

**Bethel College Mennonite Church Creation Care Committee  
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**Peace and the Environment**

The following selected quotes from an article in the October 12, 2004 "*Christian Science Monitor*" titled "Nobel redefines what it means to be a peacemaker" by Abraham McLaughlin link environmental and peace issues:

Kenyan environmentalist Wangari Maathai - this year's Nobel Peace Prize winner - has been called many things during her decades of activism --- but she's never been called a peacemaker - until now. In fact, ever since the Nobel committee chose her last week, some have grumbled that a person best known for planting trees isn't quite worthy of the prestigious award. Yet the choice, observers say, symbolizes a broadening notion of what constitutes a peacemaker in today's world - and a widening definition of peace itself. Indeed, the elite Nobel club is gradually expanding beyond politicians like Michail Gorbachev or Nelson Mandela to include people like Ms. Maathai and Iranian rights activist Shirin Ebadi. It highlights a growing recognition that women and the environment are crucial to creating peace, observers say.

The committee and others "are starting to address the issue of peace at its roots," says Sanam Naraghi Anderlini of Women Waging Peace, a group based in Washington.

In announcing this year's award, committee chairman Ole Danbolt Mjoes said: "We have expanded the peace concept to include environmental issues because we believe that a good quality of life on Earth is necessary to promote lasting peace."

It's the first time the prize has gone to an environmentalist. And it sparked some criticism. "You don't give the Nobel chemistry prize to a professor in economics," said Carl Hagen a politician in Norway. " A peace prize should honor peace, not the environment."

But people-powered movements like Maathai's may be some of the few places where peace is actually being forged these days, some observers say. --- by choosing Maathai, Anderlini says the Nobel committee seems to be saying, "Peace comes through constructive engagement on the grass-roots level."

And there's growing focus on the link between conflict and environmental issues. A recent UN report mapped areas in Africa with two or three overlapping environmental issues and found a strong correlation with conflict. Hot spots included Burundi, Rwanda, eastern Congo, and Zimbabwe - all areas with current or recent conflicts.

Besides the growing focus on conflict's root causes, the concept of peace is expanding beyond an absence of war, into the idea of "human security" where quality of life is good enough to avoid sparking conflict. Consequently, peacemaking has "broadened to include dealing with things that undermine the normal fulfillment of human life," says Chadwick Alger, who's on the editorial board of the International George Mason University in Fairfax, Va. This includes environmental problems and "all kinds of things that lead to shorter life for people."

David Orr, in a recent book entitled *The Last Refuge - Patriotism, Politics, and the Environment in an Age of Terror*, makes a similar point (p. 44):

The world community faces growing conflicts over access to freshwater, declining oceanic fisheries, climatic change, access to oil, and the mounting effects of the loss of natural capital. The challenges of global poverty, feeding another one to three billion people, arresting climatic change, preserving biotic diversity, *and* maintaining world peace will become more and more difficult especially given the spread of the means of violence. In the twenty-first century no nation on its own can be secure and no narrow definition of security will provide a foundation for safety. The idea of security must be broadened to include security against hunger, pollution, ecological degradation, poverty, ignorance, *and* direct physical assaults for everyone. Anything less will not work for long. Meeting human needs for food, shelter, sustainable livelihood, and environmental preservation reduces the sources of conflict and the dissatisfaction that feeds terrorism