



REFLECTING ON 30 YEARS OF THE GEF





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This publication is a compilation of contributions from across the GEF partnership. The GEF would like to thank the many individuals that have helped in the design, writing and production.

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FOREWORD

Carlos Manuel Rodriguez
CEO and Chairperson of the
Global Environment Facility

Day by day, week by week, the Earth is demonstrating that we are pushing it beyond tolerable limits. Heatwaves in the Arctic, hurricanes in the tropics, wildfires from Chile to California, floods from China to coastal Australia, famine in Madagascar and drought in the Middle East send the same, urgent message. Meanwhile the COVID-19 pandemic reflects a collision between human systems and nature.

These overlapping crises are systemic, arising from an economic model that aims for unlimited growth focused on individual prosperity and fails to recognize planetary boundaries. Solving them demands an integrated approach that can bring about transformative systems change.

The pandemic has shown that massive changes in human, government, and business behavior can happen quickly. It offers a once-in-a-lifetime chance to build back better by conserving and restoring the world's global commons both at sea and on land, a blue-green recovery that will bring both prosperity and resilience.

Protecting nature—on which half the world's GDP depends—would yield benefits exceeding costs at least fivefold according to recent estimates. Indeed, a transition to a nature positive economy could create up to \$10.1 trillion in annual business value, together with 395 million jobs, by 2030.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is well placed to help catalyze this transformation as it celebrates its 30th anniversary. Since 1991 it has grown from a pilot program into the largest and most experienced multilateral fund dedicated to addressing environmental threats to the planet:

the GEF has provided more than \$21.7 billion in grants, and mobilized an additional \$119 billion in co-financing, for more than 5,000 projects in 170 countries.

The GEF is the only entity with a mandate embracing all facets of a healthy environment: biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, international waters, and chemicals and waste. The GEF it has a strong, diverse, growing—and unique—network of partners including 184 member governments, 18 implementing agencies, over 500 civil society organizations, international bodies and funds, and businesses from every major sector.

The GEF has also been transforming. I was involved in implementing the first GEF project in Costa Rica, my home, in the 1990s, building visitor centers, trails, and other infrastructure in national parks. Now, its latest one—for which I was responsible, as Minister of the Environment—is entitled "transition towards a green economy." So we went from building small but important things to using GEF resources to help change our economic system.

The GEF was one of the first organizations to understand that it must focus on the drivers of environmental degradation, rather than its symptoms and effects. All GEF projects now aim at systems changes. Central to this approach are a growing number of Integrated Programs focused on tackling the drivers of environmental destruction and advancing transformative change across the full spectrum of our mandate.

The GEF has a vital role to play in global efforts to make the world nature positive, carbon neutral, and pollution free by 2030. These are ambitious goals, but as the GEF enters its fourth decade we are better placed than ever to work with our partners to make them a reality.



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HOW IT ALL BEGAN

By Geoffrey Lean

Environmental destruction is as old as civilization itself. Egyptian mummies have lungs blackened by the polluted air they breathed. Rome began building aqueducts for drinking water after dumping its sewage in the Tiber. Forests were felled to make ancient Greek ships and ink—from tree bark—for the bureaucrats of China's Tang dynasty. And Gilgamesh, the world's first known written story, warned against land degradation in Mesopotamia.

Most of the effects, throughout human history have been local. At times—and increasingly—they have spread regionally. Disregarding Gilgamesh's warning caused desertification which helped cause the collapse of Sumerian civilization, while—in our own time—nutrient pollution washing down rivers has produced dead zones in distant seas, and air pollution has fallen as acid rain hundreds of miles away.

But it was not until the 1980s that environmental damage went global. Man-made chemicals were found to be eroding the protective ozone layer. The first, courageous, scientists began warning that climate change was taking place. And it started to become clear that the rate of loss of species was rivalling the great extinctions in the geological record.

Spurred by public concern, the international community was quick to respond. The successful Montreal Protocol, which has so far reduced some hundred ozone-depleting substances by a total of 98 percent, was agreed in 1987 within four years of the discovery of the ozone hole over Antarctica. Negotiations on the UN's Framework

Convention on Climate Change, Convention of Biological Diversity, and Convention to Combat Desertification followed, and these were agreed in 1992. But the world also needed an international financial mechanism to tackle global environmental problems and help implement the new conventions.

In September 1989 France proposed, through its Finance Minister, that the World Bank be provided with additional resources to fund environmental projects, offering to support it with a contribution of 900 million French francs over a three year period. Its proposal, to the Bank's Development Committee, was quickly seconded by Germany. And little more than a year later—in November 1990—after the Bank had developed the proposal, with extensive consultations and negotiations—27 countries, including nine developing ones, agreed to set up a pilot Global Environment Facility (GEF), with about \$1 billion for its first three years.

The money was to be spent in developing countries, and concentrated on four focal areas: climate change, biodiversity, ozone depletion and international waters. And the facility was to be managed by a collective of three well-established organizations: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Bank—referred to as "implementing agencies"

It was a remarkable, as well as a rapid, development. For a start, it took place at a time of financial stringency: the \$1 billion budget represented a considerable vote of confidence in the pilot GEF. Even more significantly, it was set up as a loosely structured, action-orientated

organization which did not involve establishing a new bureaucracy—something very unusual, indeed innovative, for the international community.

It was also exceptional in that—being first proposed by a finance minister, and developed by the World Bank—the new initiative viewed global environmental issues from a primarily financial perspective and was thus designed to prioritize efficient decision-making and cost-effective operations.

The aim was to benefit the whole planet, by enabling developing countries to take actions that they could otherwise not afford, but it was equally important that this should not divert resources from their need to develop. So it was made an absolute requirement that the GEF's funds should be additional development assistance, not redirected from existing provision. Furthermore, they had also to be additional to activities that developing countries were already taking that made national economic sense. So the concept emerged of financing "incremental cost", the extra expense incurred when activities also benefited the global environment, which would otherwise have been discouraged by standard economic analysis.

The pilot GEF started work on its three year, exploratory programme—an opportunity to test innovative approaches since funding projects to improve the global environment was something new. The World Bank acted as both trustee and administrator, and as the main interface with participating countries: UNDP developed most of the capacity building proposals and UNEP concentrated on strategic planning and issues concerning science and technology. It was, in yet another innovation, a remarkable blend of UN and Bretton Woods institutions. The first tranche of projects was presented to the first meeting of the participants in May 1991, which also established the GEF's Small Grants Programme.

This was not much more than a year before the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development—the Earth Summit—met in Rio.

Preparations for the summit—and negotiations on treaties—were well under way, and the fledgling pilot facility was soon involved. Developing countries were increasingly, and rightly, coming center stage and NGOs—who were given a more prominent role at the summit than ever before—were getting more and more engaged. Both were suspicious of the World Bank's dominance of the pilot facility.

In June 1991, developing countries proposed—in the Beijing Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development—that a special Green Fund should be set up "to address problems which are not covered by specific international agreements, such as water pollution, coastal pollution affecting mangrove forest, shortages and degradation of fresh water resources, deforestation, soil loss, land degradation and desertification". It should, they added, "be managed on the basis of equitable representation from developing and developed countries, and should ensure easy access for developing countries."

They were concerned that the GEF might evolve into a substitute for such a fund and there was increasing concern among both participating countries and the implementing agencies that the pilot facility—though negotiated and agreed less than a year before—did not accord with the emerging political realities. At this point the facility got a new Chairman, who was to prove the key figure in its early history. Mohamed El-Ashry—who had been Vice President of the World Resources Institute when it had published a pioneering report calling for an International Environment Facility—was appointed Director of the World Bank's Environment Department in late May 1991 and was confirmed as GEF Chairman that November.

At his first Participants Meeting in December 1991—which was also preceded by another innovation, a consultation with NGOs—Mr El-Ashry, as he recalls, warned that "this animal is not going to fly". Developing countries, in particular, stressed the need for universal membership of the GEF and democratic decision making, and the donors

agreed that a paper giving options of future development should be drawn up.

The paper, duly presented to the next meeting in the following February, gave three alternatives: continuing with the status quo; creating an independent institution; and having a modified, and incrementally evolving, GEF. It was little surprise that the last of these was chosen. Importantly, the meeting also reconfirmed that the GEF's basic mission was "to provide concessionary and additional funding of the incremental costs for achieving global environmental benefits" and, for the present, would be limited to its four focal areas.

How the GEF would be modified, however, had yet to be decided and the Earth Summit was coming closer. In the final weeks before it opened, the negotiators of the climate and biodiversity conventions—due to be adopted in Rio in June—agreed that it should be designated as the interim operator of their agreements' financial mechanisms, on the basis that it would be restructured and its membership made universal. Meanwhile a Participants Meeting in April had begun considering a blueprint for restructuring, called The Pilot Phase and Beyond, and had agreed that "land degradation issues, primarily desertification and deforestation" would also be eligible for funding.

Developing countries—wanting funding for addressing their national environmental problems—had still, however, not formally abandoned their wish for a Green Fund, but developed countries would not consider it. Some solution had to be found if financing the implementation of the conventions—and of Agenda 21, the main program to be adopted at Rio—was to take place. Mr El-Ashry therefore persuaded the President of the World Bank to propose an 'Earth Increment' of additional money to address national environmental problems for the International Development Association (IDA), the part of the bank that assists the poorest countries. Leaders of industrialized countries promised in speeches to support the Increment at Rio, and the impasse was resolved, enabling agreement.

But once the Earth Summit was over, the donors failed to provide any more money for IDA, thus fuelling a sense of betrayal among developing nations. Implementation of Agenda 21 suffered. The GEF was left as the only potential source of new funding, and thus its restructuring—negotiations on which began immediately—became a crucial test of political will.

Eighteen months of intensive talks followed in Abidjan, Rome, Beijing, Washington DC and Paris. They ranged over a wide variety of issues, but developing countries emphasized such principles as universal membership and democratic decision making, while industrialized ones stressed that these needed to be balanced with efficient process for decision-making and cost-effective operations. But gradually the differences narrowed, and in December 1993, the participants assembled again in Cartagena to reach final agreement on four outstanding issues—how often an Assembly of all participating nations should meet, how many countries should sit on the governing council, how it should make decisions, and who should chair it.

The meeting turned out to be a disaster. The atmosphere was edgy from the beginning, but progress was still made until some key delegations were reined back by their governments saying that they had negotiated beyond their instructions, causing collapse. Mr El-Ashry took the view that a collapse would be better than a fudged compromise that left both sides unhappy and unwilling to implement it. So he closed the meeting, changed his flight, and left—despite entreaties—without a setting a date for a future one.

Not just the future of the GEF—which could have become stillborn—but the implementation of the Rio conventions was now at risk, but El-Ashry was determined not to hold another, and make-or-break, meeting until he was sure there was a chance of a final agreement. Indications of that came in February 1994, at a separate meeting of environment ministers at Agra, India. After being briefed on what had happened in Cartagena, they

called for a “speedy and successful conclusion” to the negotiations.

Taking his opportunity, El-Ashry brought together a group of participants who were attending a UN meeting in New York over dinner a few days later, and got their agreement to a full meeting in Geneva less than two weeks beyond that. Seventy-three participating countries turned up, realizing that thus was their last chance for an accord. Innovating again, it was decided, that the bargaining would take place between only three people—one representative each for the developing and OECD countries, with the Mr El-Ashry as moderator.

Even so, and despite a much more constructive atmosphere, little progress was made for a day and a half. As time began to run out, the two representatives finally asked El-Ashry to draw up his own proposals for agreement on the outstanding issues. He presented a two page paper to the whole meeting. It proposed that the Assembly should meet once every three years and that the Council should be made up of 32 seats, 16 for developing countries, 14 for OECD ones and two for economies in transition.

Decisions, where consensus was not reached, were to be made by a double majority vote—the first with an equal vote for each country, the second weighted according to financial contributions needing a 60 percent majority, a highly innovative combination of the UN and Bretton Woods institutions voting systems. And the Chair was to be split. The GEF would be managed by a CEO who is also the Chairman. However, participants would elect one of their number to preside over administrative matters for the duration of each meeting.

When this compromise was presented, the meeting exploded in applause. Agreement was reached, and the delegates proceeded to replenish the GEF’s funds to the tune of some \$2 billion for the next four years.

Since then, under El-Ashry and his successors—Leonard Good, Monique Barbut and Naoko Ishii—the GEF’s four-yearly replenishments (it is at present on its seventh) have grown to over \$4 billion. The original three implementing agencies have increased to 18 including other UN agencies multilateral development banks and NGOs.

It now serves as the financial mechanism for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Minamata Convention on Mercury, as well as for the three treaties agreed in 1992 in Rio and focuses on six main areas—biodiversity, climate change, chemicals and waste, international waters, land degradation, and forests.

Over the last 30 years it has provided more than \$21 billion in grants and mobilized an additional \$114 billion in co-financing for more than 5,000 projects in 170 countries. And, through GEF’s Small Grants Programme, it has provided support to more than 25,000 civil society and community initiatives in 133 nations.

In June 2020 the GEF council elected Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, then Environment and Energy Minister of Costa Rica, as its fifth CEO and Chairperson. During three ministerial terms he had overseen the doubling in size of his country’s forests, the conversion of its electrical sector to 100 percent clean and renewable energy, and the consolidation of a National Park System that has positioned it as a prime ecotourism destination. He had already been involved in the GEF—as the representative of a recipient government, an academic and an NGO official—throughout its history.

Opening his first Council meeting, in December 2020, he paid tribute to the GEF’s “three decades of practical, on-the-ground experience applying innovative solutions to environmental challenges of all kinds” and its “focus on tackling the underlying drivers of environmental degradation, not just their symptoms. And he added: “Our job is more important now than ever!”



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MESSAGE ON THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations

I am pleased to congratulate the Global Environment Facility on its 30th anniversary. The GEF is an important and trusted partner to developing countries, supporting global, national and local efforts to make peace with nature and achieve carbon-neutral, nature-positive and pollution-free societies.

GEF support is vital as countries work to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Amid severely reduced fiscal space, developing countries urgently

need support to address their environmental, social and economic challenges.

During the past two years the Global Environment Facility has helped developing countries hit by the COVID-19 pandemic by focusing on food security, land use and cities. It has also helped to analyze the connection between infectious diseases, deforestation and ecosystem fragmentation.

I commend the work of the Facility, and I urge developed countries to fully support the GEF as it concludes its eighth replenishment period.

December 9, 2021



Photo by Armon Polin/Shutterstock

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Wetlands in PRC. Photo by NiuZhiming/ADB

ADB: SCALING UP NATURE POSITIVE INVESTMENT

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB)

Qingfeng Zhang

Chief, Rural Development and Food Security
Thematic Group, OIC Environment Thematic Group
and ADB/GEF Executive Coordinator

The relationship with the GEF has been the longest running financial partnership within ADB, allowing for increasing synergies across the portfolio.

Achieving Sustainable Development Goals 12, 14 and 15 is becoming ever more urgent as Asia and the Pacific faces the inextricably linked threats of climate catastrophe, environmental decline, and the spread of zoonotic diseases such as COVID-19. Multilateral development financing institutions have a central role to play to scale up nature positive investment and address the drivers that deplete natural assets.

ADB is stepping up. Our Strategy 2030, highlights the importance of tackling climate change, building climate and disaster resilience, and enhancing environmental sustainability. ADB has strengthened its climate targets to ensure that at least 75% of its operations focus on climate adaptation and mitigation efforts, while providing \$80

billion in cumulative climate financing by 2030.¹ Mainstreaming nature into our policies, analysis, assessments, advice and operations is a priority.

Blending ADB's financial resources with GEF grant resources provides substantial opportunities for enhancing local and global environmental benefits. through testing of innovations, scaling up investments, mainstreaming environmentally sustainable approaches, policy reforms and capacity development such as:

Nature Based Solutions: In Chennai, India, GEF funding contributes to the demonstration of a nature-based approach for water body restoration as part of a \$470 million flood risk mitigation investment in the Chennai-Kosasthaiyar River Basin by ADB and Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC)—which will protect 2 million people. Other innovations in this area include applying nature-based solutions for erosion control in the Northern Mountain Provinces of Viet Nam.

Accounting for Nature: In the People's Republic of China (PRC), GEF funding is supporting natural capital accounting and metrics for a "Gross

¹ <https://www.adb.org/news/adb-meets-commitment-double-annual-climate-financing-6-billion>

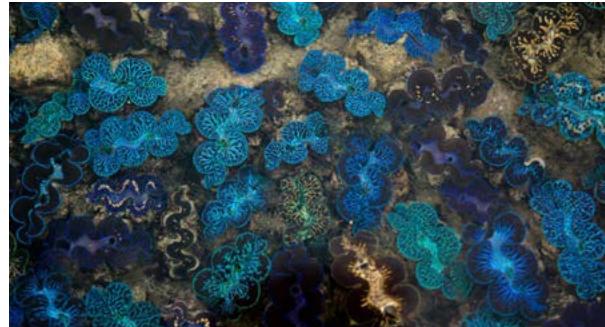
Ecosystem Product" (GEP) allowing for the establishment of market-driven eco-compensation systems that have reduced pollution caused by agricultural field plastics and strengthened the management of over 418,000 hectares of protected area. This is part of a \$300 million investment by ADB and the PRC Government to 'green' agricultural practices in the upper and mid reaches of the Yangtze River Basin.

Sustainable Cities: In four Pacific Least Developed Countries (LDCs)—Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu—ADB and other co-financiers will support around \$145 million in resilient urban water infrastructure, with additionality provided by the GEF to reinforce capacity, standards, and local level adaptation demonstrations such as water quality improvement, rainwater harvesting or payments for forest ecosystems services. GEF is also contributing to a regional support and investment platform for electric mobility linked with ADB's Sustainable Transport Initiative. GEF support also extends to e-mobility action plans and pilot investments in e-2wheel and e-3wheel vehicles for selected cities in India. This complements \$162 million investments by ADB and Energy Efficiency Services Ltd (EESL) in e-4wheel vehicles and charging infrastructure.

Going forward, ADB is excited to deepen its collaboration with the GEF Partnership in a number of priority areas:

Promoting nature positive investments and natural capital lab. Support will be given to enhance performance-based metrics for natural capital accounting to capture the value of ecosystem services as an asset, internalize negative externalities and generate investment opportunities.

Supporting ocean health and sustainable blue economies. ADB has committed to leverage up to \$5 billion in investments by 2024 and is



Coral reef Aitutaki

encouraging investments in several flagship programs—pollution prevention and management (including plastics), building integrated coastal resilience, and blue economy (including fisheries and aquaculture, tourism, marine renewables).

Improving air quality through the transition to cleaner, alternative fuels. Under a revamped Transport Sector Framework, ADB will develop an investment roadmap which will enable developing member countries (DMCs) to transition to net-zero pathways converting towards alternative/cleaner fuels.

Strengthening wetland ecosystems under a Regional Flyways Initiative (RFI). The RFI will support the protection, maintenance, and restoration of critical wetlands in East and Southeast Asia and develop a financing mechanism to support the flyway in the long term.

Advancing sustainable consumption and production. ADB is supporting efforts to transform supply chains in sustainable food systems, infrastructure and construction, chemicals and waste, textiles and transport.

2021 marks the start of the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration—now, more than ever, is the time to reinvigorate our commitments to work together.



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CAF: WORKING STRATEGICALLY TO ENHANCE NATURAL CAPITAL

DEVELOPMENT BANK OF LATIN AMERICA (CAF)

Julián Suárez

Vice President Sustainable Development, CAF

The planet's environmental challenges keep growing in scope and intensity over the decades, and are particularly acute in Latin America. The sheer variety and complexity of interactions between species, however small, keep our ecosystems functional and make our economies and lives productive. The health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic is a reminder of the close relationship between human and planetary health. About 61 percent of all emerging infectious diseases in humans are zoonotic (transmitted from animals to humans). Pathogens thrive where there are changes in the environment, such as deforestation and fragmentation, and when natural ecosystems under pressure from human activity and climate change reach critical levels that threaten their conservation.

Our biodiverse planet is threatened by an unprecedented transformation and exploitation of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, driven mainly by climate change and human activities. According to the 2020 report of the Intergovernmental Science and Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, about 1 million species of animals and

plants, out of an estimated 8 million, are at risk of extinction in the next decade.

The international community through the GEF works strategically to address the growing challenge that economic development poses to the planet's biodiversity and ecosystems. Despite significant advances, global efforts to design and implement practices that enhance natural capital and contribute to its recovery are just beginning and have pending challenges that need to be addressed for long-term prosperity.

CAF, the development bank of Latin America, is committed to the deployment of financial solutions and technical assistance to maintain and increase the productive value of natural capital and the environmental services provided by biodiversity. This task is carried out through our Green Agenda, a cross-cutting corporate vision led by the Vice Presidency for Sustainable Development. It is integrated throughout the organization, which promotes environmentally responsible and low-carbon economic development that strengthens resilience to climate change and catalyzes virtuous cycles of financing for the economic transformation and prosperity of the region.



Photo by Ondrej Prošický/Shutterstock

CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL THE TOUGHEST PROBLEMS, THE GREATEST IMPACT

CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL (CI)

M. Sanjayan
CEO, Conservation International

The GEF has never shied away from the tough problems. I'm reminded of that fact constantly, but it was particularly obvious on my last trip to Liberia with the GEF team.

Liberia is home to some of Africa's most biodiverse forests. They are inhabited by over a dozen primate species along with pygmy hippos and forest elephants. The country also faces massive socio-economic challenges exacerbated by a historic and prolonged civil war, the Ebola crisis and COVID-19. There is unrelenting pressure to convert the remaining fragments of carbon-rich forest into oil palm plantations or charcoal operations. Every forest we stepped into had the telltale smolder of recent attempts to make charcoal.

Like many of the places where Conservation International works, the potential tradeoffs between protecting biodiversity and improving livelihoods in Liberia could not have been clearer. These tradeoffs meant that protecting nature could not be done without also solving the challenges of rural poverty. These challenges, in turn, could not be addressed

without adequate consideration of the role nature plays in village life. None of those tradeoffs dissuaded the GEF from diving in.

Solving relatively easy problems is important, but it rarely moves us forward—and never at a sufficient scale. If we really want to move the needle on creating a sustainable future, we have to go after the toughest problems and most ambitious goals. The GEF's focus on these problems and ambitions is what makes all the difference. It's why the GEF is our strongest partner on the ground in difficult-to-operate places.

Most recently, the GEF joined the Blue Nature Alliance—an effort launched by Conservation International, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Rob and Melani Walton Foundation, and the Minderoo Foundation—to protect 18 million square kilometers of the global ocean within the next five years. These efforts are a major step towards achieving the global ambition of 30x30, one that would protect an area larger than the continent of South America.

This goal would be impossible without the support of the GEF. Its funding comes with the

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flexibility we need to work with government, civil society and corporate partners. That means every dollar the GEF invests get leveraged multiple times over, allowing us to scale bigger than we ever could on our own.

That's why supporting the GEF is one of the best investments that a donor country can make in protecting nature for people, and it's why we will need the GEF more than ever during this make-or-break decade for humanity.



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Photo by Gergo Nagy/Shutterstock

DBSA: PARTNERSHIP ON OUR PATHWAY TO ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND NET ZERO

DEVELOPMENT BANK OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (DBSA)

Nomsa Zondi

Climate Change Specialist, GEF Coordinator, DBSA

In its approach to finance infrastructure in South Africa and the region, the DBSA has ensured the integration of sustainability and environmental stewardship in its practices. The Bank stretched itself further, leveraging on its association with like-minded partners involved in environment and climate funds. A case in point is the process of accreditation to the Global Environment Facility, that provided the opportunity for DBSA to review its Environmental and Social Safeguard Standards, benchmarking against international norms, enabling a reputable image, gender mainstreaming in due diligence procedures and more systematically promoting sustainable development solutions in infrastructure delivery.

Partnering with the GEF has enabled the DBSA to venture into innovative climate and environment initiatives that are key building blocks to infrastructure delivery. Biodiversity initiatives that have influenced South Africa's water pricing and financing policies and practices are currently being piloted with funding from the GEF and toxic

chemicals and wastes associated with the energy sector, a key focus of the DBSA are being addressed, giving the bank an opportunity to adopt a holistic approach in fulfilling its mandate. We dialogue with our local and international partners, sharing and gathering lessons on integrated approaches towards financing infrastructure in cities through the GEF's impact programmes.

DBSA has played a key role in financing South Africa's world renown renewable energy independent power producer programme (REIPPPP). GEF concessional funds have proven to be a crucial part of some of the innovative blended finance approaches for the bank in delivering the renewable energy projects. Through GEF funds, DBSA has achieved a key competitive advantage in leveraging its funds to promote a paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways and contribute towards generation of global environment benefits.

Experiences gathered from the bank's partnership with the GEF have catapulted and enriched internal policy discussions, strategy directions and institutional set-up. DBSA has expanded its



environment, biodiversity and climate financing mandate and further committed to aligning with national and international declarations including the Paris Accord, towards reducing emissions and providing finance for a climate resilient development trajectory. Subsequently, we have made a commitment to playing an active role in a Just Transition that achieves net zero emissions by 2050. Our board approved Integrated Just Transition Investment Framework incorporates the bank's pathway, that will include details on net zero GHG emissions targets across its total investment and loan portfolios, aligning with the South African government's net zero targets as detailed in the Nationally Determined Contribution.

