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And we would list all of them. And I would use those problems to tell them that, "If you travel in the wrong direction -- if you take that journey, and you go to the right destination, you are likely to be happy, you are likely to be received well, you are likely to experience satisfaction, because you arrived at the destination that you wanted to arrive at. But if you arrive at the destination and you find yourselves with a lot of problems, then you must have made some wrong decision. Maybe this is not the place you should have been."

And so, I said, "If you --" I would use that path and say, "If you come to Nairobi --" usually you have these seminars in Nairobi, because we were also holding them when we were not allowed to be holding them, so we were hiding and holding them. So I would say, "When you come to Nairobi, there are two ways you could go. You could go north and go towards Uganda, or you could go south and go towards Mombasa. Now, what would be the reason why, when you go to the bus stop, you could take the wrong bus; that if you want to go to

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culture of peace, and equity, and civility. Could you talk about how you see the three of those coming together to address some of these larger-frame challenges for Africa?

Wangari Maathai:

As you say, I picked up on the traditional stoo

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But as far as the colonial devastation was concerned, if the Maasais were grazing at that corner, and several years -- several months later they are at that corner, then as far as the colonial administration was concerned, that was no man's land. That is no good. But it's the Maasai country for grazing.

Now, when we became a colony and we introduced the concept of land ownership that could be identified. First of all, the man is the head of the family and therefore the land has to be registered in his name. Secondly, you get a piece of paper, which we didn't have before, that says that, that land is yours and you can do whatever you want with it. That introduced a potential area of conflict, because that means that the Maasai can no longer freely move from one corner of the land to the other, because there are people who own land in between. Secondly, they need water for the animals. Water comes from the mountains. If the people who live in the highlands are cutting down forest or encroaching

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So that was my first beginning of understanding the linkage between resources and conflicts, and mismanagement of these resources, because if the government was actually -- would take that matter, and study it, and negotiate with the communities, they could find a way of making sure that the Maasais' animals can reach the ridge, they can reach the water, and the Kikuyu farms would also be protected. But if you leave it to the communities themselves, they fight, they kill each other.

The other example I had was during the elections. Every time during the elections we would have tribal clashes. And the reason why we were having tribal clashes is because politicians would want to gerrymander elections. And the best way for them to gerrymander elections was to go to their communities -- that's their tribesmen -- who have bought land in this Rift Valley, and tell them, "These people who have bought land here don't belong here, they belong somewhere else." That's a governance issue, because we have a constitution that says you can buy land anywhere in this country. So the constitution is neglected, and instead the politicians take up these issues and they convince their people that nobody should -- everybody should be where they used to be before the British came. Now, it's not possible anymore.

We have created a new nation. We have a new constitution. This is the 21st century. The only way we can survive is if we learn to govern ourselves in a way that will not discriminate, and will not undermine the welfare of all people, not just a few people, and not allow politicians to take these issues and spin them during the elections. They did so in 1991, 1992, 1997. In 2002, we escaped because there was a big wave that eventually removed the government that was there before. But in 2007, those same issues acted out, instigated by the politicians. That's an issue of governance.

And so, for me I started seeing in close quarters how if you have bad governance; that is, governance which does not respect human rights, that does not respect the constitution, that does not respect the diversity that is characteristic of every country in Africa; that is not inclusive, that uses the tribe to attain power; and if you don't, then, therefore, ensure that the resources within the country are equitably distributed, and you encourage these prejudgments that communities have against each other, you're going to have conflict. And it kept happening, and it kept happening, and I kept raising it. But nobody was paying me any attention, so I was very happy when the Norwegian Nobel Committee said, "This girl has something going."

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Geoff Dabelko:

That's terrific. And you write very eloquently about how as a goodwill ambassador for the Congo Basin, and the forest, and that whole ecosystem, you point out that these dynamics are not just limited to within countries, but can be, again when coupled with weak or poor governance, can be part of helping us understand how the conflict in DRC particularly, Democratic Republic of the Congo, where some of these same dynamics but with plenty of international actors, as well.

Wangari Maathai:

In fact, if you look now in Africa, almost every

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were destroying them, that it was the very people who were supposed to protect the forest that were privatizing them, and so the protector had become the predator. And to deal with just the symptoms was really to waste your time. You are wasting your time, because those symptoms will continue coming. You have to go to the root cause. And it is going into the root cause that eventually showed us that it is not one root, that these are many roots, and some of these roots [unintelligible].

And therefore you need to have a big picture and not have one picture. And that's also the reason why we said, "When we go into the community, even though it is the women who provide the drive for planting trees partly because it is they who suffer when the environment is destroyed, it is also they who work in the field, once we are in the community we will have to deal with the women, deal with the men, deal with the children, deal with the livestock, deal with everything, because the community is dynamic. Community's not just men or women.

So if you are UNICEF, and you are only concerned about the children -- "The children are not being taken care of," is a symptom. What is the cause? Unless you're dealing with the cause, you are wasting your time. You can use all the money you want for all the years you want, you will not solve the problem, because you are dealing with a symptom. So we need to go outside that box and deal with development in a holistic way and address all these issues at the same time. What I mean is, it is not as if everything has to go -- and, yes, sometimes it has to go.

And even President Obama, I remember when he was complaining and he was told, "You have to go to Washington, D.C.," he said, "Well, I thought the President has to be able to deal with many issues at the same time." I said, "That's right."

