

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

TECHNICAL NOTE ON NGO RELATIONS WITH THE GEF

**GEF Council Meeting
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At the GEF Participants Meeting in May 1991, a discussion was held on the representation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Participants' Meetings. It was decided by the meeting that arrangements should be made prior to the semi-annual Participants' Meetings for consultations among NGOs interested in the GEF. The aim of the consultations was to provide an opportunity for NGOs to express their views about GEF activities and to have a substantive dialogue with Implementing Agencies about GEF projects and policies. GEF Participants were invited to attend the NGO consultations.
2. This arrangement led to a series of five NGO consultations. The format and agenda of these sessions were the object of continuous refinement. The consultations evolved into a meeting among the NGOs coming from different regions of the world where common positions and presentations to Participants were formulated. An opportunity was provided during the Participants' Meetings for a presentation of the NGO views. The GEF provided travel grants for 15 to 20 recipient country NGO representatives to attend. Initially managed by the Administrator's office, the selection process for travel awards was later taken over by the NGOs themselves.
3. After the Participants Meeting in Beijing in May 1993, a tripartite task force was established to review the NGO consultations. The Task Force was composed of representatives from Participants, NGOs and the Implementing Agencies. The task force agreed:
 - a. that the NGO consultations had evolved into a useful forum for promoting a dialogue among Participants, NGOs and Implementing Agencies;
 - b. that the NGO consultations needed to be organized in a more professional and systematic manner; and
 - c. that an agenda should be prepared in advance for each consultation, NGOs should prepare and circulate written statements of their views prior to a consultation, and Implementing Agencies and governments participating in the consultations should be prepared to present their positions and responses to NGO concerns.
4. In November 1993, the GEF Administrator's Office prepared a paper on Participation by Non-Governmental Organizations in the Global Environment Facility (document GEF/PA.93/2). This paper examines the role and participation of NGOs in other intergovernmental bodies, including UN organizations, multilateral development banks and funds, and international treaty processes. Several options were proposed in the paper for establishing a more systematic relationship between the GEF and the NGOs. Box 1 presents a summary of the recommendations of that paper.

Box 1

Recommendations from the Paper on Participation by Non-Governmental Organizations in the Global Environment Facility

1. A more systematic approach to NGO involvement and consultation at the national and local level throughout the project cycle should be instituted.
2. Guidelines for such consultation based on an identification of "best practices" should be developed.
3. Opportunities should be provided within the GEF for collaboration with regional NGOs and their networks.
4. Consideration should be given to expanding the Small Grants Programme in light of the lessons learned from its experience during the Pilot Phase.
5. The semi-annual consultations with NGOs should be continued in conjunction with the Participants meetings.
6. When deemed appropriate by the Government concerned, NGOs could be included in the national delegation to Participants meetings.
7. A formal mechanism for interchange between NGOs and the Participants meetings should be established.
8. NGO links with the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel should be strengthened.
9. Dissemination of information to the NGO community at all levels (national, regional and international) should be improved in order to give effect to the principle of transparency and to improve the effectiveness of the GEF.

5. It is clear that while the GEF during its pilot phase had few formal rules on NGO participation, NGOs were involved in a broad range of GEF activities from general policy discussions through to project development at the local level. Much of the involvement of NGOs was done in an *ad hoc* manner. With the restructuring of the GEF, it is timely to consider a more systematic relationship between the GEF and NGOs.

6. The benefits to be derived from NGO participation in GEF project activities have been clearly recognized in the Instrument for the Establishment of the GEF. Paragraph 5 of the Instrument calls for GEF operational policies to "provide for full disclosure of all non-confidential information, and consultation with, and participation as appropriate of, major groups and local communities throughout the project cycle." These issues will be more fully explored by the Council when it considers issues related to the GEF project cycle and operational

modalities, including questions of NGO participation in project identification, preparation and implementation.

7. This note is limited to addressing options for NGO interaction with the GEF in connection with Council meetings. The options presented in this note take into account pilot phase experience, including the recommendations of the tripartite task force referred to above, and the information and recommendations provided in document GEF/PA.93/2.

II. OPTIONS FOR NGO CONSULTATIONS

8. The experience of the NGO consultations during the pilot phase has led a significant number of Participants to conclude that the consultations provided a valuable opportunity for governments and the Implementing Agencies to interact with NGOs and to benefit from the views and comments of NGOs on GEF activities. The Council may wish to continue the NGO consultations, while recognizing that it needs to provide guidance on the frequency and scope of such consultations.

9. With regard to scope, it is recommended that the consultations be structured along the lines agreed to by the tripartite task force in May 1993 so as to give particular attention to the GEF joint work program and operational strategies. Invitations to the consultations should be extended to "accredited NGOs" (see paragraph 10 below), although the Council may wish to consider limiting the size of the consultations. Efforts should be made to ensure balanced representation of diverse interests and groups, in particular representation of NGOs from developing countries.