Successful implementation of our Just Transition Framework requires that we continue to make deliberate decisions working towards a post Covid-19 recovery that is green, with low carbon emissions and climate resilient. We see the GEF as a key partner in meeting our commitments; the Just Transition and subsequent Net Zero. We commit to a partnership that will enable the bank to deliver a transition which will not only contribute to global environment benefits but one that also builds a fairer and more inclusive economy for women, marginal communities and managing the impact on those workers negatively affected by the move away from affected sectors.



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EBRD: A TANGIBLE IMPACT ON PEOPLE'S EVERYDAY LIVES

EUROPEAN BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT (EBRD)

Camilla Otto

Director of the EBRD's Donor Co-Financing Team

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) helps [the regions](#) where it invests build green, low-carbon, and resilient economies. Through policy reform, technical assistance and investment, the EBRD assists these economies in meeting their climate commitments.

Donors make a vital contribution to our work by providing funding that catalyses investment.

Since 2004, the EBRD has developed strong cooperation with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which has provided nearly \$150 million of co-financing, technical cooperation, and concessional finance to help address climate change and environmental degradation.

The year 2021 marks the 30th anniversary of both organizations, with the EBRD and GEF celebrating three decades of success and shared ambitions.

Our strong partnership has had a significant impact. Indeed, the list of examples is long. It includes investments in renewables, such as [financing](#) the development, construction, and operation of eight solar plants in [Jordan](#). We have also promoted

the expansion of renewable energy in [Egypt](#) by supporting one of the [first green private-to-private projects in the country](#).

Together with the GEF and other partners, we have invested more than \$118 million in [11 water and wastewater improvement projects](#) in Tajikistan, covering 22 cities across the country. These projects help tackle the impact of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), as they address public health issues at a time when water is particularly needed for sanitation and hygiene.

In addition, the [Finance and Technology Transfer Centre for Climate Change](#) programme helps companies to adopt new climate-friendly technologies, which save energy, water, and materials, and to use renewable energy. This work reduces greenhouse gas emissions and promotes climate resilience (like these examples in [Ukraine](#) and [Georgia](#), for instance).

We have also joined forces with the United Nations Environment Programme to help keep the Mediterranean Sea clean. A new [Environmental Technology Transfer](#) programme focuses on promoting investments in wastewater treatment and recycling for cleaner coasts and water systems.

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Meanwhile, the GEF contributes to our [Green Economy Financing Facilities](#), which operate through a network of more than 150 local financial institutions across 27 countries, supported by around €5 billion of EBRD finance.

Most importantly, our partnership has had a tangible impact on people's everyday lives, by preserving our planet's environment for the next generation.

We look forward to continuing our fruitful and effective cooperation with the GEF.



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Photo by FUN FUN PHOTO/Shutterstock

FAO: SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET AND HEALTHIER PEOPLE

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (FAO)

Eduardo Mansur

Director of the Office of Climate Change,
Biodiversity and Environment, FAO

Agriculture is sometimes a cause—and certainly a casualty—of our global environmental challenges.

Unsustainable agriculture and food systems are key drivers of biodiversity loss, land degradation, greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, unsustainable fisheries, and water pollution. Over 30% of the world's land is degraded, more than 20% of the world's aquifers are overexploited, and the world had a net loss of 178 million hectares of forest over the past 30 years. The degradation of our natural resources and climate change are intertwined with degradation of human health, including pandemics, social unrest and a worrying upward trend of hunger and malnutrition globally.

However, agriculture can also be a solution to global environmental challenges, now and in the future.

Sustainable agri-food systems can reverse biodiversity loss, improve land management, restore landscapes, sustain fisheries, and conserve agrobiodiversity, all while improving the

productivity and availability of nutritious food, increased food security, and more employment, especially for youth and women. FAO, as the leading international organization on food and agriculture, is working with countries and partner institutions like the GEF to ensure we will achieve sustainable agri-food systems everywhere. Sustainable agri-food systems are an integrated solution that can accelerate the clean, resilient, blue and green response and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and there is growing political, social, and economic momentum for the transition to sustainable agri-food systems for healthier people and a healthier planet.

The partnership between FAO and the GEF has played an important role in supporting countries and communities to transform their agricultural production systems. Since 2006, FAO has helped over 130 countries access more than \$1.2 billion in GEF funding to deliver tremendous results at the intersection between agri-food systems and the environment. About 21% of this investment is in climate change adaptation projects, providing invaluable lessons for innovation in agriculture to address this global challenge. FAO-GEF projects

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have benefitted over five million women and men, created over 350,000 jobs in rural communities, safeguarded biodiversity in more than 200 vulnerable marine ecosystem, and saved at least 1,000 crop varieties, animal species and breeds from extinction.

We celebrate the GEF's 30th Anniversary in a moment when our FAO-GEF partnership is more

important than ever. We still have huge tasks ahead, and we also have huge opportunities. I am confident that the FAO-GEF partnership will reach new heights, adopt innovative approaches, and collaborate across environmental and agricultural sectors to tackle global challenges together to achieve the goals of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the 2030 Agenda for a healthier planet and healthier people.



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FECO: FORGING AHEAD ON THE NEXT CHAPTER OF THE PARTNERSHIP

THE FOREIGN ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION CENTER

ZHOU Guomei
Director General
Foreign Environmental Cooperation Center
Ministry of Ecology and Environment of China

FECO is a longtime partner with the GEF. As an institution affiliated to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of China, FECO is an important platform for China's international cooperation and exchanges in ecological and environmental protection and has executed many projects to conserve biodiversity, protect international waters, tackle climate change, and reduce persistent organic pollutants and mercury contamination. By May 2021, FECO had executed 46 GEF national projects, over a fifth of the country's total. Advanced concepts, models, and characteristics have been developed in the field of ecological civilization construction and environmental protection. Many of these projects achieved highly satisfactory performance from the perspectives of the GEF and other international institutions and were regarded as exemplary models for other developing countries.

In 2015, FECO was officially accredited as a GEF Agency, opening a new chapter of partnership. As a national agency, FECO is devoted to promote the combination of GEF programming directions

and China's national priority work to realize a win-win situation between China's environmental protection goals and the GEF strategy. Becoming a GEF agency reflects recognition from the international community of FECO's performance and capability, and it is also a solid step for FECO to broaden its business and to move towards internationalization. Ever since the accreditation, FECO has worked closely with domestic agencies and successfully developed two projects, covering the GEF biodiversity and climate change focal areas. The approval of the projects marked a milestone in FECO's business of projects implementation.

At the time of the GEF's 30th anniversary, the international community is working on an ambitious agenda on Sustainable Development and, at the same time, facing challenges presented by the greatest health and economic crisis in a generation. The GEF can play a substantial part in this process. FECO will continuously deepen cooperation with the GEF and take full advantage of FECO's extensive cooperation platform, attracting more domestic institutions, social organizations, and the private sector to GEF projects. FECO will work together with the GEF to restore the health of the planet and ensure sustainable development and green recovery from COVID-19.



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FUNBIO: THREE DECADES OF INNOVATION AND SOLUTIONS

THE BRAZILIAN BIODIVERSITY FUND

Fabio Leite
GEF Agency Coordinator, FUNBIO

The year 2021 was one of extremes: images of floods turning Europe's city streets into rivers, storms raging, wildfires forcing residents to evacuate, record temperatures, the frequency with which phrases like *point of no return* have been popping up in news broadcasts. And all this set against a pandemic caused by a virus that scientists believe may have been transmitted from wild species to human beings, at the very same time as a mass-extinction period—brought on by us this time—unfolds across the globe.

The impacts are looming and the urgent need for solutions that can bring about concrete change has made the importance of robust programs like those enabled by GEF support over the last three decades more explicit now than ever. In Brazil, the GEF has backed some innovative and ambitious projects that created possibilities and changed lives in all of the nation's biomes.

The GEF's history in Brazil is also part of our history: we were one of the first projects to receive the Facility's support, back in 1996, and we went on to become a GEF project executor, and then, in 2015, one of its implementing agencies. In 1996, no one ever spoke of long-term project sustainability, but

FUNBIO is now living proof of the longevity of the GEF's results and capacity to identify solid initiatives.

Other initiatives supported by the GEF in Brazil include ARPA, the Amazon Region Protected Areas Program, the world's largest tropical-forest conservation program; the Marine and Coastal Protected Areas Program, which has made a considerable contribution to boosting marine protected-area coverage—up to 26.3 percent from 1.5 percent; and Pro-Species, dedicated to reverting the grim position of the most 300 critically endangered species in Brazil. Together, these programs have blazed trails and plotted new courses. In that, the GEF has not only played a central role as a financial backer, it has also been a generator and disseminator of knowledge, information, and best practices, creating local, national, and global collaboration networks.

This role is fundamental to the choice our species needs to take: whether we want a world that refuses to understand the importance of biodiversity conservation and climate balance, or a sustainable, inclusive and peaceful future shaped by a conservation-proactive present. On this, the 30th anniversary of the GEF, we hope to toast victory after fighting the good fight. Until then, nose to the grindstone!



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IADB: WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPLEMENT THE 2025 VISION FOR THE REGION

INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (IADB)

Juan Pablo Bonilla

Manager of the IADB's Climate Change and Sustainable Development Sector (CSD)

Global problems, without a doubt, require global solutions. As the effect of climate change rears its ugly head, it is more important than ever to work together with other institutions and entities to solve the biggest challenge that the world has ever faced. Thankfully, the Inter-American Development Bank Group has had the chance to work with the GEF in Latin America and the Caribbean.

With 35 projects in the works, as of February 2021, the collaboration between the GEF and the IADB keeps helping the countries of the region in achieving their SDGs. Although the pandemic and its economic repercussions are at the forefront of most global initiatives, we need not forget the fight against climate change. Many theories suggest that human intrusion in the natural habitat of different animals may be the cause of the new coronavirus.

The collaboration between the IADB and the GEF has about \$272 million invested in climate change projects in the regions, covering the key sector. For example, we are providing technical and financial assistance to small and medium enterprises in Latin America and the Caribbean

via equity investments in bio-businesses that are aligned with the Nagoya Protocol. But we also work with farmers to strengthen the hydrological buffering and regulation capacity of the upper watershed of Chingaza-Sumapaz-Guerrero that supplies drinking water to the Bogota metropolitan area and the adjoining rural municipalities.

The countries in the region, and in other parts of the world, need to see those important institutions such as the GEF and the IADB are leading the much-needed change. We expect the collaboration with the GEF to keep growing, allowing us to implement innovative financial instruments such as green bonds, share fundamental technical information with the countries and intervene in places that urgently need to get their head above water.

These are just a sample of the 35 projects mentioned above. The IADB is compromised to keep working with the GEF to implement our new 2025 vision for the region and hope to stay in the fight against climate change a partner as strong as the GEF. We celebrate the 30th anniversary of the GEF and hope that in the next 30 years, the Global Environmental Facility can look back and pump out their chest seeing a healthy, sustainable and healthy planet.



IFAD: MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER TOWARDS RECOVERY, REBUILDING, AND RESILIENCE

INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (IFAD)

Janie Rioux

Senior Climate Finance Specialist, GEF Coordinator
IFAD

The impact of human activities on the environment is indisputable: new heights of global heating, new lows of ecological degradation, and new slowdowns towards global goals are a matter of fact. On top of this, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused massive social and economic disruptions all over the world. The global health crisis, combined with more frequent extreme weather events, has severely affected the vulnerable people in which IFAD invests and has revealed bottlenecks in food systems. In this context, the need to increase investments in sustainable rural development is no longer a choice but rather an imperative.

What has been done so far? Climate resilience and environmental sustainability have long been a priority for IFAD, especially through the \$316 million Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP)—IFAD's flagship programme for channelling climate finance to smallholder farmers, launched in 2012. On top of this, during 2019–21 alone, IFAD has mobilized \$342 million through external climate

funds, surpassing its target of \$200 million in supplementary climate finance. The GEF has been an important partner for IFAD in achieving this result and in mainstreaming global environmental and climate change considerations in IFAD's regular operations. In particular, 36 percent of IFAD's active GEF projects support the climate change adaptation focal area through LDCF/SCCF resources. Also, IFAD's experience in leading the GEF Integrated Approach Programme (IAP) on Fostering Sustainability and Resilience for Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa has successfully pioneered efforts to strengthen the integration of climate change with nutrition, women's and youth empowerment.

What to do next? IFAD12 and GEF-8 priorities are strategically well-aligned. This provides a solid foundation for strengthening the IFAD-GEF partnership: for example, both institutional replenishment cycles focus on recovery, rebuilding, and resilience after the pandemic. In this regard, a new evolution of ASAP—known as ASAP+—will build on the results and lessons learned from the first two phases. ASAP+ will contribute to the COVID-19 response by building

resilience to climate shocks and stressors that drive food insecurity by investing in an equitable and inclusive green recovery. This offers excellent opportunities for synergies with LDCF/SCCF. Furthermore, one of the priorities of the GEF-8 biodiversity focal area strategy is improving and changing production practices to

be more biodiversity-positive, with a focus on the agricultural sector. This is in line with IFAD's goal to integrate biodiversity considerations into its operations through its new Biodiversity Strategy, forthcoming by end 2021. Moving forward, both IFAD and the GEF can deepen their collaborative efforts to achieve common and global goals.



The GEF has been vital to restoring forests as part of IUCN's Bonn Challenge

IUCN: WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS A JUST WORLD

INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN)

Bruno Oberle
Director General, IUCN

I am delighted to join the global community in celebrating 30 years of the GEF (Global Environment Facility). Together, we can reflect on three decades of successful collaboration towards a just world that values and conserves nature.

IUCN and the GEF have a proud history. We have been working together at the policy level since the GEF was established 30 years ago. More recently, as an official partner agency, IUCN has supported the implementation of GEF-funded projects through the Union's 1,500 state, civil society and Indigenous Peoples' Organization Members.

In collaboration, we have proved a powerful instrument to influence policy and then turn policy into action. Our joint initiatives address the climate and biodiversity crises, and help economies transition to become more nature positive.

Today, IUCN and the GEF are working with governments, civil society and the private sector to:

- implement the **Bonn Challenge** to bring 350 million hectares of degraded and deforested landscapes into restoration by 2030;

- achieve **land degradation neutrality** and deliver Nature-based Solutions to desertification and drought;
- support the **Inclusive Conservation Initiative** to help Indigenous Peoples and local communities safeguard ecosystems, recognizing their historic role in nature conservation;
- manage the **Nature+ Accelerator Fund** to boost private sector investment in nature.

The GEF has contributed to reaching major objectives under these, and many other, IUCN-led initiatives. In particular, IUCN has benefited from the GEF's expertise in pioneering new financial instruments, and dedication to mobilizing the private sector for nature conservation.

On this landmark anniversary, I would like to thank the GEF for three decades' support to the global conservation community.

We must also look to the future. Our joint mission has never been more important. Human activity is degrading ecosystems and driving biodiversity loss faster than ever before.

I look forward to continued collaboration with the GEF to conserve and restore nature, building on shared successes and working together to 2030 and beyond.



Empowering women in Peru with clean energy. Photo by Jasmin

UNDP: A RELENTLESS MARCH TOWARDS A BETTER WORLD

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)

Pradeep Kurukulasuriya
Executive Coordinator and Director,
Global Environmental Finance, UNDP

The urgency and complexity of today's environmental challenges are more threatening to our collective survival than at any other time in recent history.

While there has been unprecedented progress in human development, it has come inequitably and at the expense of the planet. As the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report lays out starkly, unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in fossil fuel emissions, limiting warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C will move beyond reach.

Threats to sustainable development have been compounded by the global COVID-19 pandemic with an additional 100 million people now facing extreme poverty.

Getting back on track to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and addressing the nature-climate crisis requires seizing this historic moment of unprecedented levels of public investment to rebuild in a way that charts a new course to make major, lasting changes to our economies and society.



We are used to looking ahead at all that must be done. On this 30th anniversary of the Global Environment Facility, however, it is valuable to take a moment to look back and reflect on how far we have come.

UNDP's Nature, Climate and Energy practice, built on three decades of partnership with the GEF, now spans 137 countries, with a portfolio directly benefiting 86 million people.

The Climate Promise has become the single largest offer to support governments of 119 countries to enhance their climate pledges to adapt to and mitigate the accelerating threats of climate change. In all, 433 million tonnes of CO₂e emissions are being avoided or reduced, roughly equal to taking

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94 million cars off the road a year.

Our projects have supported 4,636 Protected Areas in 86 countries, covering 137 million hectares of land, supporting biodiversity conservation, and sequestering 5.12 gigatons of CO₂.

Through these efforts, 57,000 tonnes of toxic chemicals have been abated, over 86,000 more kilometres of coastlines are now under integrated management, 15 million more people have access to clean energy for electrification and cooking, and 20 percent of the world's fisheries are moving towards sustainable management.

This would not have been possible without our partnership. Over the past 30 years working together, UNDP has partnered with the GEF on over 2,000 projects.



Stingless bees



Mangroves re-planting, 2020. GEF and UNDP-supported LDCF

This past year, in partnership with the GEF, UNDP has supported 139 countries to develop plans to "build forward better" and mobilized or reallocated nearly \$1 billion to assist partners in over 170 countries and territories. This type of response, at scale and at pace, is critical if we are to seize this historic moment to correct the course of humanity. And these actions are only possible because they can draw on depths of experience acquired together across 30 years.

Here we stand, 30 years after so much has been achieved but looking ahead at so much still to be done. Partnerships remain a constant: as vitally important as ever. Here's to answering the world's most challenging environmental issues together, as relentlessly as possible, in the next decade to come.



Mangroves re-planting, 2020. Kiribati



GLOF early warning. Photo courtesy of UNDP Nepal

Photo by ABDESIGN/iStock



UNEP: A TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT ON MILLIONS OF LIVES

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP)

Inger Andersen

Executive Director, UN Environment Programme

For more than 30 years, the Global Environment Facility has assisted developing countries in meeting the objectives of environmental conventions that underpin our hopes for a greener, more just, and sustainable future. On climate change, on biodiversity, on desertification and land degradation, and on pollution. As the largest global public financer of projects that propel action on the greatest threats to our shared future, the GEF has had a tangible and transformative impact on the lives of millions of people.

Perhaps one of the GEF's most telling legacies has been in influencing and nurturing generation of boots-on-the-ground environmental professionals. As our understanding of environmental management and sustainability has evolved over the past 30 years, so too has the GEF. As a learning, capacity building, and knowledge management facility, the GEF has been at the forefront of improving our collective understanding of sound project management—whether on monitoring and evaluation, gender mainstreaming, environmental and social safeguards, or on ensuring sound fiduciary practices.

We at UNEP remain deeply proud of our partnership with the GEF. With GEF support, UNEP has assisted 60 countries to better integrate climate adaptation plans into national policy and planning processes. More than half the world's developing countries have been supported to meet their reporting obligations to the UNFCCC. With GEF support, the Minamata Convention entered into force, much earlier than has been the case with Multilateral Environmental Agreements in the past. We have worked with countries in developing environmental information systems to better understand the state of the environment. And, together, we are now driving the global transition to electric mobility.

As we enter a critical decade, it is clear that environmental action is no longer negotiable. COVID-19 has been a tragic reminder that a return to "normal" is simply not an option as we stare down at the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. As UNEP's Making Peace with Nature report highlights, our environmental, social, and economic challenges are interlinked. They must be tackled together. We have no choice but to transform our economies and societies by putting nature and environmental sustainability at the heart of all our decisions.

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Through its integrated approach to pilots and impact programmes, the GEF has demonstrated that it is an integrating force. It has shown it is possible to simultaneously deliver results across environmental agreements, whether on deforestation, sustainable land management, climate mitigation or chemicals management. We need this approach now more than ever.

Environmental action is about taking a whole-of-society approach—to thinking and acting collectively. As we look to rapid, integrated, and transformational action to tackle the planetary emergency, the GEF is irreplaceable. We must ensure this partnership is stronger than ever as we tackle the challenges ahead.



Photo by Alexandre Laprise/Shutterstock



UNIDO: LEVERAGING GEF INVESTMENT TO ACHIEVE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (UNIDO)

Stephan Sicars
Managing Director of the Directorate of Environment and Energy, UNIDO

The UNIDO-GEF partnership dates back to the 1990s when UNIDO began to regularly contribute to the preparation and execution of GEF-financed projects. UNIDO became a GEF implementing agency in 2006 and has since utilized the GEF's catalytic financing to leverage additional investments to address the planet's environmental challenges and achieve global environmental benefits (GEBs) across the climate change, chemicals, international waters, biodiversity, and land degradation focal areas.

The UNIDO-GEF partnership is unique within the global action agenda. Within its mandate for inclusive and sustainable industrial development, UNIDO utilizes the GEF financing to achieve GEBs by promoting clean, low-carbon production technologies and processes in large and small industrial enterprises, hence simultaneously stimulating the countries' economic growth. Today, UNIDO's portfolio spans over 170 GEF-funded projects in around 70 countries.

The GEF and UNIDO have worked together for many years to reduce and eliminate the threats to the environment and human health posed by persistent organic pollutants, ozone-depleting substances, and other harmful industrial pollutants. This has been complemented by the successful engagement to eliminate the use of mercury from the artisanal and small-scale gold mining sector.

The UNIDO-GEF partnership was further strengthened through the joint work on application of industrial energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions. This has helped countries with achieving industrial greenhouse gas emission reductions, while boosting productivity and competitiveness of industrial firms. Complementing this, UNIDO is seeking solutions to increase the climate change resilience of industries through projects financed by the Least Developing Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund.

With environmental degradation and climate change having a disproportionate effect on women around the world, the GEF continues to

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be an essential partner in supporting UNIDO's commitment to addressing this nexus in the context of industrialization. As an example, the GEF-funded Global Cleantech Innovation Programme empowers women entrepreneurs to develop businesses and products that support a greener future.

As we enter GEF-8, UNIDO will continue to work with the GEF in supporting countries' compliance with the Multilateral Environmental Agreements. In doing so, UNIDO will help countries achieve transformational environmental, social, and economic impact by adopting sectoral and regional approaches for sound chemical and waste management, achieving circular economy, and reaching the de-carbonization and climate

resilience of the industrial sector. UNIDO will also work on mainstreaming biodiversity across agri-business value chains through introduction of circular economy and blockchain solutions helping to reduce drivers of biodiversity loss. UNIDO hopes to achieve all this through a combination of technology transfer, capacity building, and policymaking actions in partnership with the business sector, civil society organizations, financial institutions, and other relevant development actors.

We cannot repair the planet if gender inequalities persist. UNIDO will continue to actively engage in the GEF Gender Partnership, to advance gender equality and empowerment of women in efforts to safeguard the environment.



WORLD BANK GROUP: BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GEF

THE WORLD BANK GROUP (WBG)

Mari Pangestu

Managing Director of Development Policy and Partnerships, World Bank Group

For 75 years, the World Bank Group—the world's largest development institution—has worked to help countries rebuild and create sustainable economic growth. Today, as we face an unprecedented set of global challenges, we are putting a green, resilient, and inclusive approach at the heart of our development work.

The COVID-19 pandemic and climate change have starkly exposed the interdependence between human health, planetary health, and healthy economies. These twin crises underscore the need for development assistance that reduces poverty, boosts prosperity, and strengthens natural capital. The World Bank Group has long been at the forefront of investments to mitigate climate change, strengthen resilience of vulnerable communities, and protect nature and the essential services it provides. Yet we recognize that we must do more, and we are ramping up our commitments and operations to invest in a sustainable recovery that prioritizes people and the planet.

As we work towards a green, resilient, inclusive future, the World Bank Group has a strong track record on which to build, established in no small part with support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). We are proud to have been a founding partner of the GEF, together with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme, when it was established in 1991 to address the planet's most pressing environmental problems.

For three decades, we have served as GEF trustee and implementing agency. The World Bank Group's GEF portfolio consists of more than 800 projects in 144 countries. Tapping more than \$5 billion in GEF grants, we have supported countries across the globe to mainstream renewable energy and energy efficiency; scale up and strengthen the management of protected areas in critical biodiversity hotspots, most notably the Amazon; enhance transboundary management of shared water resources; and protect species and curb the illegal wildlife trade.

One example of our work with the GEF is the Sahel and West Africa Program in support of the Great

Green Wall. The World Bank co-invested \$100 million in GEF grants and \$1.2 billion from the International Development Association (IDA) in 12 climate vulnerable countries to apply sustainable land and water management practices across more than 1.6 million hectares of degraded lands, while boosting the resilience and livelihoods of more than 19 million people. Using GEF grants, IFC pioneered the use of blended finance, which is now an essential part of its toolkit for addressing market failures and mobilizing private investment in first-of-a-kind projects and challenging environments. Across our GEF portfolio, we have fostered innovation—in policies, institutions, technologies, business models—to tackle complex environmental challenges.

Today, we are working with the GEF to drive systemic change in complex environments. As the lead agency of the GEF's Food, Land Use and Restoration Program, we are managing a

multi-stakeholder global knowledge platform and coordinating investments in 28 countries to transform global food value chains and land use systems. We are working with cities as diverse as Freetown, Sierra Leone and Chongqing, China to integrate carbon neutrality, biodiversity, and resilience into urban planning and investment to ensure the long-term health and well-being of cities and the people who live and work in them.

