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Wangari Maathai, A Tribute

- News -

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CODESRIA

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Wangari Maathai, an African Nobel Laureate, passed away on Sunday, 25th September 2011, at the age of 71. She had been a professor at the University of Nairobi and at several other institutions, and was the founder of the Green Belt Movement. She was also a civil society and women's rights activist, a former parliamentarian, and the author of several books. Below is a tribute to the African woman who ever won the Nobel Prize for Peace, written by Professor Thandika Mkandawire of the London School of Economics and former Executive Secretary of CODESRIA:

Wangari Maathai was an amazing person. I first met her in Kampala during the CODESRIA Symposium on Academic Freedom. She arrived a day after the symposium. I was informed of her presence and her need for accomodation. I went looking for her and found her in the lobby of the hotel with a small sack of her belongings she had taken with her. When I made the obvious point that it was too late for the symposium, she replied, with that great smile that was her trade mark: "I, know but I made it". In Kenya of the time anyone employed in state institutions (including universities) had to seek state permission to travel out of the country to attend a conference. On this occassion the Government simply denied Kenyan academics the permission to travel to attend what must have been perceived as a subservive conference. And so Wangari travelled on land. Obviously there was no way they could stop Wangari.

Africa has lost a Great Daughter and an Inspriing Voice.

Thandika Mkandawire
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