You have to be holistic and multifaceted, so that you can promote this machine called development and touch the dynamic community rather than parts of that community.

Geoff Dabelko:

I hope some of the folks that you're speaking with in town here receive that message. One thing that struck me as -- goes throughout your book, as well, is the issue of kind of moving from this very -- a very grassroots focused, natural resource focus up to climate change and what that means. And it's obviously an above-the-fold -- newspaper-fold -- headline issue in

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the year of Copenhagen and the attempt to negotiate a follow-on to the Kyoto Treaty. We're starting to see some discussion of forests in that context. And that's new, and certainly starts to connect with the discourse that you talk about, again, the importance of Congo. But I think you're in perhaps an excellent position to remind us that climate change is not just the 30,000-foot view about emissions and cap-and-trade, that it really -- there's an awful lot on the adaptation side, and there's an -- it means an awful lot for those, in fact, least responsible for the problems themselves. And that was the theme that came through the book, and perhaps you can talk to us about how, you know, again sitting in Washington, we should understand the multiple faces of climate change.

Wangari Maathai:

Well, as I said down here, when I was starting, I was not starting a movement. And I had no idea that eventually this issue is so huge that 30 years down the road it will be a global issue. I had no idea then, but that's what has come to be, that more and more we have come to understand that we are part of the environment. You know, human beings sometimes act as if they are not part of the environment, as if we are separated, and we think we can go on and do whatever we want to do.

Recently I was reading an article about James Lovelock, many of you know James Lovelock, this British man who has been talking about the Gaia theory for some time. And what he was saying was very discouraging to me, because he was essentially telling me that those of us who are concerned about the planet are wasting our time, that the planet does not need our sympathy, because he said, "The planet has been changing, and is changing, and will continue to change. At the moment, we happen to be here, because it's changed and it created -- an environment was created that made it possible for us to survive. But we are helping to change that environment. And so, if we change it to the extent that we and the forms of life we know of cannot survive, the planet will just keep on going. It's we who have a problem." So he said, "You shouldn't be crying over the planet. You cry about yourselves -- because it's you who might not be able to adapt fast enough to survive in the environment that is evolving." And I thought, "Gee-whew, in a way I have been working hard to save the planet!"

But it is a thought -- even though some people don't believe James Lovelock, quite often we catch up with him, and we realize he was right. But the thought that we might be too late is a good thought that can make us stir up our mind and our understanding of the need for us to

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way has become so important that it is so essential for our survival. Africans in particular are very vulnerable. Every scientist in that climate change arena is warning Africa that because of where we are, because of the Sahara and the Kalahari Deserts, because of our very destructive agricultural practices, especially slash-and-burn, and because our communities are still very dependent on primary natural resources, which they do not add value to -- and therefore are more vulnerable to exploitation by developed regions, which as you know, are coming in droves -- but because of all this, Africa is going to find it very difficult to adapt fast enough.

Now, it is in the interest of the world to help Africa, because if the rest of the world does not help Africa and they destroy their forests, believe me, they are not going to sit there and die, they will come. And I usually think of Europe. If you think of Europe, Europeans are already creating a wall across the Mediterranean. They are so busy trying to stop North Africans and some of the Africans south of the Sahara from coming to Europe; they are still coming. They drown? They're still coming. Many of them are following their fish because these countries that are highly developed, they have been fishing everything they can find in the oceans in the tropics to the extent that the fishermen in Africa don't have anything to fish. All the fish has gone, so that they've gone off where the fish went, and they follow the fish. And some of them drown. And so, we will have huge migrations of people who will be environmental refugees especially from these regions that are very vulnerable. So it is in our interest to support them, to support the governments that are waiting to wake them up, because sometimes I think they are still asleep, they still don't see what's coming. But we are doing our best to tell governments that climate change, as far as we know -- I don't really believe that over 2,000 scientists could be wrong, and therefore, we are all very happy that the United States of America, for a change, is onboard, because it is very, very important for us to learn to adapt, to learn to adopt.

And I'm not too worried about people in the North. I know people in the North are really moving very fast. They're moving with technologies. We can already see what President

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Well, we could have told you a long time ago, because we saw that all the things you are talking about, we suffered a long time ago. Because there has been almost a conspiracy of silence of people exploiting -- our own people exploiting us and being assisted by governments on the side of donor. And at that time, we were reporting the fact that for every dollar that is invested in form of aid, in form of loan, it comes back as \$4. And we were arguing, "That's not aid, that's trade." And what would be better for Africa? Instead of exploiting her that way it is to allow her to do better, just, and fair trade. But the governments in developed countries are very protectionist. They protect -- they don't allow you to sell your products unless you sell raw materials. If you try to add value to the materials in Africa, you have no market. But if you sell raw materials, you have plenty of market. These are some of the areas where we know that we talk from both sides of the mouth when we say, "Accountable, just, fair," what are we talking about? Are we really honest? So I think that even as we put pressure in our governments to shape up, to begin governing the people with respect, with dignity, and to govern them as if they matter, it's also very important on this side of the divide to put pressure on the governments to be fair, to be honest, to be just, and not to have a conspiracy with our leaders, and continue to exploit our people and our resources, and then tell us we are poor when we live in one of the richest continents on the planet.

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