The GEF is more relevant today than ever. As the only multilateral fund dedicated to protecting and restoring the global environment, it has a crucial role to play in shaping investments to drive a sustainable and inclusive recovery. We count on our continued partnership with the GEF, its 184 member countries, and 17 other implementing agencies to achieving a healthier future for people and the planet.



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Photo by Alexandre Jo Reason/Shutterstock

WWF-US: SECURING THE BENEFITS OF NATURE AND A HEALTHY CLIMATE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

THE WORLD WILDLIFE FUND (WWF-US)

Carter Roberts
President & CEO, WWF-US

It's fitting that we're reflecting on the GEF's 30th anniversary in the wake of COP26 in Glasgow. There, for the first time, nature emerged as a centerpiece of global climate policy. It's clear now that the global community increasingly recognizes the connection between nature loss, biodiversity loss, and climate change. All of which makes the mission of the GEF more important than ever. As the only instrument that integrates across the major international environmental conventions and brings together multiple stakeholders – donors, governments, Indigenous peoples and local communities, NGOs and other critical partners – the GEF stands at the intersection of the environmental movement's converging priorities for this decade.

At WWF-US we increasingly see a demand for conservation initiatives that reflect that convergence. The most impactful projects are those that keep places intact, protect biodiversity, secure rights and livelihoods for local peoples and Indigenous communities, and deliver tangible

climate benefits. And that's exactly the kind of approach that the GEF has helped pioneer with projects such as ARPA for Life, Bhutan for Life, and National Parks: Peru's Natural Legacy – three initiatives on which WWF-US is a proud partner.

The WWF-US and GEF partnership is also moving the needle on area-based conservation projects in the Amazon, Congo Basin, and numerous other countries; working with the private sector to build climate resilience for vulnerable communities and deploy innovative climate adaptation solutions; and supporting the establishment of the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD).

These projects and others provide a model for global governments, businesses, investors, and other actors to follow as we work toward achieving the goals that will be established in the Global Biodiversity Framework. And they reflect a central conviction that durable conservation only occurs when communities have rights over their own natural resources and enjoy the benefits of the same, and when their knowledge and wisdom inform the actions of others.

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We at WWF-US urge the international community of donors to celebrate the GEF's 30th anniversary by pledging an ambitious 8th replenishment contribution to help countries fulfill their commitments to reverse biodiversity loss by

2030. WWF-US looks forward to continuing our partnership with the GEF to achieve these outcomes – including over the next four years with the GEF's goal of "Healthy Planet, Healthy People" and for many years to come.









CONVENTIONS



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CBD: BUILDING A FAIRER AND MORE EQUITABLE WORLD FOR US ALL

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD)

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema
Executive Secretary, CBD

The 30th anniversary of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a timely opportunity to reflect and highlight its many accomplishments as we strengthen our collective resolve to do more to protect our planet's health and thus reverse and halt the unprecedented rate of loss of biodiversity.

Over the past three decades, the totality of successive GEF replenishment targets has mounted to over 1.878 billion hectares of protected areas around the world, which is above 19 percent of recipient countries' total territorial area. It also helped replenish over 772 million hectares of productive landscapes and seascapes, close to 8 percent of recipient countries' territorial area. These replenishment targets represent an indicative magnitude of the extent to which the GEF has contributed to the efforts of recipient countries to achieve under 13 percent of total territorial area as terrestrial and marine protected areas.

The success of the entry into force of the Convention's two protocols, namely the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization, benefited tremendously from the

financial support provided by the GEF. Most eligible countries have utilized the financial mechanism to establish necessary and appropriate policy, legal, administrative, and other necessary measures required for the implementation of their obligations under these Protocols, considering the risks to human health.

The institutional structure operating the financial mechanism has been strengthened financially and institutionally over time. The accumulated allocations from successive GEF replenishments hit \$7 billion in the field of biodiversity. The GEF started with merely three agencies. It has since increased from 3 to 18 multilateral, regional, and national organizations that facilitate most of the multilateral financing for biodiversity projects. Special programs have also been established for mobilizing and engaging civil society organizations, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, as well as the private sector.

With continued and enhanced support from the GEF, all recipient countries have reviewed, developed, and/or updated their national biodiversity strategies and action plans in response to the global biodiversity goals and targets adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, and submitted their national reports to the Convention Secretariat. It is evident that

every project the GEF has financed has made some positive difference and impacts for all life on Earth.

The post-2020 global biodiversity framework under development represents a new phase of the global effort to fully address the loss of biodiversity, in which the GEF is expected to continue to play its critical and catalytic role in supporting national

implementation in the coming decade and beyond. Given its track record, I am confident that the GEF can step up with more, better, and faster financing mechanisms to match the scale, depth, and speed of transformative and innovative changes required to achieve our mutual goal of living in harmony with nature by 2050.



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MINAMATA CONVENTION: MUCH-NEEDED SUPPORT TO MAKE MERCURY HISTORY

Monika Stankiewicz

Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention
on Mercury

As the GEF marks its 30th anniversary, the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the youngest of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements that the GEF supports, has benefited immensely from the expertise the GEF has honed in its 30 years of experience.

The GEF played a pivotal role in this Convention starting with the decision to include the Minamata Convention in the GEF Instrument, which has given flexibility and independence to the Convention.

Through GEF-5 and GEF-6 support, the Convention was able to mobilize the Minamata Initial Assessments, which have been an essential activity and helped many countries assess and take on their Minamata Convention obligations. This keystone activity was further strengthened by GEF support for artisanal and small-scale mining (ASGM) National Action Plans. Strong knowledge management activities helped provide key data and information to improve understanding and ultimately facilitate implementation of the Convention in addressing global mercury pollution.

GEF investments to date are providing needed resources, expertise, and strategic thinking to support our parties in their efforts to ratchet down mercury supply, trade, use, and emissions, and to make mercury history.

Mercury is considered one of the top ten chemicals of major public health concern, and the Convention addresses it across many sectors and at every stage of the lifecycle. Its measures are specific and actionable, and they include flexibility for countries to implement based on national circumstances, as well as formal and informal supply chains.

ASGM, the largest source of mercury emissions on a global scale, is an example of how implementation needs to match the complexity of the issue. GEF programming on this issue began many years ago in the International Waters window. It was groundbreaking then, and it is groundbreaking today. GEF programming for ASGM ranges includes enabling activities, in the form of National Action Plans, to the broad programme known as PlanetGOLD.

GEF investments in the Minamata Convention are investing in sustainable and inclusive development, with clear benefits to human health and well-being,

to economies, and to ecosystem goods and services. In this regard, GEF mercury-elimination investments are sound investments. Not only do they achieve global environmental benefits in terms of mercury

use and emissions reductions, but they are also transformative, and add value to and advance the overall GEF portfolio.

This is a well-blended partnership.



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STOCKHOLM CONVENTION: \$1.2 BILLION OVER 20 YEARS TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STOCKHOLM CONVENTION

BASEL ROTTERDAM STOCKHOLM CONVENTIONS (BRS)

Rolph Payet,
Executive Secretary, BRS

The GEF was established in 1992 to help tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems. Since 2001, it has supported the objectives of the Stockholm Convention to protect human health and the environment from the harmful effects of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). Projects in the POPs field have evolved over time. The first decade from 2000 onwards focused on enabling activities and turn-key projects to dispose of legacy POPs. GEF interventions that we see today are more resource-intensive and complex involving a broad array of new POPs, stakeholders and other GEF focal areas.

Several replenishments and \$1.2 billion later, our communities and the environment are less exposed to the harmful effects of POPs than they were 20 years ago. Thanks to the GEF's Small Grants Programme, civil society and community-based organizations have had their capacity strengthened to support the implementation of the Convention.

With the disposal of more than 3,455 tons of DDT stocks and 318 tons of PCB concentrated oils, the GEF has contributed significantly towards the elimination of those two chemicals.

However, much remains to be done. Adequate funding is needed to address those challenging chemicals listed under the Stockholm Convention after 2009, particularly since the GEF's support has stayed at zero net growth for the Stockholm Convention since then. As we loom closer to the 2025/2028 targets for PCBs, more funding is also needed to assist recipient countries in fulfilling their commitments related to the elimination of the use of PCBs in equipment and the environmentally sound waste management of liquids containing PCBs and equipment contaminated with PCBs.

In response, the Stockholm Convention Conference of the Parties (COP) in 2021 strongly encouraged donors to the GEF trust fund, at its eighth replenishment, to increase significantly the allocation for the Convention. Given the

cross-cutting nature of the impact of POPs, such an increase in funding, if programmed in a more integrated manner, will also help recipient countries to address the negative impact of climate change and biodiversity loss and the health burden of pollution.

We are on the right path. The decisions adopted by the Stockholm Convention COP and the strong collaboration between our two secretariats and the GEF agencies provided the foundations for the impactful GEF interventions we have seen in the past decades.

The latest monitoring reports released in 2021 confirm that the levels of certain POPs are decreasing in various parts of the world. Increasing the political priority accorded to the entire chemicals and waste focal area will support the international community to maintain this positive momentum in the coming decade.

On behalf of the Stockholm Convention Secretariat I would like to thank the GEF and its agencies for these achievements.



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UNCCD: HEALTHY LAND—THE BEST BET TO SAFEGUARD OUR PLANET

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (UNCCD)

Ibrahim Thiaw
Executive Secretary, UNCCD

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) and many others have identified land degradation as one of the biggest environmental problems facing humanity. Around one-quarter of land area has been degraded. This degradation drives climate change, harms agricultural productivity, destroys biodiversity and affects 3.2 billion people—primarily the poor and vulnerable.

But the GEF, through its role as a financial mechanism to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and its land degradation focal area, is part of a growing movement to end and reverse this degradation. Through the focal area, the GEF has mobilized around \$3 billion in co-financing for countries to implement the UNCCD, and work towards the crucial goal of land degradation neutrality.

Investments in healthy land unlock an incredible range of benefits—delivering value for money and rapid impact. In fact, a recent evaluation found that investing in land can help the GEF deliver on multiple goals in other areas, from biodiversity to climate change, in a strategic and effective manner.

The case is clear. Restoring land can earn an extra 1.4 trillion in agricultural production every year, at a time when the world is trying to figure out how to feed ever-growing populations. A restoration economy will create millions of green jobs and enhance humanity's resilience to future shocks and stresses. Revitalizing terrestrial ecosystems will rebuild their ability to store carbon. Done well, restoration can protect habitats for biodiversity, build soil fertility and reduce water scarcity.

All these reasons, and more, are why addressing land degradation is increasingly being seen as a powerful solution that will deliver across the Sustainable Development Goals. The challenge now is to deliver on existing commitments to restore 1 billion hectares of land. To do this, we must use the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and COVID-19 recovery packages to halt and reverse land degradation.

The GEF will also be central if it can build on its great work so far and drive even greater action on land. In the 8th replenishment, the GEF community can make best use of resources by prioritizing action on land degradation. It can also build resilience to desertification and drought as

the land is restored by investing in early-warning systems, vulnerability and risk assessments, and drought risk mitigation.

The GEF has always been a key partner for the UNCCD. I strongly call on a full replenishment of

GEF-8 as we look to restore and sustainably manage our land resources: the best bet to safeguard our planet for present and future generations.



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UNFCCC: A PIONEER IN CLIMATE FINANCE

UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (UNFCCC)

Patricia Espinosa Cantellano,
Executive Secretary, UNFCCC

Three decades ago, as the international community began to realize the magnitude of the threat posed by environmental degradation, it was already clear that adequate access to finance would be essential to address this manifold challenge. And the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) emerged as a pioneer in this area, supporting developing countries in their efforts to protect the environment and, in particular, to address climate change.

The UNFCCC and the GEF have walked hand in hand for the past 30 years and the Facility has played a critical role in operationalizing the Convention and the Paris Agreement. The preparation and implementation of developing countries' national strategies, whether in mitigation or adaptation, have often benefited from the valuable technical assistance and financial support of the GEF. This has made it possible to turn laudable intentions into verifiable actions.

Over the years, the GEF has supported more than 1,000 climate change mitigation actions, mobilizing over \$6.7 billion in grant-based financing.

It has also provided \$1.8 billion in adaptation support to developing countries through the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), with an emphasis on those countries that are most vulnerable to climate change impacts. In addition, the GEF has provided over a half billion dollars to support developing countries' reporting and assessment, which includes essential work to prepare Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and building capacities for the transparency requirements under the Paris Agreement.

From a cause for concern some thirty years ago, climate change has now become the central issue of our time. Science is clear that very little time is left to address the climate emergency before the window of opportunity permanently closes. Today, the world is dangerously close to reaching the 1.5°C global temperature limit outlined in the Paris Agreement. We stand at a critical turning point, as the world finds itself at an unprecedented crossroads.

The role of the GEF will be even more important over the coming decades, as developing countries look for financial support to implement the Paris

Agreement. This is a vital task, and the GEF is uniquely positioned to lead in answering their call. Thirty years from now, I hope that the world can look back and recognize that the Facility made substantial contributions to resolve the climate

emergency. Building that legacy, one that the GEF can be proud of and future generations can acknowledge, is the main challenge of all those who collaborate in that indispensable institution.



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ARMENIA: CAPACITY BUILDING FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RELEVANT MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

Arsen Nikoyan

Deputy Head of International Cooperation
Department, Ministry of Environment of the
Republic of Armenia

Cooperation between the Republic of Armenia and the GEF, launched in 1993, has contributed greatly to addressing global environmental challenges in the country. Over this time, the GEF supported capacity building for implementation of relevant multilateral environmental agreements. The implemented initiatives have greatly improved the system of specially protected natural areas, with new ones being established. They have also targeted energy saving, climate change, agriculture, capacity building, and chemicals and waste management.

UNFCCC—Four National Communications, including GHG inventories, vulnerability assessments, climate change observations and projections, were submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat. These set Armenia on the path for active involvement in cooperative actions under the Convention.

Some projects embodied advanced energy-efficient building design and construction. They demonstrated up to 70% savings of heat energy and associated emissions relative to baseline levels, ensuring adoption of respective laws and standards.

As a response to climate change risk management, the GEF-funded pilot project tested various complex measures. These included provision of



(left) Before renovation, open burning, (center) After renovation, no open burning, (right) Worker wearing PPE



(left) Building hosting the BAT, (center left) Conveyor belt, (center right) Waste compactor, (right) New power line



Building for workers

technical equipment of forest management units, sound aerial biological pest control, and capacity building for cooperation between national actors. They led to significant decrease of fire impacts on around 100,000 hectares of forest land in South-East of Armenia.

Stockholm Convention—Armenia developed its *National Implementation Plan*. It strengthened capacities for the sound management of POPs at national and local levels, and created institutional capacity for POPs management at the governmental level. A new Central Analytical Laboratory was established.

National capacities were strengthened to implement Best Available Technique/Best Environmental Practice (BAT/BEP) for reduction of dioxins and furans emissions at demonstration sites. Demonstration activities in a selected site of

Ararat landfill promoted waste reduction, re-use, recycle and BAT/BEP implementation.

Minamata Convention—Armenia completed a preliminary assessment to strengthen national capacities in ratifying and fulfilling obligations under the Convention, as well as enabling strategic decision making and prioritizing areas for future interventions.

Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP) was successfully implemented by accelerating startups based on innovations and clean technologies. It increased the competitiveness of SMEs and promoted creation of favorable ecosystem for innovations.

GEF's Small Grants Programme—The involvement of civil society in identifying environmental problems and ways of solving them has increased significantly. The programme supported a number of innovation and empowerment projects targeting sustainable development of communities and CSOs. These prioritized the poor and vulnerable.

Armenia has become a signatory to several global conventions and international treaties. Our country remains fully committed to obligations taken under all the respective conventions. As a land-locked, developing country, Armenia highlights the importance of continuous international support for the development and implementation of environmental policy.

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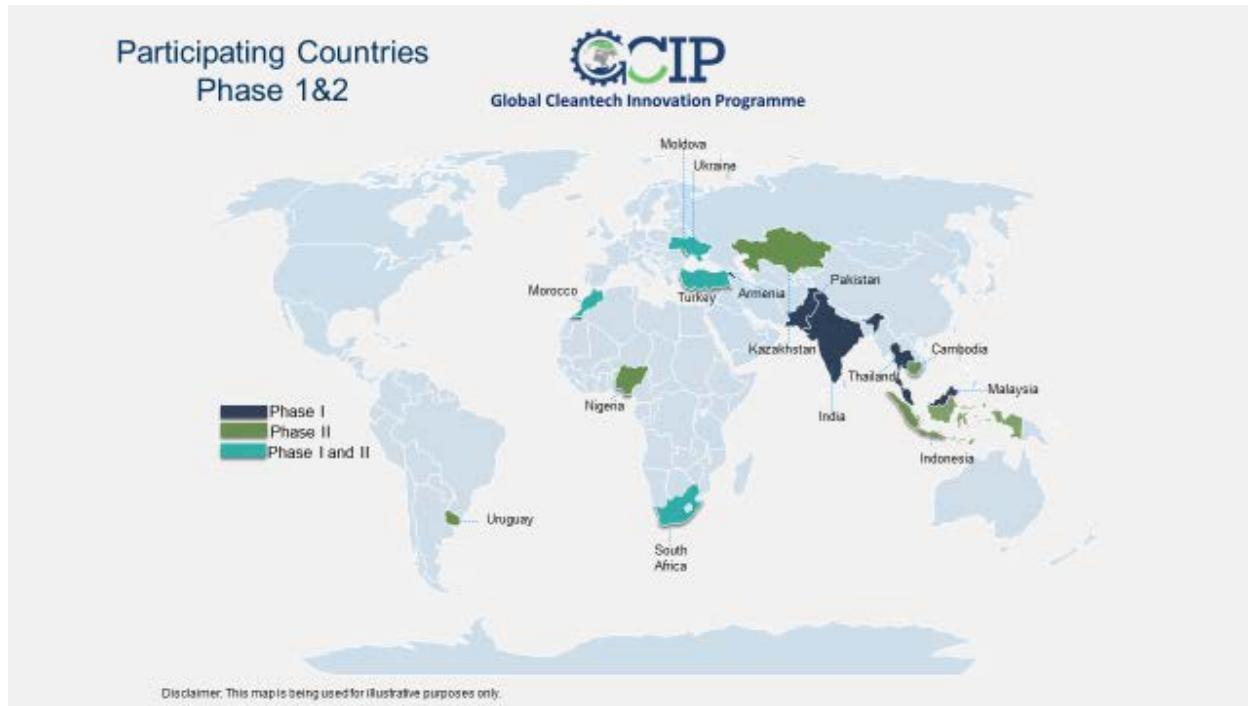
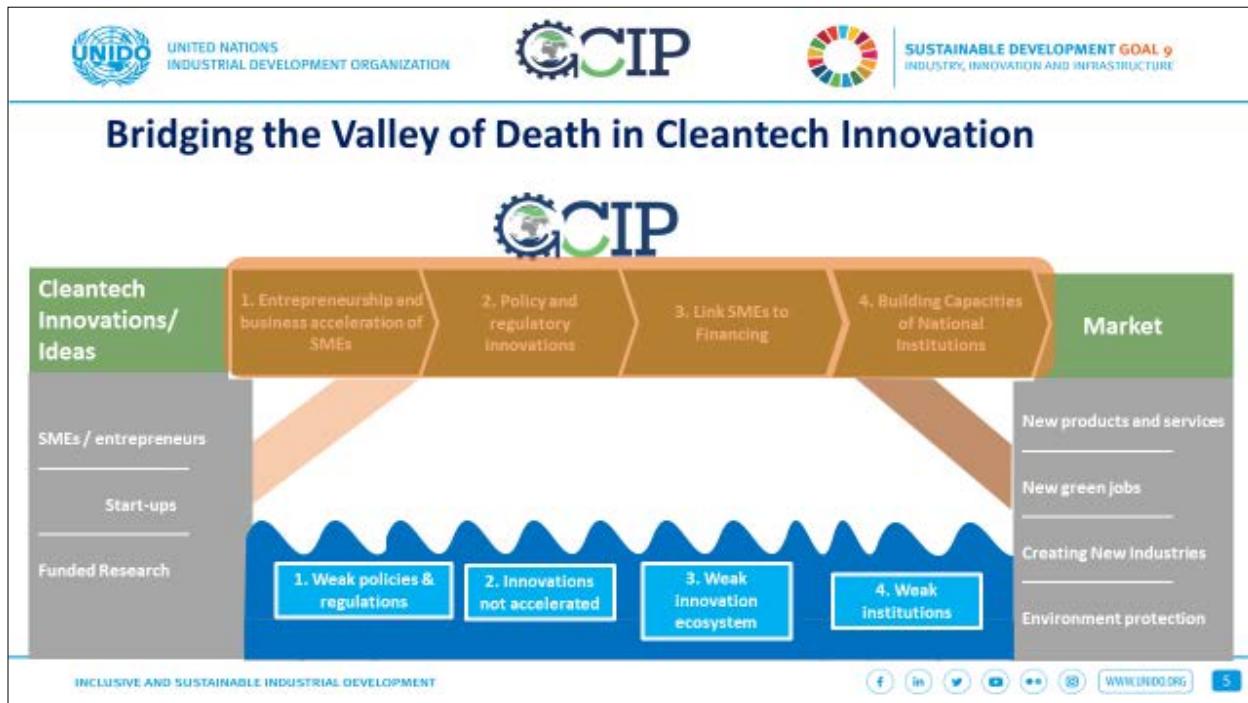


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AUSTRALIA: AN IMPORTANT PARTNER IN PREVENTING BIODIVERSITY LOSS AND MANAGING OCEANS

A 30-YEAR PARTNERSHIP

Richard Bontjer (Council Member)
Director, Environment, Oceans and Biodiversity
Section, Climate and Environment Policy Branch,
Climate Change and Sustainability Division

Australia is a long-term partner of the GEF

Australia has been a proud supporter of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) since its inception in 1991. From the GEF pilot through to GEF-7, the Australian Government has provided more than half a billion dollars (AU) in funding. The GEF's work aligns closely with Australia's commitments, including preventing biodiversity loss, protection of the oceans, strong climate action, and managing waste.

There is a growing recognition that countries must work together to protect the resilience of natural systems to support climate stability, food supply, and water, as well as human and planetary health. The GEF provides an effective platform for us to work together with other nations, while achieving significant results and global environmental benefits. The GEF is an important element of Australia's leadership in preventing biodiversity loss and managing oceans, which also

includes our role in the High Ambition Coalition for People and Nature and the High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy.

2021 is a key year for the environment

The Australian Government is helping drive forward environmental action this year. At the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) and the COP26 United Nations Climate Change Conference, Australia will work together with other nations to agree on ambitious targets, including the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. This year also marks the start of the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations, an important milestone for ambitious environmental action.

Working in partnership with our neighbours

The GEF has supported our Pacific neighbours to achieve positive environmental outcomes and reach development goals. With a particular focus on sustainably managing the ocean, moving to 100% renewable power generation and addressing chemicals pollution, the GEF has achieved substantial global environmental benefits. The GEF has also supported National Integrated Water

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Resource Management plans in a number of Pacific Small Island Developing States to combat the threat of saltwater intrusion, pollution, and contamination of freshwater resources.

Australia has contributed AU\$12 million over 10 years to support the GEF's Small Grants Programme on its first dedicated small-scale community-based adaptation activities through the United Nations Development Programme. These projects focus on reducing the vulnerability of local communities to the impacts of climate change, while supporting livelihoods and addressing poverty, as well as empowering women. For example, a small community in Palau started noticing jellyfish disappearing from Jellyfish Lake, a popular tourist spot and UNESCO site. Through the program, academics worked with the community to monitor the lake, gaining

insights from policy makers, tour operators, and key stakeholders. These actions helped improve management of the lake ecosystem by reducing tourism and anthropogenic pressures on the lake. Another example is the ISLANDS project in GEF-7, which has significant potential to improve the management of chemicals and waste in small Pacific islands.

Australia is promoting active leadership and partnerships with Indigenous peoples in pursuing environmental outcomes, for example through Australia's National Reserve System and Indigenous Protected Areas.

Australia looks forward to working with the GEF well into the future to achieve strong global environmental benefits and see partners achieve their development goals.



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AUSTRIA: CRITICAL IMPORTANCE TO SUPPORT THE MOST VULNERABLE COUNTRIES AND PEOPLE AND TO ACHIEVE A GREEN, BLUE, CLEAN AND RESILIENT RECOVERY

Victoria Schreitter (Council Member)
Advisor, Sustainable Development and Finance
Austrian Federal Ministry of Finance

Since its foundation, the GEF has made an important contribution to facing global environmental challenges and reaching development goals at the same time. As the GEF celebrates its 30th birthday, we can look back at a wide range of achievements.

One of the largest added-values of the GEF has certainly been its ability to address multiple dimensions of the environment in an integrated manner—ranging from climate change, biodiversity, land degradation, forests, international waters, to chemicals and waste. These dimensions cannot be seen as separate issues and the GEF has uniquely positioned itself as contributor to systemic, transformative change in all these areas, while rightly putting country-driven approaches and ownership at the centre.

Flagship initiatives, like the GEF's Small Grants Programme, have showcased the importance of community-based action. Moreover, important cross-cutting issues, like gender equality, have been prioritised.

