

**RESPONSE FROM THE GEF SECRETARIAT AND THE IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES TO  
QUERIES RAISED BY THE US COUNCIL MEMBER REGARDING THE PROPOSED COUNTRY  
SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR FOCAL POINTS AND COUNCIL MEMBERS**

**Background**

1. UNDP and UNEP, in collaboration with the GEF Secretariat, proposes to fund an enhanced focal point support program through a project, the *GEF Country Support Program for Focal Points* which is included in the work program.
2. At the June 2005 meeting, the Council approved paper GEF/C.25/9, *Elements for Strengthening National Focal Points and Enhancing Constituency Coordination in GEF Recipient Countries*. As indicated in the paper, the independent evaluation of the GEF Council Member and Focal Point Support Program (GEF/C.23/Inf.12) made it clear that there is a continuing need, particularly among less developed recipient countries, to strengthen GEF coordination at the country level, raise awareness of GEF priorities, policies and programs, strengthen stakeholders involvement in global environmental programs, and enhance the capacity of those countries to develop and implement GEF projects.
3. The previous focal point support program provided \$8,000 a year for focal points, and these funds were to facilitate the work of the focal points in building country ownership. The evaluation revealed that while the focal points benefited from and appreciated this facilitation support, it was not sufficient, and there was still an on-going need to provide training and capacity building to focal points. The evaluation report also recommended that the Support Program be more sharply focused on strengthening the institutional capacity for inter-governmental coordination on global environmental issues.
4. In response to these findings, the Implementing Agencies, in collaboration with the GEF Secretariat have developed a more comprehensive and integrated proposal composed of three elements - (a) direct support to build capacity of focal points, similar, to the previous \$8,000 focal point support program, but with a slightly different focus – a clear emphasis on the use of these funds for national capacity building activities, (b) knowledge management and (c) training workshops.

**Proposed activities are capacity building activities**

5. The focus of the project - and in particular of Component 1 - is to build capacity to structure and support an inter-ministerial /cross-sectoral coordination process for global environmental programs. The new and enhanced support program would be integrated within a more comprehensive and wider reaching capacity building program for focal points. We believe that this approach will have clear impact and ensure crucial linkages. In doing this, we are also strengthening institutional capacity for coordination rather than the previous emphasis on support to "individual" focal points.

6. While certain costs within the proposed capacity building program for focal points may be administrative in nature, these administrative activities cannot be considered in isolation. They are integral to meeting the objective of strengthening the capacity of the national focal point and should be included within the overall capacity building program. They are also essential to the delivery of this capacity building program and to fostering an environment at the national level that is conducive to achieving sustainable results.

7. The GEF Secretariat has confirmed with the World Bank's Legal Department that the proposed activities are not administrative in nature and therefore cannot be incorporated into the corporate budget. Further, the World Bank's Legal Department advised the Secretariat that it could not include these activities in its corporate budget as the Secretariat is not permitted under its mandate to carry out non-administrative activities, and that such activities should be incorporated into a project and implemented through one or more of the Implementing Agencies.

### **Proposed activities benefit global environment**

8. The activities which the GEF national focal points carry out also contribute to integration and mainstreaming of global environmental activities into national sustainable development plans. Thus, all support provided to focal points under the proposed proposal is intended to build country capacity which can provide long term benefits to countries and contribute to the sustainability of GEF efforts. The types of activities to be funded under this program will facilitate capacity building of national focal points and other stakeholders to develop, implement, coordinate and monitor GEF activities.

### **Targeting resources to LDCs and SIDS**

9. With regard to the issue of targeting resources to countries that are most in need, the experience of the previous program has shown that all recipient countries are able to benefit at some level from these resources. While some countries spent the funds on outreach and dissemination, others used the funds to develop databases and websites. Both these activities and these tools have contributed significantly to integration and mainstreaming of global environmental activities. There is therefore still a need for these minimal resources in all recipient countries, and countries will use these resources based on their specific needs and absorptive capacity. Each country will be expected to direct the resources to addressing its priority needs.

### **Participation of Familiarization Meetings**

10. The participation of select focal points at GEF familiarization meetings is seen as an opportunity for focal points to learn more about how the GEF operates and thus be able to be more effective at the national level in delivering the GEF's message on the need for national level integration and coordination in order to leverage resources and achieve results. Thus, this is considered a capacity building activity and not an administrative expense.

**Historic data on amount requested for support to focal points**

11. The budget attached as Annex C indicates the budget breakdown for the three components of the program. The budget in line 1 of the first component is based on the same amount provided under the previous program - \$8,000 per year per focal point. Line 2 does include an additional amount for participation of focal points at constituency meetings.