; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Wangari Maathai leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all she served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Wangari Maathai, distinguished citizen and devoted member of her community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Wangari Maathai.