




Time for Transformational Change

THE ROLE OF THE GEF

Vision Statement of Dr. Naoko Ishii
GEF CEO and Chairperson



A night sky with a green aurora borealis and a bright star. The aurora is a vibrant green light that stretches across the sky, with some darker green and blue tones. A bright star is visible on the left side of the image. The background is a dark blue and black sky with many small stars. The bottom of the image shows the silhouettes of trees against the aurora.

Bolder and more imaginative solutions are required to meet the challenges facing the global environment.

As the new CEO and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility, I am offering you this vision statement as a compass to guide the GEF partnership on a course towards greater impact. And through the coming years, I will engage with stakeholders about how to strengthen the key strategic themes that I consider essential for the success of the GEF.

Goals

FOR THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

The coming decade presents challenges unprecedented in the history of humankind. We have already reached or exceeded the carrying capacity of several of the earth's ecosystems. The next ten years will likely see another 700 million people added to the world population, more than one billion additional middle-class consumers, and 50 percent growth in economic output. Under such pressures, incremental environmental strategies alone will simply not suffice. These changes compel the GEF to equip itself to promote transformational change. We must align ourselves with a vision for a future world in which: 1) citizens recognize the fundamental links between environment and development, and governments embed natural resource constraints into their decision-making; 2) the value of

natural capital is incorporated in the way decisions are made and progress is measured; 3) all key actors – from local communities to national governments, the private sector, civil society organizations, and indigenous peoples – recognize the part they must play in finding and implementing solutions; 4) international environmental treaties are effective, fair and able to meet their agreed goals and targets; and 5) resources are adequately mobilized and deployed towards programs that reflect the lessons learned from successes and failures. These must be our goals.



Vision

FOR THE GEF

The GEF is uniquely positioned to support the stewardship of the global environmental commons. Over the past 20 years, the GEF has accumulated an invaluable body of experience and knowledge, strengthened its culture of promoting innovation, enhanced and grown its network of agencies, and continued enjoying political

legitimacy by serving the key multilateral environmental conventions. This foundation provides the GEF with unparalleled influence and capacity to take a leadership role in finding and implementing bold solutions to global environmental challenges. Specifically, the GEF can play the following roles.



The GEF is and must remain a champion of the Global Commons

Our core message is that there can be no separation between development and environment, as they are co-dependent. Healthy ecosystems are essential to secure human health, food, energy and water, and ultimately sustainable development. It is startling, however, that such ideas have yet to be fully mainstreamed and that their adoption continues to be hampered by tough barriers in the political decision-making process. This is where the GEF comes in as a champion of the global commons. The tragedy of the commons was plaguing the Danube River Basin for 150 years before the GEF stepped in to reverse serious environmental havoc stretching through 2,780 kilometers and 19 countries, many of which belonged to the former Soviet bloc. It took 15 years of a multi-faceted program to turn the Danube into a model of integrated river basin management. Most significantly, it created a common platform, and helped bring political stability to a region beset by prevailing distrust. I will ensure that the GEF fully utilizes its convening power to bring key players on board and create the context within which good decisions can be made to confront destructive trends, and to promote lasting change based on mutual trust.

The GEF is and must remain an innovator

The GEF was born with a mission to support innovation, and must remain a strong promoter of innovation for global environmental benefits. It must use its resources and network to introduce innovation in the design of programs and policies in a manner that encourages early adoption and scaling up. To be credible, the GEF must always operate from a position of technical excellence and world-class experience. It is vital that the GEF be strengthened to rise to the forefront of knowledge management pertaining to the stewardship of the global environmental goods.



The GEF is and must remain the partner of choice for environmental benefits

The GEF's success will depend on its ability to forge productive, trusting and catalytic partnerships with its member countries, the private sector, civil society, the scientific community, and its agencies. The Agencies have been providing a steady stream of innovative ideas. Recipient governments have increased their political commitment, and seen their capacity considerably strengthened. But there remains much scope for improvement. We must ensure that transaction costs within the GEF network do not reach a point where the GEF is no longer an attractive option. It is time for recipient countries to demand that partners maximize the value of their engagement, explore synergies, and promote the generation of multiple benefits. The GEF will support their endeavor.

The GEF is and must remain a catalyst in the evolving architecture of environmental finance

In order to bring transformational change to the global environment, the public and private sectors must identify new ways of working together. The GEF can be a catalyst by buying out the risk that enterprises face when operating in new and innovative markets such as carbon. The GEF can help industries start sourcing increasing shares of their commodities from certified producers. One such project has doubled the certified supply of cocoa available for the food and chocolate industries while providing significant financial returns to local community producers. Through increasing engagement with the private sector, the GEF can support innovative approaches and play a catalyst role in environmental finance. In particular, climate finance architecture is evolving rapidly as the Green Climate Fund is established. The international community needs a seamless menu of options for identifying relevant technologies, testing and proving them, and scaling up with large-scale investments. Within this range of options, the GEF can play an instrumental role in the initial stage of technology transfer. The GEF needs to work to attract potential new partners capable of adding value to recipient countries.

Principles

IN ACTION

To earn the trust required to maintain a leadership role in the protection of the global environment, the GEF must adhere to principles designed to build confidence and achieve results. Accordingly, I commit myself to leading the GEF under a set of principles with these objectives in mind.

Collective leadership and effective communication

For the GEF to play a leadership role in bringing transformational change, it is essential that it continuously and effectively communicate its vision, strategy and work. We must strengthen existing coalitions between the GEF's network of partners, and cement trust with the Multilateral Environmental Conventions that the GEF serves. Strong partnerships are essential for leveraging finance and developing ideas, but must always be justified by their impacts on the ground.

Promoting country ownership

I strongly believe that country ownership is a key to success, and I will further promote and improve country-led programs to ensure that the GEF helps embed environmental challenges at the core of development plans, explores synergies, and brings successes up to scale. We must ensure that lessons are learned and shared among countries.





Resolute focus on achieving results

The GEF should be known for its deeply entrenched results-oriented culture. Important initiatives are already under way. Now we must step up efforts to convince parties that investing in the GEF provides the best value for the money when it comes to protecting the global commons. Together with the GEF Council, I will assess more closely the results and impacts of the GEF in achieving global environmental benefits.

A lean and efficient organization

An effective organization and a clear understanding of its objectives are essential to meet the needs of all member countries. I will keep the GEF Secretariat lean and efficient. We need to strengthen our Results-Based Management Framework and Knowledge Management Initiative as the GEF continues to scale up and sustain impacts from projects and programs.

GEF 2020 and Beyond

I believe the GEF is uniquely positioned to catalyze the transformational change necessary to help turn around the worrisome trends in the global environment. However, the protection of the global commons, which is the GEF's primary mandate, is not always a critical priority in international politics. Further, the proliferation of funds is complicating the international financial landscape. The fiscal pressures confronting developed countries will remain for the foreseeable future. While the GEF has produced satisfactory results in the past, those pressures make it

all the more important for the GEF to lay out a clear path forward, both in the upcoming GEF6 replenishment and for 2020 and beyond. To position the GEF to play its unique role in this challenging context, I have initiated a process to develop a long-term strategy for the GEF. My hope is that the GEF 2020 Strategy will be inspirational and present a coherent framework for how the GEF can support our member countries and partners achieve the common goal of a sustainable planet.





GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

www.theGEF.org