



Tea and Feminist Dialogues

Rooted Leadership, Shared Power, Sustainable Peace

Date: 2 March 2026 | 7:30 AM – 1:00 PM (EAT)

Location: Serena Hotel (Alamanda Room), Nairobi, Kenya

Convened by: Nobel Women's Initiative, Wangari Maathai Foundation, and partners

On 2 March 2026, over 250 leaders—grassroots organizers, youth activists, and Pan-African coalitions—gathered in Nairobi for a morning of reflection, dialogue, and strategy. Co-hosted by Nobel Women's Initiative, the Wangari Maathai Foundation, and partners, the convening brought together voices rooted in struggle, vision, and action.

From the opening greetings to the closing reflections, the energy in the room was electric. Anger and hope coexisted; stories of resistance and triumph intersected; strategies for justice were debated, refined, and affirmed. A shared call echoed throughout the gathering: stand with the young people of Kenya.

From Kenya to Pan-Africa to Global Solidarity

The day unfolded from local grounding to global connection. It began by honoring Kenya as a site of legacy and learning, rooted in Wangari Maathai's pioneering work in environmental justice and women's leadership.

Her philosophy—captured in the hummingbird story—threaded through every conversation: each person, no matter how small their contribution, has a role to play in confronting injustice. As Maathai often asked, *“What is your little thing?”*. This question became both a challenge and an invitation—toward personal accountability and collective transformation.

Her words also anchored discussions on climate justice: *“It is the people who must save the environment. It is the people who must make their leaders change.”*

This reminder positioned grassroots organizing not as secondary to policy, but as its foundation.

From this grounding, conversations expanded across Pan-African struggles—connecting rural communities, activist networks, and policy spaces—and ultimately to global feminist solidarity. Participants affirmed that what happens in one place resonates everywhere.

Advocating for peace, justice and equality

Voices That Guided Us

Reflections from Nobel Laureates illuminated the day with history, strategy, and urgency.

Leymah Gbowee (Liberia, 2011) emphasized intergenerational solidarity: *“Empowerment is getting off some of your power so someone else can have it... passing the mic.”*

Shirin Ebadi (Iran, 2003) spoke to endurance: *“If you believe in your purpose, you will not retire, you will not get tired, and you will not get scared.”*

Oleksandra Matviichuk (Ukraine, 2022) reflected on collective resilience: *“Ordinary people can do extraordinary things... ordinary people can create history.”*

Together, their reflections framed a day grounded in history, anchored in the present, and bold in imagining feminist futures. **Wanjira Mathai**, Chair of the Wangari Maathai Foundation, reminded participants that transformation begins with individual responsibility: *“What is your little thing?”*—a question that echoed throughout the day as both a personal challenge and a collective call to action. She also invited deeper reflection on Wangari Maathai’s legacy in today’s context of overlapping crises—climate breakdown, conflict, and spiritual disconnection.

Nyaguthii Chege, Chair of the Green Belt Movement, urged participants to consider how Maathai might interpret this moment of “spiritual convergence in times of war,” emphasizing that *“war is the ultimate environmental disaster.”* She encouraged inward reflection alongside outward action: *“Even as you’re looking for inspiration outside, look within your circles.”* These interventions grounded the gathering in both introspection and action, linking ecological justice, peace, and moral courage.

Julie Wanjira, Gen Z activist and co-founder of the Mathare Social Justice Centre, delivered a powerful call for unity, courage, and political imagination. She emphasized that solidarity must begin at home: *“There’s nothing that can stand between a united people with deep resolve... Pan-Africanism has to start with local unity.”* She challenged participants to imagine bold alternatives: *“What is preventing us from coming together and creating an alternative political leadership?”* And to envision collective feminist power on a continental scale: *“Imagine what we could do if African women decided—no more wars in Congo, in Sudan.”* She also named tensions within liberation struggles: *“Liberation is masculine, but freedom is woman.”* Her reflections underscored the need to center women’s leadership not only in resistance, but in shaping the future. She closed with a call that resonated deeply: *“Stand with us and let us build a different reality... it’s possible as long as we walk together.”*

Jessica Horn, Senior Research Fellow at the Moleskine Foundation, challenged participants to think critically about memory, power, and imagination. She emphasized that sovereignty lies at the heart of Pan-African and feminist struggle: *“Sovereignty is at the core... sovereignty is deeply gendered.”*

She called for urgency and creativity in the face of global crises: *“Almost everything we believe in is being destroyed—and we need deep imagination to address that.”*

At the same time, she grounded futurism in historical accountability: *“You cannot do the future without a past.”* She urged participants to document and honor feminist labor: *“Cite each other and cite the labor... archive the work, because we are the holders of the memories of our resistance.”* Returning to Wangari Maathai’s legacy, she reminded the group: *“The legacy of heroism is a human thing—and it resides within all of us.”*

Co-facilitators Nyaguthii Chege (Green Belt Movement) and **Mona Nya Muchemi** (AfriWetu Ltd.) guided the dialogues with care and intention. Mona left participants with a lasting provocation: *“What are you going to plant today that 20 years from now people will be talking about this gathering?”*

Tables as Beacons of History

Dialogue tables were reimagined as “villages,” each named after historic African women leaders—Yaa Asantewaa, Amina of Zaria, Queen Nzinga, Idia of Benin, and Kandake Amanirenas—figures known for their courage and resistance, grounding conversations in legacy while inspiring contemporary action, with thanks to Nyaguthii’s recommendation and Mona’s contributions to the naming.

Wangari Maathai’s words guided each discussion, with reflections such as *“Those who plant trees, plant hope”* grounding conversations in both urgency and possibility.

Key Themes Across Discussions

Across tables, participants explored interconnected themes:

- Power to Communities: Local leadership in climate justice and conflict mitigation
- Protecting Changemakers: Safety and solidarity for women human rights defenders
- Youth & Women in Politics: Pathways to meaningful inclusion and leadership
- Climate Justice: Gender, land rights, and environmental stewardship
- Indigenous Wisdom & Policy: Traditional knowledge shaping sustainable futures
- Funding for Change: Shifting resources to grassroots actors
- Collective Care: Sustaining activism through emotional and cultural practices
- Gen Z Feminist Power: Youth leadership as long-term transformation
- Peace, Disarmament & Climate: Intersections of militarism and environmental injustice

Participants shared lived experiences, analyzed systemic barriers, and envisioned actionable solutions. Rapporteurs documented these exchanges to ensure the insights extend far beyond the room.

Intergenerational Feminist Learning

The convening created space for dynamic exchange between youth leaders and experienced activists. Conversations ranged from mentorship and funding to navigating cultural norms and political risk.

As one participant reflected, “*We are growing together,*” while another voiced concern, “*I would be scared for my daughters to be in Kenyan politics.*” These candid reflections underscored both the urgency and necessity of intergenerational solidarity.

Throughout the gathering, several key themes emerged:

- Pan-African solidarity and the philosophy of Ubuntu shaped discussions on justice and care
- Collective action—grounded in local leadership and centering young women’s leadership—was recognized as the path forward
- Documenting women’s histories was affirmed as both a political and feminist responsibility

Closing Reflections

Tea and Feminist Dialogues was a space to celebrate and connect—to honor memory, strategy, and possibility. It was a space where histories were uplifted, connections deepened, and seeds were planted for a future shaped by feminist leadership in climate justice, peace, and political transformation.

With deep gratitude to all participants, facilitators, and rapporteurs—your contributions made this gathering one of courage, solidarity, and hope.

Photos:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/nobelwomensinitiative/albums/72177720332482205/>