Nonetheless, a lot remains to be done. In 2021 the world is still facing mounting stressors on natural systems, as demonstrated by the increase of extreme climate events, biodiversity loss threatening the survival of thousands of animal species and habitats, and the water crisis. With the COVID-19 pandemic, many environmental challenges have been exacerbated. The GEF thus remains of critical importance to support the most vulnerable countries and people and to achieve a green, blue, clean and resilient recovery.

Looking ahead, I would like to highlight three priorities for Austria in the GEF:

- First, building on the GEF's comparative advantage of being able to address multiple

dimensions of the environment, additional efforts need to be made to respond to the alarming rate of loss of biodiversity and the scale at which climate change is accelerating.

- Second, the GEF Partnership, which has grown from an initial 3 agencies to 18, needs to be at the forefront in tackling these challenges, where all agencies are engaged according to their respective capacity and comparative advantage. Strengthening the GEF Partnership also entails deepening the collaboration with community-based organisations, civil society, science/academia and the private sector.

- Third, it will be important to continue ensuring that the GEF's activities leave a sustainable impact on the ground.

To conclude, on behalf of Austria I would like to congratulate the GEF to its 30th birthday and extend a heartfelt thank you to the current and former GEF CEOs, members of the Secretariat and the GEF Partnership for the important accomplishments so far.

Thank you and happy birthday!



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REPUBLIC OF BELARUS: INVESTING IN WOMEN'S ROLE IN RENEWABLE ENERGY

Aliaksandr Haroshka (Political Focal Point)
Deputy Minister Ministry of Natural Resources and
Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus

Currently, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus, with support of the Global Environment Facility, is implementing six projects of international technical assistance in such areas as persistent organic pollutants and chemicals management, ozone-depleting substances, management of forest and wetland ecosystems, elimination of barriers to the development of renewable energy sources, building capacity for greenhouse gas emissions trading, and strengthening monitoring, reporting, and verification systems.

The country pays special attention to the issues of adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change. One effective mechanism to reduce greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere, mitigate the climate, and contribute to the development of a "green" economy is the development of renewable energy.

The GEF project "Removing barriers to wind power development in the Republic of Belarus" (2014-2021) created a financially viable public-

private partnership to stimulate investment in the wind energy sector in Belarus by providing seed capital and demonstrating market-based practical developments.

With financial support from the GEF, pre-investment work was carried out on five sites for the construction of wind farms in the Republic of Belarus. Wind potential was measured in accordance with international standards, pre-design documentation was developed, an environmental impact assessment was carried out, and the permits required in accordance with the legislation for the creation of wind power plants were obtained. The first pre-investment asset, which was created as a result of that work, was sold at an open auction to the investor. The Turkish company "Gurish" will invest 46 million euros in the implementation of the project. Consequently, the largest wind farm in the Republic of Belarus (with a capacity of 25 MW) will appear in 2022.

The GEF project funds made it possible to fully build capacity for conducting wind measurements; to update the State Cadastre of Renewable Energy Sources; and to create the information resource Atlas of Winds of the

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Republic of Belarus. During implementation, a number of regulatory legal acts were adopted that promote investment in the field of renewable energy, as well as contribute to the fulfillment of obligations assumed by the Republic of Belarus under international climate agreements.

The project also paid attention to the role of the women's initiative for the development of renewable energy in rural areas. It trained socially active women; and developed materials that allow both preparation of a project to create a renewable energy facility and identification of financing options for such a project.

The activities of the project facilitated closer interaction of stakeholder ministries in the development of renewable energy in the country, as well as productive cooperation between government bodies, business, financial institutions, and public associations on renewable energy and combating climate change.

Thus, Belarus undoubtedly contributes to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, effective measures against climate change both at the national and global levels.

The Republic of Belarus, as a country with an economy in transition, expresses its firm intention to continue effective and efficient cooperation with the GEF and hopes for the support of the GEF in capacity building activities in Belarus.

In particular, Belarus will appreciate the GEF's assistance in combating the adverse effects of climate change, preserving biological and landscape diversity, managing water resources, introducing a circular economy, managing waste, and submitting reports to the secretariats of international treaties in order to fulfill the international obligations of the state.



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BELGIUM: AN IMPORTANT TOOL FOR ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Corentin Genin (GEF Political Focal Point)
Direction Climat & Environnement (MD8)
S.P.F. Affaires étrangères, Commerce extérieur et
Coopération au développement

Thirty years ago, on the eve of the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, the Global Environment Facility was established as a co-financing programme of the World Bank, to assist in the protection of the global environment and promote environmentally sound and sustainable economic development. Shortly afterwards it was restructured to become a multilateral fund and has grown ever since. Originally designated by two conventions as the operator of their respective financial mechanisms, it now serves five Multilateral Environment Agreements directly and half a dozen chemicals, waste and biodiversity-related conventions indirectly. The three founding Implementing Agencies have become eighteen GEF Agencies and the initial \$1 billion in funding has reached the grand total of \$21.5 billion in grants, which mobilized an additional \$117 billion in co-financing.

The GEF's focal area structure reflects the multiple facets of the global environment, incorporates the guidance that the international community develops during the Conferences of the Parties of the Conventions it serves and allows it to tackle the challenges in an integrated manner that

delivers multiple global environmental benefits. Time and again, independent evaluations have shown that the GEF fulfils its mandate well by being responsive to the Conventions and producing tangible results on the ground, in accordance with recipient countries' priorities, that have real impact on improving the global environment. In doing so, the GEF contributes significantly to the sustainable development of recipient countries.

Thanks to all these characteristics and positive results, Belgium considers the GEF to be an important tool for its international environmental policy and has been actively involved with the GEF for a long time, both in the Council and in the Conferences of the Parties of various Conventions.

Today is not only the moment to congratulate the GEF with its anniversary, but also to express sincere gratitude for the years of hard work by all those who make up the partnership. At the same time, it is a good day to look ahead and, in light of the huge environmental challenges that remain, to renew the engagement to continue to support the GEF as the key role that it must maintain in delivering support to implement the objectives of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, as well as to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Belgium seizes this opportunity

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to state its resolve to continue to work with all GEF stakeholders in order to perpetuate GEF's important role in working for a better world.

On behalf of Belgium, I would like to recall our

commitment to continue to partner with the GEF towards a Healthy People on a Healthy Planet.

By these, Belgium wishes a Happy 30th Anniversary to the whole GEF family.



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ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN: GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS COMMISSION

Rinchen Wangdi (GEF Operational Focal Point)
Director, Gross National Happiness Commission

Greetings from the Royal Government of Bhutan!

On the joyous occasion of the 30th Anniversary of GEF, the Kingdom of Bhutan extends its message of felicity for the successful efforts of GEF towards biodiversity and environmental conservation. We take this opportunity to acknowledge GEF's staunch commitments in enhancing the conservation efforts of Bhutan.

Guided by the development principles of Gross National Happiness and its far-sighted leadership of His Majesties, Bhutan remains determined to deliver global commitments to climate actions. The national mandate to conserve environment is enshrined in the constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan while the sustainable socio-economic developments are pursued in strict conformity to minimal environmental destruction.

GEF operations in Bhutan are strongly anchored in delivering result-oriented actions, which are instrumental in materializing the national programming and climate plans. Through GEF-STAR

Fund, Bhutan is striving towards achieving zero emissions in the transport sector by contributing to our commitment to remain carbon neutral (articulated at the COP15 of UNFCCC in 2009) through widened promotion of e-vehicle uptake as the preferred mode of urban mobility in Bhutan. Moreover, the Sustainable Land Management and Eco-Tourism are central activities defining the green economy, to which Bhutan has nested its national priorities on.

Moreover, the GEF-LDCF programming through NAPA projects has primarily concentrated on climate-resilient developments, testified evidently through activities of Sustainable Land Management, Smart Agriculture Practices, Climate-proofing Water/Irrigation facilities and Climate-resilient Farm Roads in the country. Additionally, the GEFSGP funding supports have been crucial in enhancing the economic livelihood of women and farmers, across the country. The 194 activities of GEFSGP, in totality, has catered to driving ecological conservations in conjunction with uplifting the rural economy throughout the twenty districts of Bhutan.

As GEF marks its 30th Anniversary, this year, the RGoB stands in support to the GEF programming

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and its operational mandates, with concentrative fulfilment of mandates flagged in Bhutan's 1st and 2nd Nationally Determined Contributions, Climate Change Policy (2020) and SDGs. In this regard, the celebration of 30th Anniversary is our reiteration of our commitments to deliver climate change operational functionalities, which in entirety, meet the mandate of COP21, the Paris Agreement. The Kingdom of Bhutan views that operations

of GEF and other climate funding windows must be accorded with empowered roles and responsibilities so that all countries receive clear directives to harmoniously exist with the planetary requirement of healthy living.

Happy 30th Anniversary, may this celebration be the reminder of our same tone and equal efforts for the healthy well-being of our planet and people of continual timeline. Congratulation GEF!



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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: SUPPORT TO JOIN A GLOBAL FAMILY

Senad Oprašić (Council Member)
Head of Environment Protection Department
Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations
of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The GEF is recognized in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) as a proven and trusted partner that supports the country's path towards fulfilment of international environmental conventions and EU accession. Thanks to continued partnership with the GEF, the country has joined a global family to combat the climate crisis, preserve ecosystems and biodiversity.

On its green development path, the country has made a significant step towards the achievement of the global climate goals. With GEF assistance, B&H submitted its enhanced Nationally Determined Contribution. This will not only contribute to GHG emission reduction but also help us restructure the economy. In this way, we will gradually transition from fossil fuels to renewables, recover back better from the COVID-19 crisis and build more resilient communities driven by green growth, job opportunities, and reduced climate risks. Further support is given to the country in fulfilling its obligations under Article 13 of the Paris Agreement via development of its domestic climate change monitoring, reporting, and verification system.

Thanks to the GEF, for the first time, an integrated river basin approach was applied, resulting in

significant improvement of flood risk management in Vrbas River basin. The flood forecasting platform was set up and a series of nature-based, non-structural flood risk reduction measures were implemented in 13 municipalities situated in the basin. This ultimately resulted in reduction of flood losses and damage for more than 200,000 flood-affected residents. These efforts now serve as a good foundation for new initiatives that can be easily replicated throughout the country to reduce devastating climate-induced flood risk.

By removing policy, institutional, financial, and technical barriers for introduction of low-carbon solutions, B&H is moving towards low-carbon urban development. Through this process, the GEF supported creation of "Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans" in 15 municipalities; established a Waste Management System in B&H; and helped sustain an Energy Management Information System that enables monitoring and analysis of energy and water use in more than 75% of public buildings. Extensive support has been given to ensuring sustainability by the development of a financial mechanism such as the ESCO market.

Over the past several years, endeavors have been made to enrich the biological diversity of the country. The protected areas network has been expanded, while the management of protected

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areas was enhanced with the development and adoption of management planning.

Further efforts will be made to enhance the protection and management of biological diversity with the GEF-7 project. It aims at better biodiversity status through strengthened resilience of key biodiversity values to climate change impact. Development options will valorize unique nature values without further threatening them.

Bosnia and Herzegovina governments extend their gratitude to the GEF, and hope to continue this extremely needed and successful cooperation. In the absence of EU funding, with the lack of capacity, thanks to GEF support we expanded our protected area, prepared important reports for the three Rio Conventions, increased awareness raising, and included academics, civil society, NGOs, and citizens in the processes of improving environment and climate actions.



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CHINA: PARTNERSHIP FOR HARMONY BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE

Cheng Zhipun (Acting Political Focal Point)
Acting Director-General of the Ministry of Finance
The People's Republic of China

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) will celebrate its 30th anniversary this year, which is an opportune moment to reflect on its past achievements and envision challenges and opportunities ahead.

Since its inception in 1991, the GEF has expanded its role in various fields, developed new tools to fulfill its mission, and enhanced its unique partnership with governments, agencies and the private sector. It has helped developing countries introduce new concepts, accelerate domestic reforms, promote technology transfer, enhance capacity building and raise public awareness to achieve environment-friendly development through its funding support. Today, the GEF has developed into the world's largest multilateral source of funds for environmental actions in developing countries, and delivered multiple environmental benefits in various natural ecosystems, from the biodiversity and climate to land, water and forests.

Standing at a new starting point, the international community is faced with unprecedented challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, worsening desertification and frequent extreme weather events. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has added difficulty to economic and social development

across countries. The international community needs to come up with unprecedented ambition and action to address challenges ahead. As a pioneer of protecting the global environment, the GEF should step up its efforts to invest in our planet in the coming years.

Over the past three decades, China and the GEF have maintained productive cooperation, with a portfolio of 176 national projects worth \$1.4 billion in the GEF funding. The China-GEF cooperation has promoted China's ecological and environmental protection, increased domestic capacity to implement international conventions on environment, and made contributions to harmony between man and Nature in China. Furthermore, China's success in implementing the GEF projects has contributed to the GEF's mission of enhancing global environmental benefits, and provided useful experience for other developing countries. For instance, the GEF support to the project of Integrated Adoption of New Energy Vehicles helps accelerate application of the electric-based mobility technologies in China, which has provided valuable experience and knowledge for large-scale promotion of the technologies for electrification of transport in other developing countries. As a founding member, client and donor, China stands ready to work with the GEF to address multiple environmental challenges, enhance global

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environmental governance, support a green, inclusive, resilient, and clean recovery from the pandemic and build a community of life for man and Nature.

Promoting green development is a top priority in China's development strategy and the 14th Five-Year Plan. China will continue to prioritize

ecological conservation, take firm actions nationwide towards carbon peak and carbon neutrality, and promote biodiversity protection on the path to build a beautiful China. As China will host COP15 to the Convention on Biological Diversity later this year, we look forward to working with all parties including the GEF to enhance global governance on biodiversity.



Photo by Sara Winter/Shutterstock

CÔTE D'IVOIRE: RESTORATION OF MANGROVES

Joseph Séka Séka

Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development

Côte d'Ivoire has been a member of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) since its inception. To date, the country has benefited from 71 projects—43 regional and international projects and 28 national projects—and has received financing for 338 microprojects for civil society.

Côte d'Ivoire has received a total of CFAF 216,343,866,192 in grants from the GEF.

A number of GEF-funded projects are currently being executed, including:

"The Integrated Management of Protected Areas in Côte d'Ivoire Project." The Banco National Park is the pilot site for this project that aims to protect this park—the water reservoir and "Green Lung" of the city of Abidjan. UNEP is the implementing agency while OIPR is the executing agency.

Two projects under the Sustainable Cities program:

"The Abidjan Urban Transport Project," the implementation of which will facilitate sustainable urban mobility in Abidjan while mitigating climate change impacts. The GEF's implementing agency is AfDB and the executing agency is AGEROUTE.



Banco National Park (3,438 hectares)
GEF/UNEP Project

"The Industrial Pollution Project," with UNIDO serving as the GEF's implementing agency and CIAPOL as the executing agency.

"The Obsolete Pesticides Management Project," which will contribute to the safe management of pesticides throughout their life cycle in order to mitigate their impact on health and environment. The World Bank is the implementing agency for this GEF project.

The GEF's Small Grants Programme, the implementing agency for which is UNDP, financed 338 microprojects for a total of CFAF 3,646,522,992. The following key results were achieved:

- the introduction of beekeeping to protect gallery forests and forest relics;

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- the sustainable management of coastal ecosystems with the protection of sea turtles;
- the restoration of mangrove forests;
- the reduced destruction of timber resources with the construction of improved stoves.

I wish the Global Environment Facility and all its staff a happy 30th anniversary. My hope is that the financing of environment and climate projects will continue for many years to come.



Visit to the 4th bridge project (GEF/AfDB project)



Photo by HakBak/Shutterstock

COSTA RICA: ACCELERATING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Andrea Meza
Minister of Environment and Energy
Republic of Costa Rica

Costa Rica's biodiversity (close to 5% of the world's known species) was under threat throughout the 20th century. By the 1990s it had the highest global deforestation rates and less than 25% of forest cover due to agricultural expansion and logging. By 2021 forest cover had increased to 52% nationwide. Over this thirty-year period, a successful implementation of environmental policies and effective execution of GEF funding, has made Costa Rica one of the only countries in the world to reverse its deforestation, stop biodiversity loss and increase forest cover to over half its total territory (52%), at the same as increasing economic growth. The policies GEF projects have helped design and implement accelerated sustainable development in the country. For example, last years incorporation of environmental parameters in the measurement of UNDP's HDI made Costa Rica rise 37 places in the global ranking of 2020.

GEF funding in the country has generated impressive results. Costa Rica's network of 160 protected areas into a single entity covering 1,840,448 hectares of protected land, equivalent to 26.21% of the national continental territory and 0.85% of the national sea

surface area protecting 3 biomes, 20 life-zones, 33 eco-regions, and more than 60 plant formations in country that hosts close to 5% of worlds described biodiversity all has been achieved through site-specific projects like the Conserving Biodiversity of Cocos Island Marine Protected Area, thematic projects like Removing Barriers for protected Areas, or system-wise projects like Removing Barriers of the National System of Conservation Areas. The newer generation of GEF projects (GEF-6 and GEF-7) in the country have started to concentrate on urban areas and in helping the country transition towards a green, blue and inclusive economy.

Today, through the Payment for Ecosystem Services programme, the country generates annual investments of \$45 million to conserve 1,000,000 hectares of private lands and making it the only existing government cash transfer programme directly targeting indigenous people. The conceptualization and initial operation of the PES programme benefited from GEF funding.

Finally, decades of GEF funding have supported the forest cover restoration and biodiversity conservation that helped boom the tourism sector. This sector now contributes with \$1.7 billion a year, between 6.3% to 8.2% of national GDP and 8.8% of total employment.



Photo by Geet Theerawat/Shutterstock

DENMARK: COLLABORATING WITH THE GEF FOR THE WORLD WE SHARE

Liesl Karen Inglis

Senior Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

The 30th anniversary of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is an excellent occasion to take stock of the results achieved since its inception in 1992, and reaffirm the critical role the GEF plays as the financial mechanism for the major international environment conventions. We would like to use this opportunity to express how proud Denmark is to be one of the founding donors of the GEF and that we remain committed to support the GEF in its role to support sustainable development by delivering tangible results in improving the global environment.

Denmark is a green frontrunner in global climate action with the goal of 70 percent emissions reductions by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050. It is Denmark's ambition to help lead the green transition by taking action to raise significantly global ambitions for the climate and resilience, the environment and nature; and by actively advancing implementation of the Paris Agreement, and further sustainable development in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. Through bilateral and multilateral collaborations, Denmark aims to be a global driving force to influence others to raise ambitions in order to meet these global goals.

The Danish Government has therefore taken the initiative to establish the first ever long-term strategy for global climate action, "A Green and Sustainable World". With this strategy, a course is chartered for Denmark's international climate efforts. This will also entail a strengthening of efforts in the multilateral climate and environmental funds, with a particular focus on those established as part of the Climate Convention such as the GEF.

In addition to this, Denmark's new strategy for development cooperation, "The World We Share" 2025, sets the direction for Danish development cooperation for the next four years. One of the two strategic pillars in the strategy is being in the front line in the fight for climate, nature, and the environment. The strategy explicitly states that Denmark will increase its support to climate change adaptation in the poorest and most vulnerable countries, not least in Africa.

In order to enable this ambitious, persistent, multifaceted and integrated global climate effort, Denmark very much appreciates the opportunity to be a part of the GEF as a way of achieving these goals, as work of the GEF contributes directly to fulfilling Denmark's priority areas. We therefore very much look forward to continuing our support and collaboration with the GEF.



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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: A STRONG COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP

Rosa Otero

Directora de Relaciones Internacionales
Viceministerio de Cooperación Internacional

With very little time left to bring about the changes needed to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has become even more essential as a funder of innovative solutions to the most urgent environmental problems.

The Dominican Republic, one of the fastest-growing countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, is highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, owing to its status as an island nation and its geographical location. The country has established a strong cooperative relationship with the GEF and has been working with the Facility since 1992 to ensure sustainable, resilient, and inclusive development. To that end, the GEF has provided more than \$359 million in financing for 15 national projects and 32 regional or global projects relating to biodiversity, land degradation, and climate change.

Among the flagship projects of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, carried out in collaboration with the GEF, is the Protected Areas Reengineering Project. The results produced by this initiative have been crucial to conserving biodiversity in the country. These results include the establishment of operating and financing

mechanisms, land management and use plans, studies on the valuation of ecosystem services, training for park rangers and administrators, infrastructure, and control and surveillance equipment. Thanks to this project, revenue collection in protected areas, the services offered, community participation and income generation, and the conservation status of key species and ecosystems have all improved.

In this latest investment cycle, known as GEF-7, which began in 2018, projects have sought to address the major challenges of climate change and its relationship with biodiversity through the strengthening of integrated landscape management, watershed protection, climate-smart agricultural practices, blue economy development, and technical capacity building.

The efforts made to date by government institutions, implementing agencies, the private sector, and civil society, working hand in hand with the GEF, have enabled us to make progress on a wide range of environmental issues. However, we must redouble our efforts to adapt to climate change if we are to ensure that our actions are sufficient to meet the challenges of the climate emergency we are facing. The GEF can count on the government of the Dominican Republic to integrate the objectives, policies, and strategies resulting from all our projects and programs into national decision-making.



Photo by Diego Alejandro Rojas/Shutterstock

ECUADOR: SUPPORT FOR POLICIES THAT TARGET CONSERVATION, VALUE CHAINS, AND BIOECONOMY

Nancy Ampudia

Director of International Bi-Multilateral and South-South Cooperation

Ecuador recognizes climate change as the main threat to the existence of life on the planet. It is aware that if the current trend of increasing global temperature continues, in several regions, including the Andean Region, the alteration of climatic regimes such as extreme rainfall or droughts, would intensify. This would leave serious impacts on biodiversity, food sovereignty, agriculture, livestock, aquaculture and fishing, food production and prices, trade, transport, and urban and rural infrastructure.

It is due to these factors that the GEF's work in Ecuador, through the financing of programs and projects, has allowed the implementation of public policies aimed at conservation, and improvement of value chains and bioeconomy. This has shown that the conservation and sustainable development of natural resources go together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition to the important impacts of implementation of programs and projects, the support of the GEF has achieved a mainstreaming

of environmental topics, with a holistic perspective in all sectors, such as in transport, agriculture, and urban mobility, among others. It is also worth noting that regional efforts have made it possible to solve in a shared way the difficulties that countries are going through in environmental matters, since environmental governance is cross-border.

Ecuador is at an important political moment after the election of a new President. With the public policies on environmental matters that are sought during this new period, Ecuador aims at guaranteeing the quality, conservation, and sustainability of natural resources. It is for this reason that the 8th replenishment of the GEF will contribute to making these policies effective for the benefit of the State, society, and the environment.

Finally, Ecuador seeks to maintain a proactive role in all forums and negotiations, promoting the search for consensus around ambitious goals that allow progress in climate action under the principles of equity and common—but differentiated—responsibilities. This needs to incorporate a focus on rights, with attention to the poorest and most vulnerable groups, and the involvement of all relevant actors.



Photo by Marcel Bakker/Shutterstock

EGYPT: MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY IN TOURISM

Hoda Elshawadfy (Council Member)
Head of national GEF unit at the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established 30 years ago at the Rio Earth Summit and Egypt was one of the first recipient countries. We are a member of the North Africa constituency that was comprised of the following countries: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia.

We have had a long and fruitful journey with the GEF since 1992, with almost 90 successfully implemented projects in all focal areas. We were keen from the start to involve all relevant stakeholders throughout the process—from ideas that fit within national priorities and that accommodate global mandates right to the closure of projects. We established a national steering committee and a GEF unit at EEAA to ensure alignment with GEF guidelines and to commitments of the Conventions.

Since the start of the GEF-5 cycle, we started utilizing a different modality. The GEF's Small Grants Programme (SGP) is now complementing full and medium-size projects to have more impact on the ground and ensure the sustainability of outputs.

Egypt's SGP, funded by the GEF and administered by the United Nations Development Programme

(UNDP), was established in 1992. It aimed to provide financial and technical support to small projects at the local level in developing countries to preserve and rehabilitate natural environments, while improving the living conditions of local communities. Beginning with GEF-6, the SGP was a fully funded component of Egypt's STAR allocation as it was one of the SG graduated countries.

Another success is "Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Egypt's Tourism" implemented by the UNDP in cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of Environment (MoE). The project focuses on supporting and enhancing ecotourism, sustainable practices, and development in the tourism sector.

In accordance with the project's goals and objectives, we launched ECO EGYPT, a nationwide campaign to promote ecotourism and encourage sustainable practices within the tourism sector in 13 different protected areas in Egypt.

Approximately 80% of inbound travel to Egypt targets the Red Sea region, one of the largest biodiversity hubs in the world.

However, this region is subject to intensifying tourism pressures. In response, we set up a partnership with UNDP Egypt, GEF, MoE, Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Egyptian Hotel Association, and the Chamber

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of Diving and Watersports. Our goal is to raise awareness about marine conservation in the Red Sea and highlight the importance of ecosystem protection and restoration.

On World Environment Day (June 5, 2021), we launched a marine conservation campaign in the Egyptian Red Sea, the first of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa region.

The campaign consists of a bilingual (English & Arabic) video that highlights the most common tourist practices that harm the coastal environment.

