

PHOTO:

1. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai was designated as a United Nations Messenger of Peace with a special focus on the environment and climate change by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon during the 2009 UN climate change conference in Copenhagen. In September, Professor Maathai addressed the Secretary-General's Summit on Climate Change on behalf of civil society.
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“Engagement between UNEP and civil society is necessary, both for UNEP and for the protection of the planet’s fragile web of life. In this engagement lies the potential for resurgence of democracy and ecological awareness.”

— Vandana Shiva in her foreword to the *Natural Allies* publication

Natural Allies: Engaging civil society in UNEP’s work

The year 2009 has seen expanded engagement of civil society in UNEP’s work. Nearly 300 organizations from 88 countries participated in the twenty-fifth session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF), exceeding by far (141 per cent and 46 per cent, respectively) the biennial targets. In addition to the nine major groups categories included in Agenda 21, other civil society organizations — from faith-based groups to cultural associations — were represented. Female participation increased from 40 to 46 per cent, and the first meeting of the Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment took place in conjunction with the GC/GMEF. For the first time, civil society delegates could directly contribute to the President’s Summary of the GC/GMEF by providing messages and recommendations. A total of 12 seats were made available for civil society to attend as full participants in each of the ministerial roundtables. UNEP is also developing guidelines to further engage indigenous peoples in its work, and has convened, together with other UN agencies, the 8th annual meeting of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues which addressed, among other topics, climate change-related migration, black carbon assessments and opportunities generated by REDD.