

A Grandmother's Wisdom, A Nation's Promise

“She approached life with curiosity rather than fear, teaching us that discovery itself is life’s greatest gift.”

— Merlin Van Lawick, Dr. Jane Goodall’s grandson

A global voice, a universal lesson

The global reach of Dr Goodall’s legacy was reflected in tributes from international partners.

Suzana Ngogi Namondo, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Tanzania, described her as one of the rare individuals whose work fundamentally reshaped how humanity understands itself. Through patience and humility, Dr Goodall challenged the idea that humans stand apart from nature. Instead, she reminded the world that people are part of it.

What made her legacy extraordinary, Ms Namondo said, was that it did not remain confined to research. It moved into communities, transforming knowledge into action and concern into responsibility.

Dr Goodall understood something the world is still learning, conservation cannot succeed without communities, and development cannot succeed without protecting nature. That principle now sits at the heart of the United Nations’ work in Tanzania, from climate resilience and biodiversity protection to youth empowerment and sustainable livelihoods.

At a time when the scale of environmental loss can feel overwhelming, her message remains urgent and reassuring - each person matters, and hope is a choice we make through action.

A grandmother’s quiet wisdom

The most intimate moments of the ceremony arrived through family voices and poetry, when public tribute gave way to private remembrance.

Merlin Van Lawick, Communications and Partnerships Associate at the Jane Goodall Institute and Dr Goodall’s grandson, delivered a eulogy first read at her funeral. He spoke not as a professional, but as a grand-



Merlin Van Lawick, one of Dr. Jane Goodall’s grandsons and a Conservation Science Communications Specialist at the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI).

son recalling a woman who shaped his childhood and worldview. He told of days spent with her in Gombe, where she would slip away alone to a quiet place of peace, returning with stories of insects, birds and small dramas unfolding in the forest. Through those simple rituals, she taught her family that life is an interconnected tapestry, rich with wonder for those who slow down, observe closely and listen patiently.

She was not only a global icon, he said. She was a mentor, a guide and a constant source of gentle wisdom. Often speaking of her “next great adventure,” she approached death with curiosity rather than fear, believing that discovery itself was life’s greatest gift.

The emotional current deepened when Angel Van Lawick followed with a reading of Dr Goodall’s own *Prayer for World Peace*, drawing the hall into a moment of quiet reflection. Then came a personal tribute from Georgina Magesa, whose poem carried the spirit of Dr Goodall in soft, hopeful lines. Speaking of for-

ests, children and the future, her verses reminded mourners that Jane Goodall did not merely study nature, she loved it. That hope, Georgina said, does not depend on age, only on courage.

Her poem traced Dr Goodall’s lifelong message, that animals are not objects but lives, that what we do to the Earth, we do to the future, and that real change begins in small hands and brave hearts. By the time Georgina finished, it was clear that Dr Goodall’s legacy had moved beyond memory, it had become a quiet promise carried forward by a new generation.

A Daughter of Tanzania

From the diplomatic community, Anna Wilson, Development Director at the British High Commission, reflected on how Dr Jane Goodall’s philosophy continues to guide conservation efforts across the world. She reminded mourners that protecting wildlife in isolation is never enough.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A life devoted to kindness becomes a shared mission, as mourners are reminded that Dr Jane Goodall’s work now belongs to everyone.
- The United Nations hails her as a rare voice who reshaped how humanity understands itself – teaching the world that people are part of nature, not separate from it.
- From research to real lives, her legacy moves into communities, turning knowledge into action and concern into responsibility.
- A grandmother remembered: Merlin Van Lawick shares quiet moments from Gombe, where Dr Goodall taught her family to slow down, observe closely and listen patiently.

“We have learned from Dr Jane that conservation must walk hand in hand with human dignity,” she said. “If we fail to protect livelihoods, create opportunity and respect local communities, then our efforts will always fall short.”

Her words set the tone for a deeper reflection on Dr Goodall’s enduring bond with Tanzania.

Speaking on behalf of the Government and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, Dr Noel Lwaga, Director General of the National Museum of Tanzania, described Dr Goodall not as a visiting scientist, but as a humble learner, a trusted partner and, above all, a cherished friend of the nation.

“She came to study chimpanzees, but she stayed to understand people,” he said. “Through her tireless work, Gombe was placed firmly on the global map of conservation science. Today, her legacy lives on in our national policies, in community-led conservation, and in young people inspired through Roots & Shoots.”

Dr Lwaga reaffirmed the Government’s continued commitment to stand with the Jane Goodall Institute, protecting Gombe’s forests and supporting conservation initiatives across the country. In spirit, he said, Dr Goodall became truly a daughter

of Tanzania, a woman whose compassion crossed borders and whose vision reshaped generations.

As the ceremony drew to a close, Board Chair Mr James Lembeli rose to deliver his final reflections, gently drawing together the emotions of the afternoon.

“Dr Jane was not only a renowned scientist and conservationist,” he said. “She was a teacher. A mentor. Someone who believed deeply in the power of individuals, especially young people to create change.”

He spoke of a world facing climate change, biodiversity loss and growing social challenges, and reminded those gathered that Dr Jane’s life was a quiet call to action.

“She taught us to protect what is fragile, to respect science and indigenous knowledge, and to treat all living beings with compassion. Above all, she taught us not to lose hope.”

Turning to the young people in the room, his voice softened.

“Dr Jane believed in you,” he said. “She trusted that your voices, your choices and your courage would shape a better future. Never forget that even the smallest action can make a meaningful difference.”

In his closing words, Mr Lembeli urged everyone to leave not only with memories, but with purpose.

“May we strive to live by the values she embodied: curiosity, humility, courage and respect for life,” he said. “Let us carry her hope forward through conservation, community empowerment and ethical leadership.”

And with that, he offered a final farewell.

“May her soul rest in eternal peace.”

A legacy that continues

As the hall slowly emptied and the afternoon light returned to the museum corridors, one truth lingered quietly but firmly.

Dr Jane Goodall’s life reminds us that hope is not passive. It is action. It is care. And it is responsibility passed from one generation to the next.

In Tanzania, where her journey began, that responsibility remains alive rooted in forests, carried by communities, and entrusted to the future.

BY REGAN RICHARD



Georgina Magesa sharing her poem with the audience.



Frederick Kimaro, JGI Tanzania Executive Director.



Deidre Samsoni Majwala, one of the Roots & Shoots members.



James Lembeli, Board Chairperson, JGI-Tanzania.