In addition to a social media campaign, these videos are displayed in airports, local airlines, buses, hotels, diving centers and on public billboards in the Red Sea region.

Our campaign is committed to achieve the relevant principles laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals and UN Convention on Biological Diversity and support the notions brought forth by the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration #GenerationRestoration.

Website:

<http://www.ecoegypt.org/>

Facebook:

<https://bit.ly/3nax4VW>

Instagram:

<https://bit.ly/3jlth5N>

English Brochure:

<https://bit.ly/2OlK5PQ>



EL SALVADOR: PROMOTING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Fernando Andrés López Larreynaga
Minister of Environment and Natural Resources
El Salvador

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has provided nonreimbursable financing for El Salvador since 1996, supporting the implementation of 18 national projects, 20 regional projects, and five global projects in addition to 212 local initiatives under the GEF's Small Grants Programme. The financing of those projects enlisted the involvement of key Salvadoran actors, including the private sector, mobilizing substantial counterpart funds for investment.

With support from the GEF, El Salvador has made solid progress in defining its policies, updating national plans and strategies, and establishing regulatory frameworks and participatory mechanisms for environmental management, as well as developing systems to produce and synthesize information relevant to the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements. National capacities have been strengthened to ensure a coordinated, synergistic response in terms of planning and implementing the road map to achieve the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals.

Through its commitment to the GEF focal areas of biodiversity, climate change, and land degradation, El Salvador has promoted innovative initiatives having significant impacts and repercussions for the global environmental agenda, as demonstrated by projects such as "Promotion of Biodiversity Conservation within Coffee Landscapes," "Mainstreaming Biodiversity Management into Fisheries and Tourism Activities carried out in Coastal/Marine Ecosystems," and "Establishment of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor." It has promoted synergistic approaches to ecosystems management to meet the challenges of climate change, food security, and disaster risk through initiatives to consolidate national management of protected areas and improve wetlands management. It has also made ecosystem and landscape restoration a national priority, inspiring the United Nations General Assembly to proclaim the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030.

In the area of climate change, the GEF has supported institutional strengthening, technical capacity building, vulnerability studies, and "Building Climate Resilience of Urban Systems through Ecosystem-Based Adaptation in the City of San Salvador," which also aims to strengthen capacities to incorporate the ecosystem-based adaptation (EBA) approach in urban planning.



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REPUBLIC OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA: INVESTING IN CAPACITY, FOSTERING COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

Antonio Micha Ondo Angue
Director of the Ministry of Environment

The threats that weigh on Planet Earth point to the fact that mankind may be the species whose existence on this planet will have been the most fleeting. The greatest paradox is that mankind itself has been the originator and prime mover of these threats. The rapid rates of deforestation and forest degradation, the fast pace of extinction of species, the pollution of the oceans, and so forth, are all part of the body of evidence that attests to the man-made causes of climate change and its impacts.

However, knowing what to avoid is not the same as knowing how to avoid it. The lack of empathy for the vulnerable groups most adversely affected by the shock of climate change and its impacts, as well as organized environmental crime in developing countries, continue to be the most enduring obstacles. Specifically, the companies and the majority of stakeholders that operate in developing countries exploit the existing systemic weaknesses, such as corruption and the paucity of mechanisms for adequate environmental monitoring and evaluation.

In light of this situation, the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) acts as a key bulwark to protect the



2011. Rehabilitation of a plot of land with fruit trees in Misa (Ebibeyin): an OP4 project for LDCs/SIDS

interests of these countries, as it is the main financial mechanism that can help them address these multiple environmental challenges. Developing countries are therefore the main beneficiaries under the GEF framework.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea, as one such beneficiary country, has been the recipient of resources to fund the enabling activities for the implementation of the Rio sister conventions, as well as for the formulation and implementation of a number of projects under the auspices of UNDP, UNEP, and FAO. In this regard, there have



2019. Rehabilitated land in Misa (Ebibeyin): an OP4 project for LDCs/SIDS

been several major achievements, such as the rehabilitation of the plot of land in Misa in the town of Ebibeyin, in the context of the project entitled "*Reforzamiento de las capacidades nacionales técnicas e institucionales para la gestión sostenible de bosques y tierras*" (Strengthening national and institutional capacities for sustainable forest and land management). This project was implemented



A typical landscape in the Altos de Nsork protected area that has already received GEF funding

between 2010 and 2014 and is part of Operational Program 4 (OP4) for LDCs and SIDS. There have also been other successes in the case of STAR projects.

GEF may therefore be seen as a facility that invests in capacity development and fosters commitment in recipient communities to actions that produce environmental benefits.



Photo by Sakari Pippo

FINLAND: A TRUSTED AND RESPECTED PARTNER TO CO-CREATE A GREENER, BLUER, AND BETTER PLANET

Ville Skinnari
Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade

For 30 years, the Global Environment Facility has served our planet in finding transformative solutions to environmental challenges and in fighting against environmental degradation. The GEF has the unique role—now and in the future—as a key financial instrument for supporting and promoting global environmental benefits.

The GEF's strong mandate and capacity enables it to deal with climate change, biodiversity, land degradation, chemicals and waste, and international waters. The challenges our planet faces are immense, interlinked and complex. Together, in close cooperation and coordination with all relevant stakeholders, we can find the solutions. It is important to find synergies and prevent working in silos. The GEF plays a lead role in bringing all actors together.

The GEF provides a great example of how to involve all partners, such as civil society organizations, academia and the private sector. We are confident the private sector engagement strategy will take collaboration with the private sector to a new and necessary level. We are grateful for the GEF's efforts to promote gender equality and trust it will continue to



strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all its work. Thirty years ago, the GEF itself was an innovative financing mechanism. This innovativeness continues in its activities and brings transformational change to the current and future challenges of our planet.

Today, as the organization turns into its thirties, the transformational work is more important than ever. During and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the GEF has played a vital role in building back better, greener, more sustainable, more resilient and more inclusive. The GEF has also an important role in helping to prevent future pandemics. We are confident the GEF can and will also fulfill our future expectations.

We sincerely congratulate the GEF on its many great achievements and its indispensable work during the past 30 years. For Finland, the GEF remains a trusted and respected partner. Only together can we accomplish a greener, bluer and better planet for the generations to come.

Photo by Dirk Ercken/Shutterstock



FRANCE: GEF WORK IS CRITICAL TO ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY

Alain Beauvillard (Council Member)
Head of Multilateral Finance for Development and Climate at the French Treasury

France has been a longstanding and key partner of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) since its establishment in 1991. Given its central role in various global environmental issues, it has, for the past 30 years, inspired and fueled our discussions and actions related to multilateral official development assistance.

France is pleased with the outcomes of the GEF's work and supports evolutions of the GEF's orientations over the different replenishment periods. In particular, France supports the decisive action of the GEF to place greater emphasis on environmental conservation in the most vulnerable countries, namely the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States.

As the financial mechanism for five international conventions, the GEF is the only multilateral fund with a central position in the environmental financing architecture. Its value added in seeking climate co-benefits is well established, in complementarity with other multilateral funds such as the Green Climate Fund. Furthermore, the



GEF is recognized as a major player in biodiversity conservation and it will play a pivotal role in supporting the implementation of the future post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

France drew on the experience of the GEF and its successful work on the ground in establishing a bilateral fund—the French Facility for Global Environment (Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial or FFEM in French). There are numerous synergies between the two funds. More than 55 projects have been co-financed by the GEF and FFEM since their establishment, leading to the

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mobilization of €67 million from the FFEM and more than \$150 million from the GEF through its implementing agencies. They have worked together on biodiversity conservation, tropical forest conservation, nature-based solutions such as mangrove restoration, and combating the use of mercury in gold mining.

The challenges related to global environmental conservation in the post-COVID recovery context

are immense. Private sector mobilization, as well as the expertise and geographic specificities of the implementing agencies, will continue to play a critical role in the continuity and impact of the GEF's activities. While much work needs to be done and many challenges tackled, France supports the work of the GEF now more than ever, as it is critical to addressing the climate and environmental emergency.



Photo by Dirk Ercken/Shutterstock



LA FRANCE: LE TRAVAIL DU FEM EST ESSENTIEL POUR FAIRE FACE À L'URGENCE CLIMATIQUE ET ENVIRONNEMENTALE

Alain Beauvillard (Council member)
Head of Multilateral Finance for Development and Climate at the French Treasury

Depuis son lancement en 1991, la France est un partenaire historique et majeur du Fonds pour l'Environnement Mondial (FEM). Au centre des différentes problématiques environnementales mondiales, il inspire et nourrit nos réflexions et notre action d'aide publique au développement multilatérale depuis 30 ans.

La France se félicite des résultats obtenus par le FEM et soutient les évolutions de ses orientations, au fil de ses reconstitutions. En particulier, la France soutient l'action décisive du FEM pour une meilleure prise en compte des pays les plus vulnérables que sont les pays les moins avancés (PMA) et les petits états insulaires en développement en matière de préservation de l'environnement.

Mécanisme financier de cinq conventions internationales, le FEM est le seul fonds multilatéral avec un positionnement central dans l'architecture du financement de la protection



de l'environnement. Sa valeur ajoutée dans la recherche de co-bénéfices climatiques est établie, en complémentarité d'autres fonds multilatéraux comme le Fonds Vert pour le Climat. Enfin, le FEM est reconnu comme un acteur de référence pour la protection de la biodiversité ;

son rôle sera clé dans le soutien à la mise en œuvre du futur cadre-mondial post-2020.

La France s'est inspirée du FEM et de ses réussites sur le terrain pour créer un fonds bilatéral, le

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Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial. De nombreuses synergies existent entre les deux fonds. Plus de 55 projets ont été cofinancés par le FEM et le FFEM depuis leur création, mobilisant 67 MEUR du FFEM et plus de 150 M\$du FEM via ses agences de mise en œuvre. Ils se sont rejoints, entre autres, sur la conservation de la biodiversité, la préservation des forêts tropicales, les solutions fondées sur la nature comme la restauration de la mangrove, la lutte contre l'utilisation du mercure dans l'orpaillage.



Dans le contexte de reprise post-Covid, les défis liés à la préservation de l'environnement mondial sont immenses. La mobilisation du secteur privé, ainsi que l'expertise et les spécificités géographiques des agences de mise en œuvre, continueront à jouer un rôle fondamental pour la continuité et l'impact de l'action du FEM. La tâche à accomplir et les défis à relever sont nombreux, mais la France soutient plus que jamais le FEM dans son action, cruciale pour faire face à l'urgence climatique et environnementale.





Photo by Raulduran Photo/Shutterstock

GEORGIA: SUPPORTING INNOVATIVE AND INCLUSIVE INITIATIVES

Levan Davitashvili (Political Focal Point)
Minister, Ministry of Environmental Protection and
Agriculture of Georgia

Over the years, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has provided significant assistance to Georgia to improve environmental conditions and implement its international obligations under a number of global conventions. The role of the GEF in establishing modern approaches and expert support at the national level is outstanding.

Our long lasting and active cooperation with the GEF on biological diversity, climate change, desertification, persistent organic pollutants and international waters is significant for Georgia as the country is a party to the global environmental agreements related to the above listed fields. Namely, these are the Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, and UN Convention to Combat Desertification.

I believe that the success of the GEF is thanks to its constant improvement of its framework and procedures. This includes the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) under which funds are pre-allocated to 3 key sectors—

biodiversity, climate change and land degradation. This approach us to plan the future projects more thoughtfully and rationally.

Another successful mechanism is the GEF's Small Grants Programme (SGP), which was launched in Georgia in 2012. During the 10-year period, the programme has already supported 76 local initiatives in the country nationwide. Along with the environmental benefits, all projects contributed to poverty reduction and livelihood improvement, capacity development of the local civil society organizations, gender equality and women's empowerment. Its current phase focuses on initiatives with a geographic scope of the Greater and Lesser Caucasus Mountains, Black Sea coast and Georgia's semi-arid regions. It aims to promote and support community-based innovative, inclusive and impactful initiatives and foster multi-stakeholder partnerships at the local level to tackle global environmental issues in priority landscapes and seascapes.

It is notable that GEF not only provides financial assistance to my country through remarkable and unique mechanisms, but also supports the state bodies in planning the projects across the country by using innovative methods and engaging the relatively less developed parts of Georgia

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in environmental governance. Furthermore, GEF helps us to gain significant experience and increase the responsibility of the parties involved in the projects. We consider such an approach as another important factor of its success.

Expressing the great appreciation for the existing cooperation and the provided assistance, Georgia considers the GEF to be one of the valuable and reliable partners for the country.



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GERMANY: AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE MULTILATERAL CLIMATE FINANCE STRUCTURE

Annette Windmeisser (Council Member)
Head of Division Climate Finance (division 421)
Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

The 30th anniversary of the GEF marks an excellent opportunity to celebrate and to reflect upon its contribution in addressing global environmental problems throughout the last three decades.

The GEF is a true learning and adapting institution and a prime example for partnership among various actors that learn and inspire each other. The GEF's quick response to the pandemic and the new focus on blue and green recovery has shown this once more. Germany strongly encourages the GEF to continue this learning path and values the open dialogue of the last decades.

As the second largest donor to the GEF, Germany highly appreciates the GEF's unique role as financing mechanism for the most important environmental conventions of our time and its contribution in providing environmental benefits to those most in need. Reaching out to local communities and Indigenous people, using innovative approaches, and engaging with various partners such as the private sector are crucial when we want to tackle the challenges still ahead of us.

Germany welcomes the trustful partnership that the GEF has built with the GCF to ensure a collaborative and coordinated programming of funds, projects, and national partners. In order to maximise benefits and complementarity, this partnership should be intensified further in the coming years. The GEF's special commitment to vulnerable countries such as LDCs and SIDS in building resilience and providing support for adaptation is of great importance for Germany. This is why Germany has been the largest contributor to the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and encourages the GEF to continue this path.

Despite these accomplishments, accelerated action is needed to achieve the Paris climate goals. In this context, the GEF will remain an integral part of the multilateral climate finance structure, both advancing both the adaptation and mitigation agendas.

Germany would like to thank the staff of the GEF for their tremendous commitment and looks forward to working together with the GEF in the future in jointly addressing global environmental problems—for people and planet.



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ITALY: A UNIQUE ABILITY TO ACT HOLISTICALLY ON GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Paola Pettinari

Senior Advisor, Ministry of the Economy and Finance

Thirty years after the Global Environment Facility was established, we are learning the hard way about the consequences of our failure to live up to the pledges we made at the 1992 Earth Summit. The health emergency we face as a global community is inextricably linked to the health emergency our planet is facing.

The vision proposed by the 2021 Italian Presidency of the Group of Twenty is structured around the three pillars of "People, Planet and Prosperity". Those three words taken together also imply that what we do to the Planet affects us directly.

Our life depends on the integrity of the Earth system.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in its August 5, 2021 report, warns that many of the changes observed in the climate are unprecedented. Sadly, some are already irreversible. Stabilizing the climate requires urgent and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The international community agenda is now focused upon this goal, and rightly so. However, sequestering carbon is not the only task we must fulfil to stem the rapid and dramatic deterioration of our environment. We must not see it in isolation, either.

The Earth is an interconnected web of life.

It is now a well-established fact that species diversity and richness in our natural habitats and forests, in our wild plants and animals, in our landscapes, in our seeds and crops, and in our diets, as well as in our cultures and knowledge systems, is critical to both human and planetary health. Healthy ecosystems and healthy people are more resilient to climate changes, natural disasters, or disease outbreaks. Yet all the 2010 Aichi goals to protect wildlife and ecosystems have been missed and we seem unable to stop the loss of our natural world.

Transitioning away from the paradigm that has led us to the over-exploitation and degradation of our environment requires a holistic response. We must be especially wary about technological silver bullets to solve complex biodiversity, nutrition, hunger, climate, ecological, and health crises, with no regard for their overall environmental, health, and social effects in the short, medium, and long-term.

The GEF, with its mandate spanning across different focal areas, has the unique ability to act on global environmental issues in an integrated fashion. The extent of the GEF's contribution toward preserving and restoring clean air and water, healthy land, forests and oceans which are the fabric of life on our Planet, will be the true measure of its success in the years to come.

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JAPAN: 30 YEARS—THE LANDMARK MOMENT OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

Kazuo Kobayashi (Council Member)
Director for Development Issues
Ministry of Finance

Established in 1991, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has now reached a landmark moment. I would like to express my utmost appreciation to the efforts made by GEF staff, management, implementing partners, recipient countries and other donors. The GEF's mission is very clear. It is to safeguard the global environment by helping developing countries meet their commitments to multiple environmental conventions. The GEF has been designated as the financial mechanism for UNFCCC, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Minamata Convention on Mercury, and Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Chemicals.

Japan has been a leading donor to the GEF, and this is not only because of our high expectation and trust for GEF achievements. It also reflects Japan's wish to address global environmental issues together with the GEF. We are glad to see the successful transition from previous CEO Dr. Naoko Ishii to Mr. Carlos Manuel Rodriguez in June 2020, and we expect that the strong leadership will continue.

We view the GEF activities in the following areas as particularly valuable:

On climate, the GEF has played a role as a hub in sharing information, lessons learned and knowledge. Furthermore, the GEF has a unique strength in the area of upstream intervention, including through policy, legal, and regulatory reforms and capacity building, and also through mobilizing and supporting broader public and private climate investment.

On biodiversity, Japan and the GEF have built a strong partnership, with the GEF providing technical support to help achieve the Aichi biodiversity targets as part of our efforts to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.

On chemicals and waste, Japan has accumulated vast knowledge and expertise from its own experiences, and knows that every country needs to have sound chemicals and waste management. The production, use, and disposal of chemicals are rapidly increasing in developing countries, and these should be matched by enhanced programs and initiatives of sound chemical management.

And finally, the GEF pursues synergistic results through a multi-sectoral approach that includes

COUNTRIES

the areas of climate, biodiversity, land degradation and chemicals; this is an additional strength that enables developing countries to realize multiple benefits across environmental conventions. Safeguarding the global environment can be achieved through enhanced cooperation between developed and developing countries. The GEF is

expected to continue playing an innovative role, building on its 30 years of experience on the ground. Japan congratulates again the GEF on its 30th anniversary and continues to endorse GEF's noble mission for our globe. And we expect more achievements in the next 10 years as well.



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MALAYSIA: INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY TO ENHANCE BIOSAFETY PRACTICES

Sheela Inthiram

Administrative and Diplomatic Officer, Economics and International, The Government of Malaysia

In recent decades, biotechnology has been promoted as a key driver of economic growth, accelerating research and development, promising food security, creation of entrepreneurial opportunities for industrial expansion, health and environmental sustainability.

Malaysia is moving forward in exploring and adopting high technology in optimizing the utilization of her abundant biological resources. Biotechnology is fast making its mark in Malaysia with industries gearing up on the latest innovation to increase productivity and gaining the edge over competitors. Adoption of biotechnology however has raised concerns about the consequences and risks of its advances.

For example, agricultural researches indicated that cultivating genetically modified crops could increase herbicide tolerance and insecticide resistance in weeds and pest insects leading to resistance evolution and further pesticide use. This unsustainable agricultural practice may lead to disruption of the ecosystem dynamics and biodiversity pool.

The fast pace of biotechnology advancement not only brings new perspectives of beneficial applications but also a different realm of risks. The same technology that is being used to enrich our lives, could have unforeseen effects, possibly leading to irreversible environmental damage and potentially detrimental to human, plant and animal health including the wider biodiversity. With rising application and development of modern biotechnology in Malaysia, concerns over their possible health and environmental implications has roused regulatory mechanisms for a more stringent food safety and environmental risk assessment.

Under an earlier Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded project "Capacity Building for Implementation of Malaysia's National Biosafety Framework", Malaysia developed the regulatory and institutional framework. This project also facilitated capacity building on biosafety. Some of the outcomes of this project were the development of a legal framework on biosafety which was eventually adopted by the Malaysian Parliament in 2007 as the Biosafety Act of Malaysia. The law is implemented by the Department of Biosafety Malaysia.

COUNTRIES

Towards enhancing the implementation of biosafety measures in the country and new GEF funded project in collaboration with United Nation Environment Programme (UNEP) and Department of Biosafety (DoB), Malaysia titled "Institutional Capacity to Enhance Biosafety Practices in Malaysia" funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF) is currently being implemented. This project is a big step towards developing a comprehensive framework for implementing national biosafety regulatory system and establishing the necessary capacities to act and respond to Malaysia's obligations as a Party to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

The project aimed to realize a national framework that is based on the following five key elements:

1. A national policy, sectoral policies and strategies related to biosafety and biotechnology
2. A regulatory biosafety regime
3. Governance and administrative system
4. Systems for monitoring and evaluation
5. Mechanisms for public participation and awareness

The first two- a national policy, sectoral policies and strategies regarding biosafety and biotechnology and a regulatory biosafety regime provide the solid foundation and guidance for the implementation of the regulating systems which encompass systems for governance and administration as well as for monitoring and enforcement actions. The final element- mechanisms for public participation and awareness provide for non-technical factors that are crucial to the public's acceptance and confidence in the decisions that are made by the government and regulator particularly the issues of transparency and opportunities for public participation.

Building a comprehensive biosafety regulatory framework and implementing an effective system that is responsive to the various domestic and international commitments and obligations is certainly an enormous, complex and resource-intensive undertaking. With the support of this project, Malaysia is certain that capacity for the effective implementation of biosafety measures in the country will be further strengthened. We would like to thank the GEF for the continued support to Malaysia in the area of biosafety governance.

For more information: <http://www.biosafety.gov.my/en-my/Pages/default.aspx>



Photo by Ahmed Shan

MALDIVES: A PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORY

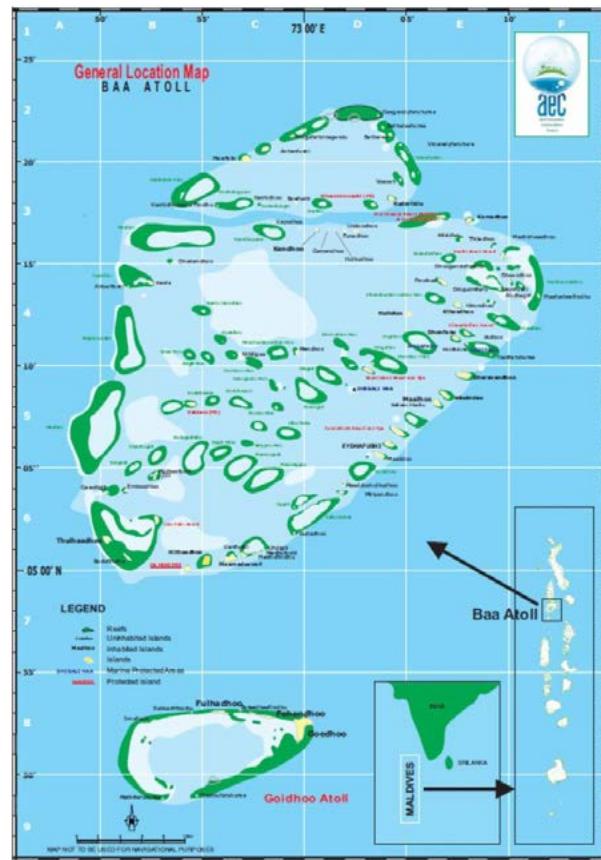
BAA ATOLL BIOSPHERE RESERVE OF THE MALDIVES

Ahmed Wisam

Environment analyst, Ministry of Environment and Finance

The Maldives is a small, island state sprawled across the Indian Ocean. The country is composed of 2,000+ coral reefs, 1,190 islands that are grouped naturally into 21 geographic atolls. The total land area of this tropical paradise is a mere 300 km², making 99% of the country ocean. Even though the terrestrial flora and fauna is relatively poor, the marine biodiversity is extremely rich. And it is this natural abundance that the livelihood of the country depends on. The two main sources of income for the country—tourism and fishing—largely depends on the health of coral reefs. Furthermore, atoll ecosystems are also of global significance, as it is by far the largest group of atolls and coral reefs in the Indian Ocean. These reefs are home to internationally threatened turtle species such as the green and hawksbill turtles, Napoleon wrasse, the giant clam and black coral. It is also home to globally significant populations of whale sharks, reef sharks, and manta rays.

Recognizing this, one globally significant atoll—Baa Atoll—was selected for the Atoll Ecosystem



COUNTRIES

Conservation Project, funded by the GEF, to test the resource management and sustainable use in an atoll, with the aim of replicating the lessons learned across the country.

The project aimed to address shoreline erosion, sedimentation, pollution, and the direct exploitation of terrestrial and marine habitats, and at the same time regulate baitfish harvest, reef fishing and the disturbance of fragile nesting and roosting sites for seabirds.

The project resulted in meetings, workshops, seminars and studies, when previously there were little to no knowledge and practical ability which had resulted in poor cross-agency coordination and weak policy implementation. The project also resulted in the relevant agencies working together with the communities, and consequently the establishment of a mechanism that manages the natural resources, and a conservation fund that supports the sustainable management of the atoll's natural environment. The fund supports small scale local projects in the areas of conservation, livelihood and education, awareness and research.

The project has resulted in Baa Atoll being declared as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, with a separate office in place to manage the day-to-day management of the Reserve.

At heart, the project aimed to protect and conserve the fragile environment of the atoll and apply the lessons learned for the management of coral reefs and atolls across the country.