10. As is the practice in many international organizations, it is recommended that the Council or the Secretariat approve a list of "accredited NGOs" whose purposes and activities are related to the GEF. To be included on the list, an NGO should submit a request to the Secretariat, stating its interest in the GEF and identifying its competence and expertise in matters relevant to the GEF.

11. In considering the frequency of consultations, three options (or combinations thereof) may usefully be considered.

Option 1. NGO consultations should be organized before each regular (semi-annual) Council meeting.

Under this option, the Secretariat would organize an NGO consultation twice a year. The consultations would occur immediately prior to the regular meetings of the Council (the timing of which should be considered by the Council at its first meeting). It is also anticipated that the GEF joint work programs would be considered by the Council at the regular meetings.

Option 2. An annual NGO consultation should be organized in conjunction with a regular Council meeting.

It might be considered sufficient to organize one NGO consultation each year. An annual consultation may be larger than the semi-annual ones envisaged under option 1. If this option were preferred, it is recommended that the consultation be convened in conjunction with the Council meeting that will consider the Annual Report of the Council. This will allow the NGOs to express their views on the report to be presented to the Council and to contribute to a review of GEF activities.

Option 3. NGO consultations should be organized regionally.

A variation of either option 1 or 2 would be to organize NGO consultations in various regions as opposed to in conjunction with GEF Council meetings. The consultations could be organized on a rotational basis in different geographic regions, and efforts could be made to identify convenient opportunities with which to link the consultations so as to minimize travel and costs for NGOs (for example, NGO consultations could be held in conjunction with a Convention meeting or another NGO event.) The principal advantage of this option is that it might broaden NGO interactions and outreach.

III. OPTIONS FOR NGO OBSERVERS OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

12. NGOs have consistently expressed their interest in being able to observe the GEF Council meetings. From discussions on this matter during the restructuring of the GEF, there did not seem to be a consensus on this proposal. Should the Council agree that in addition to, or instead of, or instead, the consultations discussed above it would be appropriate to invite NGOs to observe the Council meeting, the Council will need to provide guidance on arrangements to facilitate NGO representation.

13. Three options for NGO representation are proposed:

Option 1 NGO representatives from the list of "accredited NGOs", taking into account any criteria established by the Council, would be invited to observe the Council meeting. The Secretariat could be requested to determine which NGO representatives should be invited or, alternatively, the NGOs could be invited to select their representatives themselves.

Option 2 NGO representatives would be invited to observe Council discussions on the work program and projects, but not other Council discussions.

Option 3 There would be no NGO representation at Council meetings beyond the NGO consultations .

14. Should the Council decide to invite NGOs to observe its meetings, and taking into account the structure of the Council itself (32 Members representing constituency groupings of Participants), NGO observers at Council meetings should be "representative" of the wider NGO community. The number of NGO observers to be invited would need to be determined by the Council, but it should be consistent with the efficient management and functioning of the Council's work. It is suggested that 8 to 10 observers be considered. This number is based on the following distribution: 4 NGO representatives from recipient country geographic regions (Africa, Asia and Pacific, Latin American and Caribbean, and Central, Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union); 3 NGO representatives from non-recipient country geographic regions (Asia and Pacific, Europe and North America); and 1 to 3 NGO representatives with competence and interest in the substantive focal areas of the GEF.

IV. FUNDING OF NGO CONSULTATIONS AND OBSERVERS

15. The Secretariat will need guidance as to the funding of NGO consultations. In the past, total costs incurred have been included in the administrative budget of the GEF Administrator. Such costs included:

- a. Travel and per diem of representatives of NGOs from recipient countries (approximately 15 individuals);
- b. Interpretation;
- c. Documentation preparation and distribution;
- d. Rental of conference facilities; and
- e. Staff preparation time.

16. Funding for participation of NGO representatives from recipient countries has been very much appreciated by the beneficiaries of such funding, and it is clear that their participation in the NGO consultations was dependent on the provision of outside resources. If a priority objective of the consultations is to allow the Council to benefit from a diversity of views and expertise, serious consideration must be given to the provision of adequate financial resources to prepare the consultations and to facilitate participation. Three alternatives may be considered:

- Option 1 Funding of consultations and NGO representatives from recipient countries should be included in the administrative budget of the Secretariat.*
- Option 2 A separate project should be approved to cover the funding of the consultations and NGO representatives from recipient countries.*
- Option 3 A voluntary fund should be established to cover the funding of the consultations and NGO representatives from recipient countries. Contributions to the fund should be sought from Participants, NGOs, and private foundations. The Secretariat could be requested to explore the feasibility of establishing and managing such voluntary fund.*