

Draft Statement by the Indian Head of Delegation at the Sixth Assembly of the Global Environment Facility

Chairperson, Excellencies, GEF CEO, heads of delegations, representatives of international organizations, representatives of civil society organizations, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of India and 1.3 billion people, I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Vietnam for their kind hospitality extended in hosting this Assembly and to the people of Da Nang for the warm welcome.

As a developing country participant in the GEF, India has played a significant role in GEF's evolution from its pilot phase in 1991 to its emergence as an important partnership of 183 countries, international institutions, CSOs and private sector, working in the forefront of global environmental protection. India, as donor and recipient, continues to be strongly supportive of GEF's work as a unique multilateral funding mechanism helping developing countries to meet the objectives of the international environmental conventions and agreements.

India was the global host of 2018 World Environment Day which took place on June 5, 2018 with plastic pollution as its main theme. Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on the world to do more to tackle plastic pollution and other environmental issues. He said that India being the fastest-growing economy in the world today, we are committed to realizing the standards of our people in a way that is sustainable and green." Also, one of the first initiatives of the PM after

coming to power was the Clean India Campaign, and he has reiterated that environmental degradation hurts the poor and vulnerable the most. It is therefore duty of each one of us to ensure that material prosperity does not compromise our environment." India is committed to follow the green path in its development efforts.

As we come to the successful completion of the GEF-6 program cycle, I congratulate GEF CEO and the Trustee for the GEF-7 Replenishment. I am happy to announce that India has decided to strengthen its support to GEF-7 with a 25% increase over its contribution to GEF-6. We will now provide USD 15 million to GEF-7. We wish GEF family the very best in effective implementation of the programs in GEF-7 cycle with a renewed focus on demonstrable outcomes and scalable impact. Excellencies, ultimately, it is the impact which will sustain any or all of our efforts.

Given its huge size and attendant challenges, India is also a major recipient of GEF financing and knowledge. We endorse the continued focus on Biodiversity and Land degradation. We believe Himalayan Biomes deserve global attention, being of critical importance as one of the recognised biodiversity hotspots in the world. We urge GEF-7 programming to support countries of Himalayan region in achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Target. Similarly, we welcome renewed focus on Land Degradation in GEF-7 and commitment to meet the Bonn Challenge to restore 150 million hectares of deforested and degraded land by 2020. Although the reduced support for climate change in GEF-7 would certainly change the complexion and scale of impact of GEF program, yet we do hope that appropriate action in other focal areas will generate climate co-benefits. We also welcome the

thoughtful selection of the Impact programs and hope to contribute to their great success. We also hope to see assistance to countries for improving conditions of cities including its air quality through the sustainable cities program and other thematic areas.

Marine pollution is a serious global problem, and India has long coastline of almost 7500 km. India has joined the United Nations' 'Clean Seas' programmes to monitor marine pollution. It is therefore an area of criticality for GEF to work on with countries sharing coastlines.

India supports the achievement of broader sound management of chemicals and waste and is committed to eliminating the most harmful chemicals which are covered by the Stockholm Convention, the Minamata Convention and the Montreal Protocol.

The GEF policy direction clearly enunciates the criticality of national ownership of the GEF program for maximising sustainable benefits. This is something we welcome and therefore strongly pitch for the inclusion of National Agencies in GEF Partnership to build suitable capacities in the country and improve the efficiency of GEF cycle. We need to make GEF more agile and responsive to recipient demands and therefore look forward to additional policy measures to enhance the operational efficiency and transparency of the GEF. At the end of the day, the best programme is one that is country driven.

We also urge the proposed private sector advisory committee to consider the primacy of Government action in many of the focal areas of GEF. Private sector participation strategy should be nuanced

and orchestrated. We do realize that private sector brings in a fresh perspective, which is beneficial. But, availability of concessional resources is limited and the overall responsibilities relating to environment lie with the public sector in developing countries. GEF while engaging with the private sector should ensure additionality, accountability and country ownership. Let me again reiterate that two critical elements to achieving our goal will continue to be Technology and Finance.

India has achieved significant impacts through the Small Grants Projects. We appreciate the potential benefits to be gained from enhancing community engagement in GEF programs and advocate capacity building and appropriate role for civil society organisations that have experience and commitment to the local situations. India would like to reinforce GEF's support for SGPs in India for GEF 7.

We strongly believe that GEF can deliver on all its promises and meet high expectations expressed by Participants in Replenishment discussions. We commit India's support to the GEF and its team very ably led from the front by its CEO Ms. Naoko Ishii.

India on its part would continue to lead by example – never flinch on its part to live up to its responsibility because we strongly believe that India has to be an integral part of the global thought process. We have done well- a greater cohesive togetherness can help us do better.