

GEF General Assembly

Statement on behalf of the constituency by Bruno Oberle, State Secretary, Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland¹

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

I'm very pleased to speak in the name of our GEF constituency, namely the countries Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Switzerland here at this 5th General Assembly of the GEF after a very successful replenishment negotiation process, which was finalized in Geneva.

The 6th replenishment negotiation process of the GEF took place during a very difficult but also very crucial period of time. Difficult, because amongst many traditional donor countries, several are confronted with economic and financial challenges. Meeting these challenges and responding to the financial needs to protect our planet will be demanding for those countries as well as for all the others. Mobilizing funds for the global environment is never an easy task. This is particularly true for all the developing countries, who contribute to the replenishment of the GEF since a number of years on a voluntary basis. We highly appreciate those efforts, which go well beyond symbolic contributions. We have noted that the world has profoundly changed since the foundation of the GEF in 1991. Hence the efforts to broaden the donor base of the GEF remains important and will become even more significant in the future.

¹ Check against delivery.

It is also a crucial moment in time for the development of future multilateral systems for the environment. The scientific evidence leaves no doubts: We need strong, coordinated and rapid actions on all levels – multilateral, national, regional and local – to change the trends which endanger life on earth.

We, as a unique constituency representing donor and recipient countries, are therefore very enthusiastic about the positive outcome of the replenishment process and would like to thank everyone for their great efforts to climb this high mountain and tackle the various challenges. We also note that the countries of the constituency have benefited from the collaboration with the GEF and the GEF agencies and look forward to enhance this work for example in the Aral Sea region.

The GEF was one of the first international funds dedicated exclusively to the promotion of investments for the global environment. Since its foundation other funds were created. In addition traditional bilateral and multilateral development funding institutions have increased their funding for environmental issues. This is great news and it proves the strong relation between environmental protection and social as well as economic development. 2005 Kofi Annan said “Our efforts to defeat poverty and pursue sustainable development will be in vain if environmental degradation and natural resource depletion continue unabated.” I fully share this view and would like to recall that the environment is not a cost factor, but provides benefits and is the very foundation of well being and development of mankind.

The GEF rests unique and is today more important than ever for the global environment, because:

- its approach moves beyond sectors and facilitates synergies
- it works within a network with its specialized implementing agencies and in a dialogue with civil society and the private sector
- it tackles the root causes of environmental degradation – especially within the GEF-6 strategy - and not only its effects
- and finally, it is the connection between the environmental conventions and the programs and projects in the field.

Along these lines we encourage you all to approve the 6th GEF replenishment and GEF 2020, the long term strategy of the GEF. It will support the GEF in its activities to address the root causes of environmental degradation. We are convinced that the greater differentiation, the improved co-financing policy, the enhanced inclusion of the private sector and the improvement of the project cycle will lead to better impacts in the field.

I would like to close with a statement of Nelson Mandela: “Vision without action, is merely dreaming. Action without vision, is just passing time. But with vision and action, we can change the World!”

Let's do our share to change the world.