



Eye on Earth Summit 2015

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and friends; Good morning to all of you.

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today. I want to congratulate the organizers for hosting this important forum at such a critical time for our planet.

I especially want to thank our host, H.E. Razan Halifa Al Mubarak for her tireless leadership of and commitment to environmental protection.

Ten days ago, world leaders gathered in New York and adopted an ambitious, bold and universal sustainable development agenda.

The Sustainable Development Goals that were agreed there hold the promise of a fresh start for our planet

I have three takeaways from the NY Summit that I believe are relevant to our meeting today.

First, the SDGs clearly recognize that the health of the global commons—from land and forests to oceans and climate – is essential to achieve our ambitions for development and prosperity. We are pushing the earth to its limits - its planetary boundaries - and urgent coordinated actions are needed to get it back into a safe operating place.

Second, there was consensus on the need for integrated and multi-stakeholder approaches to deal with the challenges before us.

Third, in New York, there were also many references on the expectation that access to data and information can help achieve the SDGs.

Of particular note, a global partnership on sustainable data was launched. I am pleased to see some partners in this initiative such as Eye on Earth, UNEP, IUCN, WRI, are here today.

A friend of mine working for the new initiative reminded me that we are entering a period when everyone has a mobile phone, when satellites can give us high resolution data of any part of the planet every three days,

and when two thirds of any new world data comes from surveillance cameras, sensors and social media.

All in all, this has remarkable potential.

At the same time, for those of us working with developing countries on global environmental issues, it is absolutely clear that many governments and communities are not fully equipped with the capability of using data and information.

In my remarks I want to touch upon two things; first, the potential of data which I have observed from the GEF supported portfolio, and second, what needs to be done to make best use of data in order to achieve sustainable development.

Let me start with the potential power of data. It is no doubt the data availability has already enhanced the quality of GEF supported projects in two ways.

Number 1, **knowing more can lead to better policies.**

Consider data available from satellites. High resolution data from NASA, for example, can lead to sustainable landscape planning and

better policy choices on ecosystem based adaptation, climate smart agriculture and better disaster risk management. We are in conversation with colleagues such as Robbie from Planet Lab, who will speak later, how we can make best use of satellite data, whose potential is enormous and cost is coming down dramatically.

My colleagues working on the oceans are also excited that technology now gives us more data to monitor the location of fish stocks which can help create better policy for preventing over-fishing and marine conservation.

Number two, reliable, timely information can lead to better enforcement of agreed actions.

For example, Global Forest Watch, initiated by WRI, and of which we are a partner, can greatly enhance the ability of forest monitoring worldwide, and the enforcement of deforestation projects.

Another area where improved information flows can lead to better enforcement is in the area of international wildlife tracking.

At the GEF we're working with a wide range of partners to invest in an important new program to help stop the killing, the trafficking and the demand for wildlife products.

Now let me move on to the second part of my remarks.

I have four points.

First, we need to make sure capacity is built at the community, sub-national and national level of developing countries to fully benefit from newly sourced data.

All of the exciting potential we are talking about will be wasted if we do not pay attention to accessibility and affordability of data.

Within our own portfolio at the GEF, we are paying extra-attention to help augment the capability of counties in this regard. However the challenge is massive and we need a more systematic approach to address this gap issue. That is why we are here today.

At the GEF we have revamped our effort of better knowledge management, with the clear goal to codify, analyze and offer to the wider global community better information and knowledge from the GEF supported portfolio. Better data is an indispensable part of this endeavor.

Second, we need to deepen and broaden the analysis needed to promote integrated approaches for transformational change.

More data is great but more analysis is also needed to make better use of data. I mentioned in my opening that one of my takeaways from NY is consensus on an integrated, multi-stakeholder approach.

It is easy to say “we need integrated approaches”, but how to apply this in actual policy-making is not. We need to bring science together with data so that policymakers can have a better understanding of what is the most effective entry point to address issues requiring integrated solutions. I firmly believe that such an approach will help lay the necessary foundation for science based solutions.

Third, we need to employ multi-stakeholder, partnership approaches to fully utilize the potential of data.

Such platforms are hugely enhanced by the availability of data and information. Some examples we at the GEF are participating in include:

- Greening the supply chain of global commodities -- forest monitoring

- Sustainable cities initiative –City associations have come up with methods to measure greenhouse gases at cities level. Such methodologies need to be increasingly shared to maximize impact.
- Coastal fisheries
- Marine debris

Last but not least, we need to find ways to trigger the necessary behavioral change.

Better informed governments, business and citizens can take decisions on a daily basis that can benefit them and the environment.

Critically, more of the right data combined with better communication may have a high chance of behavioral change. This won't be easy. But the renewed global commitment to deliver the SDGs will help make it happen.

I believe fundamentally that with the right information and incentives decisions makers at every level of society and citizens themselves will make the right choices. We have to. There is no second chance.

Thank you