Today, the Maldives has replicated the experiences of Baa Atoll biosphere reserve to establish two additional atolls declared as UNESCO Biosphere reserves. Work is currently underway to establish more reefs as protected areas which may further lead to the nomination of more atolls of the Maldives as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserves.



Photo courtesy of Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve Office



Photo courtesy of Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve Office



Photo courtesy of Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve Office



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MAURITIUS: WORKING TOGETHER ON COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

Gerard Bussier (Council member)
Deputy Financial Secretary, Ministry of Finance,
Economic Planning and Development

The year 2021 marks the 30th anniversary of the Global Environment Facility. It confers an opportunity for concerted and maturing efforts towards addressing our planet's most pressing environmental issues.

Since its inception in 1992, the GEF has intently propelled itself to the ranks of leading benefactors and flag-bearers on the global environmental front.

The GEF has remained a key partner of Mauritius in addressing the country's complex environmental challenges. Its support in areas such as biodiversity, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and chemicals and waste management has been invaluable.

Through the first biodiversity project in the 1990s, the GEF has helped Mauritius in the restoration and propagation of critically endangered flora and fauna on the islands of Rodrigues, Ile aux Aigrettes, and Round Island, which form part of the Republic of Mauritius. At the same time, it has further reinforced local technical and administrative skills for conservation and ecosystem restoration. GEF assistance towards protection of marine

biodiversity successfully culminated in the first Marine Protected Area in Rodrigues in 2009.

The GEF also assisted Mauritius in enhancing electricity yield from sugar-cane factories, which was conducive to biomass-related renewable energy on the grid throughout the years. Furthermore, GEF's support led to the first Energy Efficiency legislation and the setting up of an Energy Efficiency Management Office in 2011.

The GEF has incessantly played an instrumental role in enhancing the understanding of technologies and policy frameworks required for Mauritius to move into the smart grid era. This is exemplified by the installation of the GEF-funded Solar PV project, Battery Energy Storage Systems, and Smart Grid equipment in view of boosting the penetration of renewable energies on the national grid.

On chemicals and waste management, the first National Implementation Plan for the Stockholm Protocol and the disposal of persistent organic pollutants like DDT was initiated in 2006. To date, the GEF has helped Mauritius dispose of tons of DDT and contributed to the introduction of integrated vector management strategies. This has successfully curtailed transmission of communicable diseases like malaria and dengue.

COUNTRIES

The role of the GEF remains a highly catalytic one in innovative areas with projects on invasive alien species, sustainable transport systems, and enhanced management of health-care wastes in the pipeline.

It is with great pleasure that I wish the GEF a Happy Anniversary and many years of new progress ahead.





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MEXICO: THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

Brenda Pequeño (Council Member and GEF Political Focal Point), Government of Mexico

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has forged a unique and robust alliance that pools the efforts of 184 countries in addition to partners from civil society, international organizations, and the private sector (GEF, 2021a). Ever since its founding, the GEF has been a cornerstone for the global effort to build a sustainable development process and has offered an avenue for the fulfillment of international environmental pledges.

In countries such as Mexico, whose socioeconomic conditions and geographic features make it particularly vulnerable to climate change, the GEF has served as a key financial mechanism for environmentally sound action while at the same time fostering social participation, a reduction in inequalities, and the inclusive and equitable engagement of all sectors of society. The GEF has contributed to Mexico's achievement of its climate-related goals and the fulfillment of its international commitments, starting with its signature of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992 and continuing on to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda.

Mexico has the fourth-largest GEF project portfolio in the world, with 76 national and 43 regional projects accounting for over \$1.121 billion (GEF, 2021b). With initiatives such as its Project on Adaptation to Climate Change Impacts on the Coastal Wetlands, for example, it has succeeded in reforesting over 50 hectares of mangrove swamps and marshes and rehabilitating around 70 hectares of watercourses (World Bank, 2017). The Project on Strengthening Natural Protected Areas has helped to build up the number of jaguars in the country from 4,000 in 2010 to 4,800 in 2018 (CONANP, 2018).

The global economy is going through its deepest recession in 90 years. Today more than ever, as the world struggles with the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, efforts need to be redoubled to honor international environmental commitments and support a sustainable economic recovery. The world is more unequal now than it was in 2019, as the pandemic has had a disproportionately severe impact on the most vulnerable groups in the population. It is estimated that, worldwide, there will be 120 million more people living in extreme poverty than before, and 8 out of every 10 of those people will be in middle-income countries. That is why it is so important to increase the support

being provided to low- and middle-income countries. We have less than 10 years to attain the goals of the 2030 Agenda, and financial assistance for the areas of the world that are most exposed to climate-related threats and where the population is most vulnerable is therefore essential if long-term sustainable growth is to be achieved.

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REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: SHELTERBELTS REDUCE LAND DEGRADATION

Golovaci Nicoleta

Superior Consultant, Regional Development Policies Department Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment

Launched in 2012 in the Republic of Moldova, the GEF's Small Grants Programme (SGP) supports activities of non-governmental and community-based organizations towards climate change abatement, conservation of biodiversity, protection of international waters, reduction of the impact of persistent organic pollutants and prevention of land degradation, while generating sustainable livelihoods. During the period of 2012-2020, the SGP granted about \$2 million as small grants for NGOs, which have implemented 55 projects. As result, 301,860 people benefit from the implemented projects within the SGP. All these projects contributed to solving ecological problems that are included in the priorities of the GEF.

One GEF-funded project on land degradation neutrality is being carried out by FAO from 2020-2023 with a budget of \$1,666,895. The project aims to provide support at central and local levels in achieving land degradation neutrality through enabling the transition from traditional agriculture to the innovative practices of climate-smart agriculture and green agriculture. Approaches like sustainable agro-forestry (shelterbelts) and land

management practices will contribute to achieving the goal at local level within the pilot site of 32 villages in the districts of Orhei and Rezina. Furthermore, the project is raising awareness on the impacts of land degradation at grassroots level in rural communities and agricultural production environment overall.

Another GEF-funded project—"Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into Moldova's territorial planning policies and land use practices"—was implemented by UNDP Moldova during 2015-2018 in four communities from Soroca and Stefan-Voda districts. The most important results were seen after the large-scale planting event in 2018 in Copceac village. Over 400 volunteers from all over the country and the respective communities helped plant a forest protection belt on a degraded and eroded land field of 14 hectares (ha). Today there is a full grown forest that the villagers can benefit from. Also, thanks to this project, there was a considerable increase in hay production in Copceac village. In 2017, it accounted for about 13 tonnes/hectares of hay as compared to 0.5 tonnes/hectares before the rehabilitation.

The Republic of Moldova is proud to be part of this trust fund, and through collaboration, we will be able to contribute to the improvement of the environment and the protection of the planet.



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MOROCCO: GEF CONTRIBUTION TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

Nassira Rheyati

Chef de la Division de la Coopération Internationale
Direction du Partenariat, de la Communication et
de la Coopération, Département de l'Environnement

As a GEF participant country since 1994, Morocco has benefited from 40 national projects amounting to roughly \$140 million, which have paved the way for the mobilization of approximately \$1.2 billion in cofinancing, thus contributing to national environmental protection efforts and giving impetus to legal, institutional, and strategic reforms in this area.

GEF projects have supported efforts to integrate environmental sustainability into several key development sectors (agriculture, energy, transport, housing, industry, etc.), and have helped Morocco meet its commitments under multilateral environmental agreements and participate in activities related to biodiversity conservation, combating climate change, and proper disposal of chemicals.

As early as 1999, the GEF provided assistance to Morocco with the establishment of the Ain Beni Mather Integrated Solar Combined Cycle Plant, thus paving the way for innovative sustainable energy technologies and laying the groundwork for the national renewable energy development strategy.

In view of the agricultural sector's share of GDP and its vulnerability to climate change, it has received substantial assistance from the GEF amounting to roughly \$37 million or 27 percent of the total grants received. These funds were used to assist with implementation of the Plan Maroc Vert agricultural strategy and facilitated the more seamless integration of measures related to biodiversity conservation and combating climate change into the sector, thus strengthening its resilience and adaptation capacity to climate events.

In the area of chemicals, the first platform to eliminate polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in Africa was established in 2015 in Casablanca through a public-private partnership, with GEF assistance. This platform has already been used to dispose of 1,080

metric tons of equipment contaminated with pure PCBs and to decontaminate 450 metric tons of PCB-contaminated equipment.

Transport, a key development sector, has also benefited from GEF assistance to implement the national strategy for the development of logistics competitiveness. In this context, a logistics sector greenhouse gas mitigation strategy (NAMA) has been developed, with an MRV system supported by a tool for calculating GHG emissions.

The GEF has also provided assistance with 199 community projects through GEF's Small Grants Programme, thus making an effective contribution to environmental protection and improved livelihoods for vulnerable population groups.

We are very pleased with this partnership and call on the GEF to stay the course and expand its work with countries to address the new environmental and sustainable development challenges, including those related to their post-COVID-19 recovery.



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MOZAMBIQUE: BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO MANAGE CLIMATE RISK

Joaquim Maibaze

Minister of Land and Environment of Mozambique

In recent years Mozambique has been plagued by extreme weather events such as cyclones, flooding, droughts and rising sea levels. As a global challenge of immeasurable proportions, climate change matters have been at the top of the Government's priorities. This is explained by the approval of several strategic instruments for the sector, with emphasis on:

1. Approval in 2015 of the National Strategy for Adaptation and Mitigation of Climate Change, essentially aimed at reducing the vulnerability of communities, the economy and infrastructure to climate risks and natural and anthropogenic disasters;
2. The elaboration and implementation of 121 local adaptation plans;
3. The approval of the Nationally Determined Contribution of Mozambique in 2018.

With the support of our cooperation partners, the country has been, on the one hand, developing adaptation actions, building resilient infrastructure, and on the other hand, implementing mitigation actions, with emphasis on the introduction of clean and renewable energies, that have been contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. And still in the context of mitigation, the country

embraced the REDD+ initiative whose the results are already visible and measurable. In this vein we must highlight the REDD+ pilot initiative in the Zambézia province, which is considered to be one of the first successful cases and hence a model in Africa, with carbon credits already generating gains for the entire chain of actors and beneficiaries, especially to the local communities.

Among various cooperation partners that the country has been engaged with, the GEF's contribution has an important role to play specially in the fields of biodiversity conservation, climate change, land degradation, persistent organic pollutants, chemicals and waste management, to ensure:

1. Human and environment protection;
2. Strengthened institutional and community capacities in climate risk management;
3. Poverty alleviation in our communities, by strengthening their productive capacities and increasing financial sustainability.

On behalf of the Government of Mozambique, we would like to wish you a happy anniversary, reiterating our continued willingness to collaborate with you in environment. Related matters such as sustainable management of the environment, natural resources management and ecosystems services that nature offers.



THE NETHERLANDS: A PROUD PARTICIPANT IN THE GEF SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT

Carola van Rijnsoever
Director Inclusive Green Growth,
Ambassador Sustainable Development
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands

As the GEF celebrates its 30th anniversary its work seems more needed and more relevant than ever. GEF at 30 has become “the indispensable mechanism”.

This decade is our last chance to prevent climate change from having devastating effects and to avert the risk of reaching irreversible tipping points. This decade is also our best chance to end poverty and inequality through delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals. The GEF has been a key mechanism for preserving our environment for 30 years. In the time to come we cannot do without the GEF to achieve the goals that we set ourselves together, focusing on preventing and fighting environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change, as well as on helping vulnerable communities to adapt to changes.

As Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher, said, change is the only constant in life. And change is the only constant in the GEF’s life as well. The breadth and depth of the environmental and climatological challenges that we are up against



make us feel more strongly than before that only strong cooperation across all actors and sectors will enable us to master these challenges. Integrated programming, innovative financing mechanisms, cooperation with other funds, private sector engagement—these new ways of working, involving a wider set of donors and stakeholders in our work, are the future of the GEF. An inclusive approach, taking into account the rights and talents of all on the ground, is the only way to make a lasting impact and to achieve durable change.

The Netherlands has been a proud participant in the GEF since its establishment. We look forward to continue being an active partner in the years to come.

Dear GEF-community, congratulations on your anniversary. Let us all thrive together and make the most of the GEF to build a healthy planet for healthy people!



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NORWAY: GEF—PART OF THE FUTURE WE WANT

Mette Møglestue

Council Member/Elected Co-chair

In these challenging times for the environment, there is an urgent need for efficient cooperation between governments, the private sector, academic institutions, organizations dedicated to working on environmental issues, and civil society. As the only financial mechanism with a mandate for all global environmental issues, and as a partnership between all relevant actors, the GEF has a key role to play in addressing the drivers of environmental degradation. GEF's move towards more integrated programming in the last few years has been a welcome step forward, and shows that the GEF can adapt and increase its efficiency over time.

Throughout its 30 years of existence, the GEF has been essential in putting in place legislation, mapping the environmental status of partner countries, and providing capacity building. We would also like to thank the GEF for being a dedicated funding mechanism to key multilateral environmental agreements, and translating decisions taken at Conferences of the Parties into results on the ground in partner countries.

The future plan of the GEF to focus more on integrated programming resonates well with Norway's environmental ambitions. System-wide approaches are needed to create the necessary green shift. This can contribute to reaching climate targets and support nature, climate resilience

and adaptation. Healthy ecosystems are needed to achieve the sustainable development goals. Norway, through its development cooperation, supports a wide range of efforts to address challenges to the climate and the environment; in agriculture, land and nature restoration, in protecting important forest areas, preserving blue forests, avoiding loss of marine species and ecosystems and coastal erosion. These efforts reduce vulnerability to extreme weather events and floods. They align well with GEF's focal areas, and the integrated programs GEF is currently implementing and designing for the future.

Sustainable development, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and environmental security are all key issues for Norway, and we see the GEF as an important partner to deliver on our ambitions. We encourage the GEF, based on the wisdom and experience accumulated throughout these last 30 years, to share lessons learned with sister funds and inspire partners to act based on scientifically robust knowledge and proven innovations.

On the occasion of its 30th anniversary, we would like to congratulate the GEF for being a pioneer in environmental and climate financing, for continuously reinventing itself by focusing on more thematic integration, for bringing in the private sector as a key partner, and for focusing on innovative solutions. We wish the GEF a successful continuation and look forward to shaping together the future of our partnership!



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PANAMA: GEF CONTRIBUTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT

Ligia Adela Castro de Doens (Operational Focal Point)
Climate Change Director,
Ministry of Environment of Panamá

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is uniquely positioned as a strategic partner for supporting actions to improve the conditions of the global commons—from forests to oceans and the atmosphere—all of which are vital spaces for a prosperous world suited to the development of a variety of livelihoods.

By implementing projects that promote sustainable land management practices, with an emphasis on addressing land degradation and drought, Panama has been able to:

- Evaluate the extent of land degradation at the national level and use the results of this exercise to prepare our first National Atlas of Sustainable Land Management.
- Deliver benefits for agroecosystems, by increasing the availability of food and water through improvements in land productivity and the efficient use of water resources.

We have promoted the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its

protocols through various projects and enabling activities, and have also established and launched, as a result of the foregoing, the National Biosafety Commission for Genetically Modified Organisms, pursuant to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Furthermore, in view of the emphasis on building capacity to preserve biodiversity, Panama benefited from promoting the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol, in coordination with other Latin American countries. In addition, the Project to Update the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2050, approved by Cabinet Decree in December 2018, was implemented with GEF funding.

In terms of developments at the national level, we wish to point out that the country is suffering from the adverse effects of climate change, ranging from sea level rise to shortfalls in agricultural production, and extending to loss and damage caused by landslides and urban flooding.

Thanks to the provision of GEF funding for the implementation of the enabling activities under the UNFCCC, we have been able to develop the framework for preparing National Communications and Biennial Update Reports and have developed capacity to enhance climate transparency.

COUNTRIES

GEF's contribution to the achievement of Panama's environmental objectives has been comprehensive in scope and of tremendous value, covering a wide variety of areas in science,

policy and ecosystems, and encompassing a number of socioeconomic, human, climate and hydrographic aspects as well as environmental land management.



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PERU: CONSOLIDATION OF THE NATIONAL SYSTEM FOR NATURAL PROTECTED AREAS

Martha Carolina Cuba Villafuerte de Cronkleton
(Operational Focal Point)
Director of Cooperation and International Affairs
Office, Ministry of Environment

I would like to congratulate GEF on its 30th anniversary and all its efforts to help countries solve Earth's environmental problems.

Since 1992, Peru has benefitted from GEF funds, which have allowed us to implement close to 60 projects equivalent to over \$212 million, mainly in the areas of biodiversity conservation, land degradation, and climate change.

These funds have allowed us to fulfill important international commitments, including the Aichi biodiversity targets, and the Paris Agreement, but also to carry out key national environmental policies.

The implementation of GEF projects in our country has posed big challenges, such as coordination with diverse stakeholders, including governmental and non-governmental at multiple levels. Despite these difficulties, we have achieved important results: such as the consolidation of the National System for Natural Protected Areas, which created a model that guarantees financial sustainability for

the effective and efficient management of natural protected areas in our national territory.

Other noteworthy achievements are the incorporation of gender and interdisciplinary and interculturality approaches in the formulation of policies and initiatives, as well as, the scaling of project impacts to national and regional policies.

Currently, we are participating in two multi-country development initiatives, such as the "Amazon Sustainable Landscapes Program" and the "Food System, Land Use and Restoration (FOLUR) Impact Program", which aim to strengthen the Amazon's connectivity, promote the deforestation-free commodity supply chains, and strengthen governance systems and integrate landscape management, among others.

The environmental sector in Peru still has many challenges to address. We believe in the importance of rebuilding linkages between people and nature and including nature-based solutions. Likewise, we should continue efforts to generate economic incentives and alternatives to stop the ecosystems degradation. To that end, we look forward to continued collaboration with and technical support from GEF. Happy Anniversary GEF!



THE PHILIPPINES: GEF CONTRIBUTION TO THE ENR SECTOR IN 30 YEARS

Analiza Rebuelta – Teh (Council Member)
Undersecretary, Department of Environment and Natural Resources

In the last 30 years, the GEF has brought significant contributions to the Philippines' Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) sector by supporting projects that delivered national and global environmental benefits.

By any measure it is difficult to value the GEF's aid (in qualitative and actual quantitative terms) just by the figures. At present, the country has a total of 128 GEF-funded projects—65 are national projects with total grant funds of \$291.114 million and \$3.189 billion in leveraged co-financing; 63 are global/regional projects with total grant funds of \$468.572 million and a leveraged co-financing of \$1.92 billion. The projects' contributions have all-encompassing objectives—not only conservation and protection of ENR, but also improving the lives of Filipinos through livelihood and jobs creation, policy formulation, and capacity building.

Moreover, the GEF's multi-stakeholder approach made project implementation holistic and integrative, and upheld good and shared governance with Indigenous peoples, Local Government Units, and communities. This has



planetGOLD Philippines in action discussing mining areas in Paracale, Camarines Norte

significantly improved the country's progress in achieving internationally established environmental targets of managing biodiversity loss, pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, land degradation, deforestation, unemployment, poverty, and other related ENR problems confronting a poor country.

Results of the country-initiated assessment of the GEF-4 and GEF-5 implementation in the Philippines show that the impact of GEF projects has reached down to focused ENR concerns that have major global and local socio-economic and significance. Among the most notable projects, the GEF has supported policies on climate change adaptation and mitigation; REDD strategies (reforestation, enhanced carbon stocks); elimination of persistent



Woman panning for gold in Paracale, Camarines Norte

organic pollutants; expansion of Marine Protected Areas and terrestrial ecosystem Protected Areas; improved system in Indigenous People & Local Communities Conserved Areas; strengthening of Key Biodiversity Areas through financial sustainability; finding markets for biodiversity products; managing invasive alien species; and updating of the Conventions' Action Plans.

GEF support provided a unique opportunity to address controversial issues regarding mineral resources' development in the Philippines. Artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) remains a thriving industry in the Philippines with 70% of the national gold production attributed to the sector. The country's participation in the planetGOLD program will provide support in making ASGM safer and more profitable through improving miners' access to formal markets, supporting government efforts in formalizing ASGM operations, and promoting better mining practices. Part of the project's progress includes identifying pilot sites wherein baseline studies have started, drafting a policy brief on gender mainstreaming in ASGM, regularly publishing articles and knowledge products related to the sector, and developing a draft mercury-free processing plant design. These efforts, directed

towards eliminating the use of toxic mercury, contribute to addressing poverty, on top of environment protection.

The GEF's Small Grants Programme also continues to be of great assistance to the country, supporting community-based organizations in the conservation and restoration of the environment. The recently approved SGP7, with a GEF grant of \$4.4 million, will develop and implement adaptive landscape and seascape management strategies that build social, economic, and ecological resilience based on production of global environmental and local sustainable development benefits. This includes agro-ecological practices and eco-friendly, climate-adaptive small-scale community enterprises with clear market linkages.

As countries continue to seek solutions to remedy the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's lives, on the environment, and on the economy, the GEF is gearing towards enhancing adoption of a sustainable, inclusive, resilient, low-carbon, low-polluting, nature positive and circular economy-based pathway.

Indeed, GEF support continuously provides catalytic impact to the initiatives and efforts of countries.

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planetGOLD Philippines team with enumerators and respondents of the projects Contextual Study exercise in Sagada, Mountain Province



Focus Group Discussion with financiers in Sagada, Mountain Province



Miner in a ball mill facility in Paracale, Camarines Norte



Miner extracting mercury from amalgam in Paracale, Camarines Norte



Mangroves conservation at Asau Savaii 1.

SAMOA: CELEBRATING THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY

Frances Reupena (Operational Focal Point)
CEO, Ministry of Natural Resources

Samoa is a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. Samoa's memberships underscore its determination and strong will to be part of the solution by partnering with the global community to tackle pressing environmental issues in the context of sustainable development. Our journey since then has seen the active engagement of Samoa in the international arena as part of collective efforts to address global environmental and sustainable development issues, including climate change.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF), the largest environmental multilateral source of funds for environmental actions, has funded various programmes and projects related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, international waters, land degradation, protection of the ozone layer, persistent organic pollutants, biodiversity and ecological restoration initiatives at the national and local community level.

The longstanding partnership between the GEF and the Government of Samoa has contributed positively towards economic growth, enhanced livelihoods, and improved social and environmental safeguards as we continue to experience the challenges brought on by climate change and sea level rise.

GEF projects, such as the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA), have also enabled Samoa to identify and map our priority needs in critical sectors such as agriculture and food security, water supply, biodiversity, health, forestry, coastal infrastructure and environment, urban settlement and village communities. This has allowed for a targeted and more strategic approach to addressing environmental and sustainable development priorities effectively.

The GEF's Small Grants Programme (SGP) has made a huge impact in mobilizing community-driven environmental and climate change initiatives on the ground. The SGP is in its seventh cycle and continues to benefit community-based organizations, NGOs, CSOs and research institutions. By "thinking globally" and "acting locally", the SGP in Samoa has spent approximately \$5.1 million in more than 260 projects since its

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Vaisigano River Floodwall segment 1 (hard structure solution) greening of the concrete wall to help absorb heat generated by the wall.

establishment in 2003, a significant contribution to the local economy. Operational Phase 6 (OP6) saw over \$1.8 million distributed across 81 projects. Many of these projects have already been successfully completed, providing income-generating opportunities, alternative sustainable livelihoods, a greater ecosystem and community resilience. For the current Operational Phase 7, the SGP has approved and disbursed \$500,000 to help build on the stronger foundations that have been created thus far, promoting and supporting innovative, inclusive and scalable initiatives, and fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships at the local level to tackle global environmental issues in priority landscapes and seascapes.

As the GEF commemorates its 30th anniversary, we take this timely opportunity to offer congratulations and acknowledge with much appreciation its contribution to our national efforts to secure environmental sustainability and climate change resilience. In the past 15 years, Samoa has successfully implemented a number of multi-million dollar projects funded by the GEF such as the National Adaptation Programme of Action Projects 1 to 5; Enhancing the Resilience of Tourism Reliant Communities to Climate Change Risks in Samoa (ICCRITS), targeting the tourism sector; Integration of Climate Change Risks and Resilience

into Forestry Management in Samoa (ICCRIFS) Project for the forestry sector; and Integrating Climate Change Risks into the Agriculture and Health Sectors in Samoa (ICCRAHS) Project to address integrated priorities of the agriculture and health sectors, while the current IMPRESS Project scheduled to complete in 2022 is targeting the energy sector. Samoa is also pleased to note that it is finalizing its GEF-7 proposal on invasive species management involving both the environment and the agriculture sectors, which is set for submission to the GEF in December 2021.

Samoa's eligibility under the Least Developed Countries Fund grant saw the approval of its Economy-wide Adaptation to Climate Change or Adaptation Project currently under implementation. The project aims to implement economy-wide climate actions, including building climate resilience of communities by securing their livelihoods and protection of their physical assets. In addition, the project is also ensuring a strong policy and legislative framework to address adverse impacts of climate change is in place. The effective integration of climate change adaptation and disaster risk management across national sector development planning and programming has further enhanced coordination between and among key actors in government, the private

sector, civil society and local communities. The project is set to complete in May 2022.

