



STATEMENT

BY

**THE HEAD OF DELEGATION FOR ZIMBABWE
AMBASSADOR GRACE TSITSI MUTANDIRO**

AT

THE GEF ASSEMBLY

23 - 28 JUNE 2018

Da Nang, Vietnam

The Chair of the GEF Assembly

The Prime Minister of Vietnam His Excellency, Nguyen Xuân Phúc

Heads of States and Governments here present

The Chief Executive Officer of the GEF - Dr Naoko Ishii

Hon Ministers here present

Global and Local Business leaders here present

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me at the outset to express gratitude to the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for the warm and familial hospitality extended to my delegation since our arrival. I also wish to express our appreciation to the GEF Secretariat for the successful hosting of this important conference. We are indeed delighted to be part of the Sixth Assembly of the Global Environmental Facility in this beautiful lush city of Da Nang.

The GEF Assembly is convening at a time of increased threats to the global environment and our human wellbeing. We have now witnessed a proliferation of environmental challenges such as pollution, deforestation, land degradation, poaching against the background of a changing climate, that impact lives of communities who bear the brunt of increased negative environmental changes. Environmental issues therefore should no longer be about endless negotiations but concrete action that requires broad approaches in addressing the drivers of environmental change.

In addressing these challenges the focus on results and provision of predictable adequate and timely means of implementation is critical and the GEF has a central role to play. Zimbabwe is therefore appreciative of the work done so far by the GEF in availing financial resources to achieve global environmental benefits.

The Sixth Overall Performance Study by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office informs us that the GEF has continued to demonstrate its transformational impact. Indeed, the GEF has a comparative advantage in terms of its broad coverage of environmental issues, having more than 25 years of experience in global environmental financing with results to show for it.

Zimbabwe welcomes the outcome of the sixth Overall Performance Study (OPS 6) by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office that has shown an improvement in the performance rating for Southern Africa compared to the regional average. This is indeed an indication of our commitment to contribute significantly to global environmental benefits. We hope that, in future, such performance ratings can be used as significant determinants for resource allocations over and above the traditional indices.

For Zimbabwe, the GEF has been and still is the largest partner for environmental management. We have implemented about 42 projects since joining the GEF in 1994. We have received about \$158.94 million and attracted about \$1.2billion of co-financing to date. Funding from GEF is addressing many institutional gaps in the management of key ecosystems to achieve global environmental benefits. This is critical as Zimbabwe is home to key ecosystems of international significance such as Biosphere Reserves, National Parks, World Heritage Sites, Ramsar Sites and Key Bird Areas. Management of such complex ecosystems requires huge financial resources and planning.

The successful conclusion of the GEF 7 replenishment negotiations has provided impetus to our efforts to achieve global environmental benefits. We appreciate that some of our concerns as recipient countries were taken on board during the replenishment process.

We appreciate that allocation of scarce resources is a difficult balancing act, we are therefore pleased that some key working elements from previous cycles such as the the STAR framework, Country Support programme and the Small Grants Programme have been maintained.

For Zimbabwe, the Small Grants Programme, Country Support Programme and STAR frameworks represent the key strengths and comparative advantage of the GEF, as they collectively enhance country-ownership, predictability and results. However their implementation should be continuously reviewed and assessed to enhance transparency, flexibility and ease of access. They should also be reviewed to ensure compliance with convention guidance and national priorities. It is, however, our plea that the GEF7 country allocations should not go below the GEF6 allocations, given that momentum has already been built through our current GEF country portfolios. Any attempt to reduce and negatively readjust allocations will therefore dampen national efforts towards the desired Global Environmental Benefits.

Whilst we welcome the continuation of key policies such as the STAR, we are still not clear about the future of the grant based approach as we are witnessing a subtle and gradual shift to other non grant instruments. We are noticing continued attempts to impose additional requirements on recipient countries to access GEF financing. While certain arrangements such as investment mobilised and optimisation are important aspects of grant financing, we are concerned that they will soon be used to disadvantage some recipient countries. These extra burdens and the continued decline in pledges will dampen the desire to achieve global environmental benefits.

Zimbabwe therefore requests the GEF Assembly to reaffirm the Rio Declaration principles which are also enshrined in all conventions to which the GEF serves as a financial mechanism. While we appreciate the need to be innovative and show ambition to achieve transformational change, however, the desire for transformational change should not make us lose sight of our mission and negatively affect that which is working.

Environmental conservation is an expensive undertaking which requires a collaborative effort. As such, to achieve transformational change the GEF needs to foster strategic partnerships with other financiers including the private sector. A broader, clear and deeper engagement of the private sector is therefore a prerequisite for the success of the GEF. However we should be cautious that the GEFs engagement with private sector should not affect the grant approach and country allocations. GEF private sector engagement should not mean GEFs gradual and subtle shift away from grants. The GEF should therefore remain a financial mechanism for the conventions and should be guided in its operations by convention resolutions.

Ladies and gentlemen, global benefits will not be achieved without building the capacity of recipient countries, and therefore the Country Support programme is a strategic area which the GEF should prioritise. Currently capacity and monopoly on programs design, implementation and evaluation is resident with Implementing Agencies.

We need capacity and support to be able to absorb the funding and cumulatively produce the required Global Environmental Benefits. The Assembly should ensure that the GEF prioritises capacity building for recipient countries to ensure country ownership.

Zimbabwe commits to ensuring the achievement of global environmental benefits. We will endeavour to avoid irreversible environmental damage, maintain essential environmental processes and preserve the broad spectrum of biological diversity for current and future generations. In this regard, we are proud to associate with the global movement towards this worthy agenda.

Esteemed delegates, the Zimbabwe Government is appreciative of the GEF Secretariat, donor countries and GEF Implementing Agencies continued support and commitment to environmental sustainability in developing countries such as Zimbabwe. Given the magnitude of the global challenges, a lot more support and resources are required to effectively mitigate these challenges.

I thank you all