We wish GEF a successful GEF-8 replenishment, as that will be a timely and tangible global gift to

celebrate its 30th anniversary. Congratulations to the GEF for reaching this milestone and Samoa looks forward to continuing our genuine partnership.



Launching of Samoa's Climate Change Policy 2020-2030 by the Hon. Prime Minister - Fiame Naomi Mataafa.



Vulnerable selected families Small Business Incubator training participants to enhance resilience of community, youth and gender to climate change impacts – elei printing, planted taro plantation and strengthened buildings.



Community Disaster & Climate Risk Management (CDCRM) village training exercise and vetiver planting to assist reduce erosion along the riverbank.

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Opening of village pool at Lufilufi 1.



Mangroves replanting @Siufaga Falelatai 1.



SERBIA: STRENGTHENING LOCAL CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Sandra Dokic (Operational Focal Point)
Assistant Minister, Ministry of Environmental Protection

Serbia is in a region that is highly vulnerable to climate change, where the increase of the average temperature is higher than on the global level. Man-made changes in the climate system will lead to the increase of extreme weather events such as floods, heavy rainfalls and droughts.

From the very beginning of the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements that will help to implement climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, the Republic of Serbia has been supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its accredited agencies.

Within this partnership, the Republic of Serbia created advanced policies, a legislative framework and a climate-resilient business environment. With GEF assistance, the government managed to produce timely and quality reports to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, preparing information for the national inventories, drafting adaptation options and strengthening monitoring, verification and reporting mechanisms. The GEF has so far provided many grants to fund projects of national and local character in Serbia aimed at preserving the environment.

These projects are in line with various multilateral conventions that Serbia has ratified, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

In the Climate Change Focal Area alone, GEF has funded eight projects since 2010. We will mention a few examples of the positive results of these projects. The City of Belgrade reduced its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from road transport through the promotion of a long-term modal shift to more efficient and less polluting forms of transport. For the first time, cities like Belgrade, Niš and Novi Sad joined forces with more than 2,000 European cities to promote sustainable and less polluting modes of urban mobility. Serbia strengthened the ability of its institutions in addressing climate change. Concrete energy efficiency investments were implemented in 13 municipalities, while 54 municipalities introduced Energy Management Information Systems. In addition, six biomass/biogas facilities have been constructed.

Serbia is the first country in the GEF's network that tested innovative solutions for decarbonization of the economy and for improved climate data management. Through the Innovation Challenge, the "Climate Smart Urban Development" project

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mobilized individuals, civil society, academia, municipalities, and public and private companies to come up with new ideas for mitigating GHG emissions, while ensuring environmental and economic benefits at community level.

The interest of the financial sector in green projects has also increased. For the implementation of these ideas with the financial help of the GEF, teams managed to raise funds and the results will be cutting around 500,000 tons of CO₂ for Serbia. At the same time, they will produce benefits in terms of increased use of renewables, improved energy efficiency, waste management, innovative technologies and new green jobs.

Thanks to the GEF project, Serbia developed innovative and cost-efficient solutions for simple and user-friendly public access to city/municipal climate change-related data.

Besides attracting public and private financing, the GEF seed grant funding also enabled alternative financing for environment and climate-related initiatives. Crowdfunding as an alternative financing tool for renewable energy projects started with the

support of the GEF and the first energy cooperative in Serbia—Solar Roofs—was founded by the citizens in Šabac.

Also, GEF projects strengthened local climate resilience by enabling development of local climate change adaptation plans for most vulnerable cities, such as Zrenjanin, Ub, Bečej and Kraljevo.

In the biodiversity protection area, one of the results of the GEF's support was the establishment of the Serbian Association of National Parks and Protected Areas, which contributed to strengthening the financial sustainability of 30 protected areas. In the chemicals management field, cooperation with the GEF resulted in the first-ever comprehensive Mercury Inventory for Serbia.

The latest cooperation between the GEF and the Government of Serbia aims to reduce the carbon footprint of Serbian communities by fostering transition from linear to circular business models. This project will strengthen partnerships between the government, and public and private enterprises in protecting the environment, tackling climate change and ensuring sustainable economic development.





SPAIN: HELPING DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

Gonzalo García Andrés

State Secretary for Economic & Business Affairs
Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation

Spain is highly vulnerable to climate change, which makes us very aware of the importance of shared responsibility in protecting the environment worldwide and building a more resilient and secure country.

We have realized during the coronavirus crisis that the solution—vaccination—must be global to be effective. Similarly, the fight against climate change and environmental degradation requires global, multilateral, and comprehensive efforts.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a partnership that unites countries, agencies, civil society, and private sector, being the largest multilateral trust fund focused on enabling developing countries to invest in environmental issues and working in many emerging challenges such as international waters, land degradation, food security, illegal wildlife trade, green cities, habitats fragmentation, etc.

The 30th anniversary is an excellent moment to praise the GEF as a key player in strengthening environmental governance through its exemplary and leadership role. The GEF-7 Corporate Scorecard shows its great contribution in engaging stakeholders (civil

society, Indigenous people, local communities, and private sector), supporting transformational change, and achieving impacts on a broader scale. In this task, Spain has worked jointly with the GEF in coordination with other institutions.

Likewise, we must move forward to understand and overcome the upcoming challenges and help future generations to deal with them. The environmental crisis we are living shows several interconnected facets: climate emergency, loss of biodiversity and a public health crisis. The GEF has a key role to boost the levers to address them by fostering a green economic recovery, sustainable nature-based development, and public awareness. The multilateral trust fund's next four-year funding cycle, which starts in July 2022, shall support developing countries to increase their climate resilience, make further progress in amplifying their environmental agendas and ensure that the "do no harm" approach is respected.

Recovery from the current pandemic is a great opportunity to build long-term resilience and prevent similar crises in the future. The path we have ahead now is to combine responses that meet the demands of the short term while looking to the future, so that we can take advantage of all the opportunities to transform and modernize our economies, while improving our quality of life and our natural capital. Based on the work of the past 30 years, we are confident that the GEF will achieve its objectives.



Photo by Barbara Ash/Shutterstock

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS: ADDRESSING DRIVERS OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Lavem Queeley (Council Member)
Senior Director, Department of Economic Affairs
and PSIP, Ministry of Sustainable Development

St. Kitts and Nevis joined the Global Environment Facility (GEF) family on July 25, 1994, cognizant of the importance of environmental management to sustainable development in a Small Island Developing State (SIDS). The preservation of our natural ecosystems has become more challenging as global socio-economic models have evolved, translating into increasingly affluent and migrating populations. This has resulted in demands on our most critical resources, which includes access to land, potable water, reliable and affordable energy, as well as access to decent work.

Recognizing the inextricable link between sustainable development planning and environmental action, the GEF has focused its Programming Directions to support interventions that address drivers of environmental degradation, while fostering positive outcomes. St. Kitts and Nevis is aware that a single catastrophic event can have significant economic, social, and environmental impacts. These could erode the gains made, including the loss of vital inputs to our survival such as our rich biodiversity and our fertile land. COVID-19 has been one such event, bringing to the fore the

need for even greater attention to how humans interact with the natural environment.

St. Kitts and Nevis uses this opportunity to thank the GEF for its partnership that resulted in the designation of two terrestrial protected areas: the Basseterre Valley National Park and the Central Forest Reserve and National Park under the Integrated Watershed and Coastal Area Management (IWCAM) and the OECS Protected Areas and Associated Livelihoods (OPAAL) projects, respectively.

The implementation of the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) mechanism has translated into greater on the ground investment evidenced by the approval of two national GEF-funded initiatives under the fifth and sixth programming cycles with a third initiative to be presented shortly. The support provided for the creation of national Small Grants Programmes has fostered increased community-based initiatives that can be scaled up for further investment.

As we endeavour to advance a post-COVID recovery, let us continue our partnership buttressed by our commitment to the Paris Agreement and the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which encompasses the Sustainable Development Goals, to "Build Forward Better" creating a more resilient society.



SWEDEN: A COOPERATIVE SPIRIT SPAWNS A CONSENSUAL APPROACH

Karin Seydlitz (Council Member)
Deputy Director, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

We are celebrating the GEF's 30th anniversary this year. The Swedish Government is proud to have partnered with and contributed financially to the GEF from the very beginning.

Sweden hosted the first UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. This was a major milestone in multilateral cooperation on the environment. Next was the establishment of the GEF in 1991 as a pilot. Like no other organization, the GEF—being the financial mechanism for five Multilateral Investment Agreements and International Waters—has been able to unite interrelated concerns such as biodiversity, chemicals and waste, ocean management, land degradation, and climate change. It has demonstrated an ability to evolve and remain relevant, for example, through integrated approaches, advances on gender equality, social inclusiveness, and a rights-based approach, and more recently, through its response to COVID-19 and its central role in the blue-green recovery.

The value of such a coherent instrument has been confirmed repeatedly—from the original decisions at the 1992 Rio Conference, to, more recently, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The GEF has proven to be a valuable partner in the implementation of Swedish development cooperation and multilateral climate

and environment priorities.

Sweden believes that the GEF offers a role model for international cooperation on "Nature" and inspires the international community to address the strong interlinkages between human health and ecosystem health. Multilateral cooperation through the GEF complements Sweden's bilateral development cooperation priorities to mainstream climate, and biodiversity and its ecosystem services in all our thematic and geographic strategies.

From Sweden's perspective as a member state, the consistently cooperative spirit of the GEF partnership has spawned a consensual approach that has long been the GEF hallmark. The GEF Secretariat and its leadership have been instrumental in generating this spirit.

In GEF-8, Sweden would like to see a stronger role for the GEF in advancing the "Nature" agenda to better equip the organizations to take forward the outcomes of COPs in Kunming, Glasgow, and other places and to be able to play a key role in the recovery. This will require a robust GEF-8 replenishment! Next year, in June 2022, Sweden and the international community are celebrating Stockholm + 50, another milestone in our journey. Sweden is counting on the GEF to continue playing a central role in safeguarding the global environment and to take part in the follow-up of this important event.



SWITZERLAND: TRANSFORMATIVE AND SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS TO INTERRELATED CHALLENGES

Franz Perrez

Head of the International Division, Federal Office of Environment, Forests and Landscape (FOEN)
Swiss Ambassador for the Environment

The global dimension of environmental challenges is today more evident than ever before. The continuous overexploitation of our planet and its natural resources will have severe consequences if we do not act now. The global environmental degradation puts our economic prosperity, human health, and well-being at risk. In developing countries, environmental degradation is putting past development achievements at risk.

One would have to invent the Global Environment Facility (GEF) today, had it not been established yet. It was a foresighted decision 30 years ago to establish the GEF as the financial mechanism of the Rio Conventions, and later to add the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Minamata Convention, and the Paris Agreement. The combination of activities across the various Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) has been a strength of the Facility since its inception. It encourages synergies, and facilitates integrated programming and innovative cross-sectoral approaches. The GEF offers the opportunity for transformative and systemic solutions to the many interrelated environmental challenges.

We have to urgently ratchet up our efforts to keep our planet in balance and livable for future generations. Ambitious and coherent policies, integrated strategies, and innovative technologies are needed to address the global drivers of environmental degradation. The GEF will have to play an important catalytic role as part of our global effort to keep our planet in balance. It should build on its strengths, fostering synergies, cross-sectoral approaches, and integrated solutions, while keeping in mind its *raison d'être*—to support the implementation of the obligations stemming from the MEAs. The GEF will have to strengthen the role of recipient countries, which are key in driving change locally and assuring policy coherence. The GEF should increasingly focus on innovation, take risks, and engage with the private sector to increase its positive environmental impact.

Lastly, it will be crucial that all countries contribute as much as they can to an ambitious GEF-8 replenishment. If we want to address the drivers of environmental degradation effectively, a joint effort by all is needed. In line with Barbara Mikulski's quote—"Each one of us can make a difference. Together we make change."—let us make sure that together with the GEF we will make change and that the institution will be well positioned to continue to play a pivotal role for the global environment in the years to come.



Photo by Barbara Ash/Shutterstock

THAILAND: BUILDING CAPACITY TO IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Pavich Kesavawong (Council Member)
Director of Foreign Affairs Division
Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

Over the past 30 years, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has contributed funds for addressing global environmental projects all over the world. The GEF has allocated more than \$100 million to numerous projects in Thailand both at regional and national levels in many focal areas such as climate change, biodiversity, land degradation, chemicals and waste, and international waters. These projects not only contribute to global environmental benefits but also strengthen our capacity in improving environmental and natural resources management at national and local levels. The GEF's projects help Thailand achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and fulfil our strategy on eco-friendly development and growth.

The GEF has made significant progress during the last decades in supporting developing countries, including Thailand, to carry out projects and activities that address global environmental challenges, and achieve commitments of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs),

decisions of the Conference of Parties, and other initiatives. It would be difficult for us to solve increasing environmental problems in the country and fulfill our commitments under various MEAs without financial support from the GEF.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to spread all over the world, Thailand found the GEF has tried to accommodate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. As for the future, Thailand supports the GEF to promote green recovery that focuses on climate and nature-friendly projects such as energy-efficient construction, green transportation, and renewable energy, to help the global economy recover after the pandemic.

I would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to the GEF Secretariat for the excellent work over the past 30 years, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also believe the GEF, as the largest multilateral trust fund for developing countries, should continue to work together with all partners to address pressing environmental challenges we all are facing today. We hope the GEF would continue to deliver multiple global environmental benefits and to prevent a future pandemic for the protection of health and well-being of us and the next generations.



Photo by Makrem Larnaout/Shutterstock

TUNISIA: IMPROVING THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF COMMUNITIES CLOSE TO INTERVENTION AREAS WHILE PRESERVING NATURAL CAPITAL

Sabria Bnouini Ben Ammar (Operational Focal Point)
Director General for External Relations
Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment

The Global Environment Facility was established 30 years ago with the mandate of helping countries carry out projects that can yield global environmental benefits and assisting them with the protection and sustainable use of their natural resources, in keeping with the principles of sustainable development.

Tunisia's natural ecosystems are rich and diverse and its natural resources, fragile. Its membership in the GEF has, without a doubt, benefited the country and paved the way for the development of a number of flagship projects in the different key action areas of the GEF.

Innovative projects and enabling activities have been conducted over the years. As early as the 1990s, Tunisia received funding to carry out projects in the areas of energy efficiency and the protection of natural resources and fragile ecosystems.

Currently, this fruitful cooperation is reflected in



several projects, among them:

- The "Ecotourism and Conservation of Desert Biodiversity" project
 - The "Sustainable Management of Oasis Ecosystems" project
- The "Rapid Transformation of the Tunisian Market to Energy-Efficient Lighting Technologies" and the "NAMA Support for the Tunisian Solar Plan" projects

- The project "Addressing Climate Change Vulnerabilities and Risks in Vulnerable Coastal Areas" <https://youtu.be/9cNrNraqv28>

In addition, several Tunisian organizations have received financial assistance in the context of the GEF's Small Grants Programme (SGP) to carry out environmental projects.

These projects have clearly contributed to the delivery of global environmental benefits and improved sustainability of ecosystems, helping Tunisia meet its international commitments. They have played a role in starting and accelerating the ecological and energy transition, stimulating economic growth, and creating new jobs.

Most of the projects carried out with GEF assistance adopt a human-centered approach to activities: improving the living conditions of communities close to intervention areas while preserving natural capital.

Tunisia is currently facing a difficult socioeconomic situation that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (<http://www.environnement.gov.tn/index.php/fr/les-impacts-socio-economiques-environnementaux-climatiques-COVID-19-tunisie>). As a result, grants and catalytic investments are needed to demonstrate the beneficial impacts of the green economy and environmental protection on economic recovery and job creation.





Conservation and Sustainable Management of Turkey's Steppe Ecosystems—*Gazella subgutturosa*- Ceren SAHİN

TURKEY: INVESTING IN NATURE FOR THE FUTURE

Akif Özkalı (Operational Focal Point)
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Turkey is celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the largest multilateral fund providing support to developing countries to invest in nature. The GEF has a significant impact on the global environment, particularly in areas which the GEF highlights as priorities.

After the cooperation in the pilot phase, Turkey became a member of the GEF in 1994 and currently maintains a portfolio of 34 national, 35 regional and global projects that implement the GEF's policies and strategies. These projects contribute to decision-making processes, enhance national capacities and provide solutions to environmental problems in support of global achievements for Agenda 2030 and beyond.

Turkey's ongoing projects focus on irrigation system modernization, invasive alien species in key marine and coastal ecosystems, sustainable use of biomass, energy efficiency, conservation and sustainable management of steppe ecosystems, sustainable land management and climate-friendly agriculture, persistent organic pollutant reduction and replacement with environmentally sound alternatives, and land degradation neutrality target setting. All the projects are designed with the

assistance and guidance of the GEF to address specific gaps and needs.

Turkey is proud to announce that the GEF-funded project "Integrated approach to the management of forests in Turkey", which focuses on high conservation value forests in the Mediterranean region, has been classified as a Good Practice under the GEF Project Portfolio. The project has developed 28 forest management plans (FMPs) which cover biodiversity zoning, forest fire planning, pest management, carbon-focused reforestation, non-timber forest products, eco-tourism plans and protected forest areas management. It has also created and operationalized an open access online platform, "Forest and Ecosystem Management Systems", which enables users to report on progress towards the SDGs in the area of integrated forest management.

Now in its eighth phase, the GEF has adopted a new approach that recognizes rising challenges and the need for stronger impacts, an orientation that Turkey strongly supports. This new direction addresses common goals of Turkey and the GEF –to determine the key drivers of environmental loss and enact transformational change, to develop more integrated projects and programmes that address multiple issues simultaneously, and to implement new strategies and policies.

Through its GEF projects, Turkey seeks "to promote a green, blue and resilient recovery, and to create pathways to an equitable, nature positive and carbon-neutral world", as reflected in "GEF Highlights: Evaluation Findings 2018-2021". Importantly, the projects aim to incorporate key lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The GEF will continue to be a strategic partner for Turkey at the policy level, playing an effective role in developing solutions to current global environmental problems. Turkey would like to extend its gratitude to the GEF for all its efforts to create a better future for future generations.



Conservation and Sustainable Management of Turkey's Steppe Ecosystems -*Gazella subgutturosa*- Ceren ŞAHİN



Integrated Approach to Management of Forests, with Demonstration in High Conservation Value Forests in the Mediterranean Region



Integrated Approach to Management of Forests, with Demonstration in High Conservation Value Forests in the Mediterranean Region

Photo by Rich Carey/Shutterstock

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: AN ESSENTIAL CATALYST FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

Mathew Haarsager (Council Member)
Deputy Assistant Secretary, International
Development Finance and Policy
U.S. Department of the Treasury

The GEF is a critical institution for addressing a wide range of environmental issues, particularly through its support of five key multilateral environmental agreements. The United States has been a significant backer of the GEF since its founding 30 years ago, supporting its establishment in 1991 and contributing to all seven replenishments. As the Facility turns 30, we celebrate its continued commitment to global environmental benefits and its widespread achievements, and we look forward to an even more impactful future.

Through the GEF, we are able to support priority environmental investments with international partners that catalyze significant international support. The GEF addresses many global environmental problems that affect our collective health, safety, and prosperity, such as by supporting climate change mitigation, combatting wildlife trafficking, reducing harmful pollution, and conserving fish stocks in international waters. Multilateral institutions are invaluable partners in the pursuit of sustainable, inclusive, and resilient development, and the GEF is an essential catalyst for environmental change.

We view the GEF's integrated-programming approach as a key comparative advantage. Rarely do environmental challenges only impact one sector, and through this integrated approach, the GEF is well-positioned to support projects that generate multiple environmental co-benefits across different focal areas. As the GEF continues to develop and strengthen this approach, we expect it to lead to greater systemic impact.

In addition, by providing a source of dedicated financing specifically for climate and environment goals, the GEF makes it possible for multilateral development banks, UN agencies, development finance institutions, non-profits, the private sector, and other implementing partners to do more on climate and the environment than their regular capital or financial resource base and lending envelopes would permit.

The GEF serves a critical function as a financial mechanism to several international environmental conventions, helping countries meet their obligations under these conventions, leading to local, regional, and global impacts. We look forward to continuing our strong partnership with the GEF to address long-standing and emergent environmental issues.



UZBEKISTAN: DECOUPLING ECONOMIC GROWTH FROM ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Jakhongir Talipov (Operational Focal Point)
Head of the Department
International Cooperation and Projects Department

Uzbekistan has been a partner of the Global Environment Facility since the first cycle of GEF funding in 1994. Through seven GEF funding cycles, over 30 years, Uzbekistan has participated in 53 GEF-funded projects at national, regional, and global levels. This portfolio of projects totals \$695.7 million in GEF funding, with \$4.35 billion in leveraged co-financing.

In the area of climate change, GEF support has increased national capacity for greenhouse gas emission inventories, the formulation of an Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), and increasing NDC ambitions. Uzbekistan has adopted energy-efficient and low-carbon building codes, and mandates for construction of green public buildings and housing. A new direction is initiated through a recently approved project on accelerating investments in low emission public transportation. GEF support has helped Uzbekistan phase out methyl bromide and ozone-depleting substances through the promotion of ozone friendly and low global warming potential technologies in the refrigeration and air conditioning sector.

These outcomes are contributing to Uzbekistan's signature, ratification, and implementation of the Paris Agreement. Further, they are paving the way to green recovery and development of a sustainable, carbon-neutral future.

The GEF is the most valuable catalyst for action towards improving environmental management in Uzbekistan. GEF support has contributed to sustainable land management, benefiting farmers and rural families, who are highly vulnerable to climate change. Protection has been increased for Uzbekistan's biodiversity, including protecting rivers and lakes to combat desertification around the drying up Aral Sea. Key results for biodiversity include the Lower Amu Darya Biosphere Reserve (2013)-first in Uzbekistan's new history, Protected Areas Expansion Master Plan (2012) and adoption of the Law on Pastures (2019). Recent efforts established transboundary cooperation across snow leopard landscapes in Central Asia.

These efforts have generated significant political will to enhance the national environmental architecture, and to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation. Within those programs, an integration of gender equality and an engagement with the private sector has been demonstrated to ensure long-term sustainability

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of environmental actions. The GEF's assistance to fill knowledge gaps through the transfer of international best practices and environmentally sound technologies is fostering technological and innovative capabilities of the country.

The lockdowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic have had some temporary positive

environmental impacts, but this situation also allows us to reflect on the work ahead in partnership with the GEF to shape a resilient society that depends on a strong environmental support system.





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ZIMBABWE: GEF INITIATIVES ARE IN TANDEM WITH ZIMBABWE'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (2021–2025)

Tanyaradzwa Mundoga (Operational Focal Point, Political Focal Point), Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate

The Ministry of Environment Climate Tourism and Hospitality Industry is the Focal Point for the Global Environment Facility in Zimbabwe. GEF funding is an important part of environment and natural resources management in Zimbabwe. We have managed to fulfil a number of multilateral environmental obligations, and national developmental goals since we started receiving GEF funding in 1994. The support was initially received through the GEF's Small Grants Programme and later through various enabling activities and STAR allocations.

We made a decision as a country to implement integrated projects in order to enhance the effectiveness of projects funded by the GEF. Under GEF-5 cycle the project focused on protected area management and community livelihoods, improved forest and land management in the Hwange Sanyati districts which are key wildlife and forest areas in Zimbabwe.

Currently, the GEF-6 project aims to promote an integrated landscape approach to managing

wildlife resources, carbon and ecosystem services in the face of climate change in the protected areas and community lands in the lower to Mid-Zambezi Region of Zimbabwe. We are also delighted of the recent approval of our GEF-7 Dry Sustainable Landscapes Impact Programme Child Project which is also expected to address a range of forest and landscape issues in the South East Lowveld of Zimbabwe.

The GEF is also financing enabling activities for policy and capacity for the country under various agreements such the Stockholm, Biodiversity, Land Degradation, Mercury and Climate Change Conventions. The enabling activities enabled Zimbabwe to prepare national inventories, strategies and action plans. These activities have improved our environmental policy and legal framework and the mainstreaming of these issues into the different sectors.

On the other hand, the GEF's Small Grants Programme has been and still is a success in Zimbabwe. To date we have implemented several Community Based Organisation led projects to the tune of \$200 million since 1994. The impact of SGP is

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evident at community levels. One of our SGP projects won the UNDP Equator Prize Initiative in 2014.

All these initiatives are in tandem with Zimbabwe's National Development Strategy (2021–2025) and the country's vision of becoming an upper middle income economy by 2030.

As a country we will play our part to ensure that Zimbabwe commits to ensuring GEF financing produces results and achieve local and global environmental benefits.



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PARTNERS



ADAPTATION FUND: CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF WORKING TOWARD A HEALTHY NATURAL WORLD

Mikko Ollikainen
Manager, Adaptation Fund

As the Global Environment Facility celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2021, we congratulate it for its achievements over the last three decades and its key role in delivering global actions to address a wide range of environmental issues and foster a healthy planet—and in turn, healthier lives among the populations it supports.

In addition to tackling the world's most pressing environmental problems, many GEF projects address more than one environmental issue at a time—which has been crucial during these especially challenging times when we face compounded urgencies such as those of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The GEF has been an important partner of the Adaptation Fund (AF) for a long time, and AF programmes benefit significantly from this fruitful cooperation—which continues to grow in many areas.

The GEF has hosted the AF Board Secretariat on an interim basis as a functionally independent unit since 2008, a relationship that was recently

reaffirmed through mutual decisions in December 2019. This partnership and its excellent fund-to-fund cooperation has helped AF work efficiently since its launch in 2007 and grow into the productive, effective, nimble and innovative fund that it is today.

GEF's work serving multilateral environmental agreements that bring together 180-plus member governments, civil society, international organizations and business to enable developing country investments in nature and biodiversity has been an excellent model, as well as dynamic investments in initiatives like the Great Green Wall to restore native plants and trees and prevent desertification in the Sahel. GEF's holistic and integrated approach to environmental issues has benefited AF greatly from a learning standpoint, and we see this reflected in AF's own interventions across many projects that are focused on ecosystem- and nature-based solutions to help vulnerable countries adapt and build resilience to climate change.

Early GEF investments also laid foundations for AF to build on in several instances.

We see AF projects that have built on earlier GEF project measures such as in Antigua & Barbuda, Bhutan and Turkmenistan, and AF-GEF synergies in implementing complementary projects in Honduras, Samoa, Tanzania and others. AF also has benefited from sharing of good practices from GEF in knowledge management, gender, project review, IT and human resources, and collaborated with them in prominent forums.

Further, we are delighted about broader cooperation in serving the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement among GEF, GEF's LDCF and

SCCF funds, together with the Adaptation Fund, the Green Climate Fund and Climate Investment Funds. These funds all came together recently to commit to leverage their collective strengths in supporting vulnerable countries toward a climate-resilient recovery from COVID-19.

We are grateful for GEF's role in breaking new paths since its inception and look forward to our continued partnership toward building back a climate-resilient, sustainable and green economy, and a healthy natural world.



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CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs): CREATING A UNIQUE AND VIBRANT MOMENTUM IN DEALING WITH THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS

Akhteruzzaman Sano
Chair, GEF CSO Network

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) creates a unique and vibrant momentum in tackling the global climate crisis. Engaging civil society organizations and indigenous people's groups in the GEF architecture is one of excellent achievements. The CSOs engagement in the global and regional GEF events like GEF Council Meetings, GEF Assembly and Expanded Constituency Workshops (ECW) have been unfolding a new era of partnerships and engagement. It connects civil society representatives with government representatives so thoroughly bringing more trust and working relationships.

The GEF CSO Network represents more than 600 civil society organizations and indigenous people's representatives to the GEF architectures. The network has been contributing in the GEF policy dialogues, programmes and projects vigorously.

The Network pledges to add value and complement in the GEF funded programmes and

projects implemented by the governments in tackling the global climate crisis.

The GEF has been doing tremendous works around the globe but unfortunately it could not create significant visibility of the GEF at country or community levels since its inception 1991.

The true engagement of the civil society groups with defined roles and responsibilities to contribute in the government implemented projects may be a turning point for making the GEF visible at country levels. There should be real integrated rather than fragmented programming to bring governments, CSOs and private sector agencies to work together for the defined common goals. Unfortunately, still such real integrated approaches are absent in the GEF programmes and initiatives. Therefore, the upcoming GEF-8 faces questions whether it will be able to address the gaps and add values to increase the GEF's visibility at country levels or not.

As a part of addressing such critical gaps, the GEF CSO network recommends to establish multi-stakeholder dialogue platform at country levels

under the GEF guidance. Governments will lead or chair and civil society representatives serve as the process facilitators for addressing all forms of climate issues in each country. Age & sex-disaggregated baseline focusing on vulnerability, capacity, economic status and ecology etc., climate literacy and civic capacity building should be

considered as the key entry points for overcoming the risks and gaps caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and climate crisis and to work toward a recovery that is green, blue, clean, and resilient. Unless and until, such true and real integrated approaches are made manifest, the expectations of the GEF may remain as a dream.





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INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OFFICE: INDEPENDENT EVALUATION FOR BETTER ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Juha Uitto
Director
GEF independent Evaluation Office

For the GEF to operate effectively at the forefront of the rapidly evolving environmental and sustainable development agenda, it is important to be informed by the latest science and to learn practical lessons from past operations and beyond. Evaluation in the GEF has evolved into a highly influential function and independent evaluation is built into the GEF Instrument.

At the end of the three-year pilot phase, the GEF participants commissioned an independent evaluation to guide the future planning of the Facility. The evaluation noted the lack of a systematic effort to capture and disseminate the experiences and called for a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and dissemination strategy. In 1995, the GEF Council decided that there was a need for monitoring and evaluation at both strategic and operational levels. A Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) unit was subsequently established in the Secretariat in 1998. As the M&E function matured, the Council decided to convert the unit into an M&E Office, as the first M&E policy was approved in 2006, confirming the independence of the Office to

report directly to the Council. This independence was further solidified with the conversion of the office into the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) by a Council decision in 2013. Since then, the IEO's role has been to conduct independent evaluations of the GEF's performance and impact, and to set and validate the standards for the evaluation function within the partnership.

The flagship evaluation product is the quadrennial Overall Performance Study (OPS), later turned into a Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF. The first OPS was presented to the Council and the GEF donors in 1998. Now, in 2021, we are at the 7th Comprehensive Evaluation, still known colloquially as OPS7. As before, the overall purpose of OPS7 is to provide solid evaluative evidence to inform the negotiations for the next GEF replenishment. The replenishment participants and the Council scrutinize the evaluation findings seeking guidance regarding successful initiatives and good practices that can be built upon. The 34 component evaluations that fed into OPS7 and assessed a full range of issues from GEF impact to operational effectiveness were successfully completed under the extraordinary constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the past quarter century, the IEO has become a trusted member of the GEF family. By independently assessing GEF results and performance, and by promoting learning and

knowledge sharing throughout the partnership, evaluation helps the GEF become more effective in its pursuit of global environmental benefits.



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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ADVISORY GROUP (IPAG): CELEBRATING OUR ACHIEVEMENTS ALONG THE TOUGH JOURNEY

Lucy Mulenkei

Chair, GEF Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group

Indigenous Peoples have always had to struggle to achieve their dreams. These struggles have taught us to never give up but to keep going no matter what. In the early years, Indigenous Peoples had a limited role in the GEF and were only able to access funding through GEF's Small Grants Programme (SGP). This programme was also seen as the only mechanism for the GEF to engage Indigenous Peoples at national and community levels.

The Rio Conference¹ marked a turning point for Indigenous Peoples and started the journey to increase our visibility and involvement within the GEF. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, we started getting information on how to participate in GEF meetings. We were small in number, represented by the International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests. There was not enough funding to allow many of us to attend meetings, thus participation rotated between Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

We continued advocating for Indigenous Peoples to be given an opportunity to implement a GEF Medium Size Project. After a long struggle, we succeeded. Funding was provided for an International Alliance, and UNEP was the implementing agency.

From then on, Indigenous Peoples continued the journey to work more closely with the GEF. In September 2012, a report entitled *Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples recommended the establishment of an Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group to enhance "coordination between GEF Partner Agencies, GEF Secretariat Staff, and Indigenous Peoples."*

The document further stated that the *"key function of the group would be to provide advice to the Indigenous Peoples focal point on the operationalization and reviewing of this Principles and Guidelines paper, particularly on the appropriate modality to enhance dialogue among Indigenous Peoples, GEF Partner Agencies, the GEF Secretariat representatives, and other experts."*

¹ The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 3-14 June 1992.



First team meeting of Members of Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group at GEF DC headquarters.

The Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG) held its first meeting in 2013. This group comprised members of both Indigenous Peoples and those representing different agencies working together with one goal: to ensure the GEF fully understands and considers activities, values, principles, rights, and projects recommended by Indigenous Peoples and to strengthen their involvement. This is very important as we all appreciate and recognize that Indigenous Peoples play a key role in conserving our planet's biodiversity. Approximately 25 percent of the Earth's surface and ocean areas are managed by Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs). However, it is estimated these areas hold 80 percent of the Earth's biodiversity.

Most of the world's forests are found on communal lands. In many places, community forestry and management have been shown to be more effective than national parks, and other protected areas, in reducing deforestation. Approximately 40 percent of land listed by governments as "under conservation" is managed by IPLCs. This means IPLCs are critical to reaching the global targets for the effective management of protected areas and the associated Sustainable Development Goals. Yet IPLCs receive little support from governments to maintain and enhance their contribution to such global targets.



Indigenous Peoples Meeting with Carlos Manuel then Minister of Environment of Costa Rica during CBD COP14 in Egypt for support during the meeting.

Since its creation, IPAG has actively participated in key GEF activities. Of particular note are the Assembly and Council meetings, events at different Conferences of the Parties to the Environmental Conventions, review of GEF policies and programmes, and interactions with GEF units and agencies.

As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the GEF, we are happy to highlight the development of an innovative new programme supporting Indigenous Peoples and their efforts to conserve biological diversity: the Inclusive Conservation Initiative (ICI).

Traditionally, many GEF projects have been small in scale. A key focus of IPAG has been on supporting the GEF to develop a larger, overarching programme regarding Indigenous Peoples.

The ICI, implemented through Conservation International and IUCN, supports IPLCs to promote biodiversity conservation and other goals and mandates of the GEF, while helping to empower Indigenous communities. The ICI has identified over 10 different projects from 10 geographical areas where Indigenous Peoples come from.

The ICI builds on and supports innovative models for biodiversity conservation developed



IPAG members participating in GEF assembly in Vietnam 2018

by Indigenous Peoples, such as Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs) and Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs). In the Philippines, the ICCA Consortium has enabled communities to identify and protect their important biodiversity. It has had major achievements in key areas such as the mapping of 148,000 hectares of ICCAs in ten selected land and seascape sites. In Fiji, the LMMA network, comprising NGOs, government departments, academic institutions, and over 400 communities, has worked together to promote and encourage the preservation, protection, and sustainable use of marine resources by local stewards.

These achievements further motivate Indigenous Peoples to continue their hard work despite the many challenges experienced along their long journey. COVID-19 has come and is still ravaging through the world with Indigenous Peoples and local communities bearing the brunt of its impacts.

In the face of the pandemic, they have demonstrated the great resilience of their social systems. Despite these challenges, we have continued to conserve and protect our biological and cultural diversity. The work on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework is a good example of our contribution, for which GEF support is greatly appreciated.

The GEF has long recognized the critically important role of IPLCs in protecting Mother Earth's biodiversity and in ensuring sustainable development. Projects involving Indigenous Peoples have made a major contribution to protect the global environment across the GEF portfolio.

IPAG will continue to provide guidance and advice on Indigenous issues across the GEF portfolio. We will work closely with GEF programs to increase awareness and involvement of Indigenous Peoples—men, women, youth, and local communities—within the GEF-7 and GEF-8 programs.



Indigenous Peoples from Guatemala learning and sharing on different Indigenous tree seedlings and plants. Photo: Sotz'il



GEF'S SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME: HARNESSING THE POWER OF COMMUNITY FOR GLOBAL CHANGE

Yoko Watanabe
Global Manager
GEF's Small Grants Programme

The world is currently facing a dual crisis with profound consequences for humanity that is already affecting billions of people around the world: biodiversity loss and climate change. In addition, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is having an unprecedented impact on the world's economic and social systems, as well as the environment. Considering the opportunities to address these challenges by "building forward greener and better," the GEF's Small Grants Programme (SGP) has an important role to ensure that civil society and local communities, especially Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, and persons with disabilities, are positioned as key partners for sustainable development and custodians of nature—agents of change with the power to turn the tide.

In fact, local communities have been contributing to nature conservation in diverse and sustainable ways for centuries. As a result, they have built a rich repository of traditional knowledge that has the potential to serve as a source of innovation to provide nature-based solutions for the multiple global crises that are threatening the health of

humans and the planet. With the increasing realization that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be achieved without the full engagement of civil society and local communities, SGP's role to support and amplify their capacities to expand and replicate locally developed solutions is critical.

Launched in 1992, soon after the GEF's establishment, SGP is its largest and longest standing corporate programme, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on behalf of the GEF Partnership. As a dedicated mechanism to provide financial and technical support to civil society and community-based organizations (CSOs and CBOs) to address global environmental issues, SGP has supported over 25,000 community-led projects in 133 countries over the past 30 years. It has a special focus on strengthening the capacity of CSOs and CBOs in Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States. The GEF has invested over \$1 billion to support the programme since its inception, with at least an equivalent amount leveraged as cofinance.

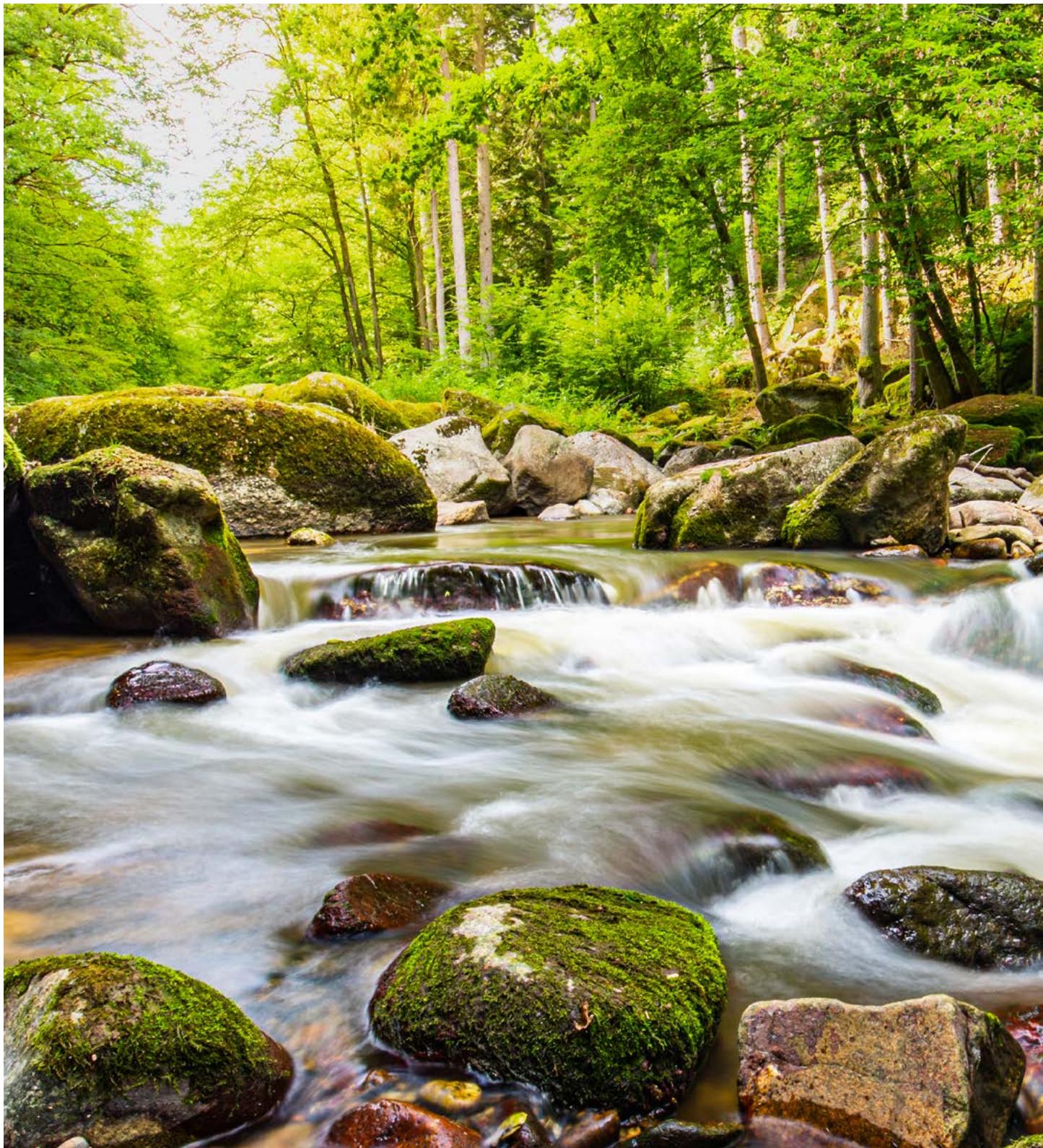
Through its decentralized decision-making approach at the country level, complemented by a

unique focus on innovation, inclusion, and impact, SGP has empowered local communities to design and lead local actions on all of the GEF's focal areas, including biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, international waters, chemicals, and waste management. Many of its initiatives have also adopted an integrated approach by promoting sustainable development, improving livelihoods, reducing poverty, and fostering gender equality.

The Third GEF-UNDP Joint Evaluation of the SGP recently revealed that the programme continues to be highly relevant and coherent with the GEF's mandate and with the needs for action at all levels to accelerate sustainable development. Moreover, the evaluation noted that SGP constitutes a window through which small-scale, CSOs, and CBOs can access GEF resources. As multiple partnerships, including those involving civil society, are crucial for the achievement of global environmental objectives, SGP also plays an important role in boosting progress on the Multilateral Environmental Agreements that the GEF serves. Beyond that, the evaluation concluded that SGP has been consistent in achieving social

and environmental benefits, which is a strong recognition that innovative local actions can be efficient to deliver results with global impact.

As the GEF celebrates its 30 years of excellence, SGP is proud to have been able to serve effectively as its corporate programme in supporting civil society and local communities. Building on the lessons and achievements so far, for the GEF's eighth replenishment cycle and beyond, SGP is ready to expand its scope and scale of operation with partners. SGP will sharpen its approach to strengthen landscape and seascape-based initiatives and promote community investments that identify, nurture, and replicate scalable local solutions that can advance the SDGs, besides contributing to global frameworks such as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the Paris Agreement, the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and others. SGP is poised to play an integral part in the GEF's ambition to ensure a green and blue recovery from the ongoing COVID-19 crisis towards a healthier, more productive, and resilient planet.



A photograph of a forest stream flowing over large, mossy rocks. The water is clear and reflects the surrounding greenery. The background is filled with dense, lush green trees and foliage.

ALUMNI

Alfred M. Duda, Ph.D.
Retired, GEF Secretariat (1994-2012)

Stressful...Exhausting...Ground-breaking...Exciting... Rewarding...Best jobs ever! So many feelings come to mind when I look back at my time at GEFSEC. With my transfer to the newly-formed Secretariat in 1994 from the World Bank, I found a small staff with an almost impossible mission in servicing the new Council. It took years of discussions and compromise among members of the Council, governments, agencies, NGOs to build what the restructured GEF has become at age 30. It wasn't easy the first few years interacting with all parties in developing the procedures, policies, operational mechanisms. Views and expectations were divergent. Operationalizing the new mandates of universality, participation, and transparency took years of Council meetings. Dr. El-Ashry guided our small staff through the political pitfalls and brokered common ground among the different views of Council members, agencies and NGOs. This meant paper after paper after revised paper over the years! In 1995 we had only 1 specialist for each of the 4 focal areas to service the 4 Council meetings. With the evolving nature of GEFSEC, I was appointed Team Leader for Operations with all focal area specialists in the team. The Web was an infant back then and most recipient countries had no real access, which meant copying all the papers, stuffing the envelopes, and shipping them globally with tight deadlines. The small support staff was overwhelmed at these times, and I remember vividly having to grudgingly drag my fellow specialists with advanced degrees to help stuff envelopes into the night and help push the carts over to shipping. It was a great opportunity to develop camaraderie, and I still treasure the

opportunity to have learned about different cultures and build lasting friendships. What a relief when we could eventually post docs on the internet!!!!

My specialty over my previous 19 years as a manager was addressing multi-jurisdictional water conflicts. I was brought to the new GEFESC to develop the International Waters (IW) Strategy, subsequent guidance, and program/project review. During the Pilot Phase there was no idea of what IW meant---open oceans? shipping and ports? It was a time of experimentation. Eventually the idea of basing IW on "transboundary water systems" (freshwater basins, aquifers, and coastal oceans) and Agenda 21 found favor with both recipient and non-recipient countries in the Council while balancing interests. But it was paper after paper after paper! I am heartened that the original IW strategy for building trust and confidence among countries for collective management and facilitating adoption of intergovernmental institutional mechanisms for sustainability is still being followed in year 30. Beyond my pride for having been a small part of the early days of GEF, I am especially pleased that the IW portfolio knowledge management and South-to-South experience sharing and adult learning mechanism (GEF IW:LEARN) is still active after 20 years. The distance learning and conferencing techniques for experience sharing that were piloted have served the portfolio well during the Covid Pandemic. A 10th GEF Biennial IW Portfolio Conference is in the works for 2022. This event serves as a face-to-face equivalent of a COP so that GEFSEC and its agencies can get feedback from country officials and improve GEF's IW service. What a privilege and rewarding experience to have worked with the GEF family for 17+ years! Highlight of my career!

Ivan Zavadsky

Executive Secretary of ICPDR, former GEF SEC staff
and IW FA Coordinator

Working for the GEF in the Secretariat was an amazing experience. It was so easy and enriching to associate myself with its mission to "Save the Planet". The broadness of the project portfolio that GEF co-finances harnessing the top science and meticulous process of evaluating projects and involvement of stakeholders serves as a role model for any environmental donor. Accent on sustainability, market transformation, scaling up, and innovation made the GEF policies, strategies, and guidelines truly responsive to the needs of environmental recovery of most valuable ecosystems of the globe.

As a staff of the GEF Secretariat, working mainly on projects and programs within the International Waters Focal Area, I had the opportunity to learn a lot about the challenges and problems that the transboundary water systems, both marine and freshwater, are facing. These range from weak management, and rapid economic and population growth to lack of cooperation and—sadly—illegal activities that deplete scarce water resources or fish stock.

But more importantly, I had the opportunity to help the countries, international organizations,

and local communities to address some of these challenges in an efficient and sustainable way. GEF IW and multifocal areas' projects provide targeted assistance to key stakeholders sharing the burden of difficult transboundary management of river basins, lakes, and aquifers. They also support governments and communities dependent on the health and productivity of shared Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs), a source of food and income for many.

The GEF, on its 30th birthday, should be rightly proud of the achievements on hundreds of IW projects. I feel privileged to be part of that success story for more than a decade. Let me, with true admiration, name only few that the entire IW community considers outstanding: the Danube/Black Sea Strategic Partnership, Guarani Aquifer, Hai River Basin, Benguela Current, Globallast, and the Pacific Islands Oceanic Fisheries Management Project demonstrated the "theory of change" and showed the GEF's comparative advantage in addressing the causes of global environmental degradation.

And a small but important addition to my testimonial: The GEF community should not forget the invaluable contribution of Al Duda to the establishment and successes of the GEF IW Focal Area, which in many forms and directions lasts to this day.

Ramesh Ramankutty

Former Head of GEF Operations & Business Strategy

I joined the World Bank Group in 1989, fresh out of graduate school, to work for the Asia Environmental Division. At that time, excitement was brewing in the environmental community about the Earth Summit set for three years down the road. My supervisor, Gloria Davis, was centrally involved in negotiations with the UNDP, UNEP, and NGOs to establish a financing mechanism to meet the objectives of the Summit. The aim was to implement a novel concept of "incremental costs" to finance the contributions of developing countries to generate global environmental benefits. The GEF was thus born, as a pilot facility, in 1991. I hoped that one day I would be able to work for the GEF.

In 1998 I began working at the newly-established evaluation unit at the GEF Secretariat. Never did I imagine that I would spend the next 17 years of my career at the GEF, working directly with four CEOs (Mohamed El-Ashry, Leonard Good, Monique Barbut, and Naoko Ishii), as the GEF matured through somewhat painful adolescent years into young adulthood.

My most exciting assignments at the GEF were the replenishment processes we undertook every four years. This was not only an opportunity for fund raising, it also provided timely openings to undertake course-correcting reforms in institutional architecture and policies to render

the GEF fit for purpose. Along the way, as other environmental conventions adopted the GEF as their financial mechanism, more focal areas and project implementing agencies were added supplementing the capacity of the GEF networks. Additionally, a resource allocation system was introduced and an independent Evaluation Office was established.

I only wish that successive replenishments had kept pace with growing demands and the expanding capacities of the GEF network. Questions about the GEF's independence (related to the hosting of the Secretariat at the World Bank) led to plateauing replenishments. Some conventions even led efforts to establish other financial mechanisms. While several reforms have worked to increase the independence of the Secretariat, there are potential ways to enhance the responsiveness and the attractiveness of the GEF to the conventions. A possible measure could be to give those conventions, for which the GEF is a financial mechanism, visible representation on the GEF Council.

In looking back on my tenure, what I cherished most about my time at the GEF was the opportunity to work across varying cultures of a wide network of multilateral organizations, conventions, and countries, all in the service of the most pressing existential challenge of our times. I wish the GEF well for the next 30 years, beginning with a robust GEF-8 replenishment.

www.thegef.org

The Global Environment Facility was established on the eve of the Rio Earth Summit to tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems. Since then, it has provided more than **\$21.7 billion** in grants and mobilized an additional **\$119 billion** in co-financing for more than **5,000 projects** and programs. The GEF is the largest multilateral trust fund focused on enabling developing countries to invest in nature, and supports the implementation of major international environmental conventions including on biodiversity, climate change, chemicals, and desertification. It brings together 184 member governments in addition to civil society, international organizations, and private sector partners. Through its Small Grants Programme, the GEF has provided support to more than 26,000 civil society and community initiatives in 135 countries

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