

First Meeting for the Eighth Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund

April 22-23, 2021

Virtual Meeting

Keynote Address

H.E. Mohammad Mahmood Abubakar, Minister of Environment, Nigeria

- Good Morning, let me start by expressing Nigeria and Africa's Delight for the work GEF has been doing towards combating climate and environmental degradation through its support from GEF 1 to 7, and now, an up-coming GEF 8 that we believe will be more ambitious in the scale of issues it will be set to address given the socio-economic impact saddled on us by the Covid-19 pandemic and the aggravating climate change.
- The benefits of these Environmental Facilities towards human existence cannot be overemphasized, because without a healthy environment, there can be no human health or social progress. This is no-where more critical than on the African continent where the environment is intertwined with our livelihoods.
- Healthy environmental systems are vital for achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals. These global goals are now facing over-lapping threats and tipping points that require our urgent attention and action.
- More than anywhere else on the planet, transformational change in Africa is critical for the continent's economic growth and development to restore and improve planetary health.
- The African continent is at a tipping point where rampant destruction and degradation
 - Of forests,
 - loss of biodiversity,
 - Depletion of wildlife populations and precious marine freshwater resources,
 - With poor management of wastes and hazardous chemicals are all undermining the health and resilience of its people.
- On the same note, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a stark reminder of the conflict between nature and economic systems.

- The pandemic has had profound impacts on food security and livelihoods across Africa. This, in turn has undermined the fragile relations between people and the natural environment.
- Countries now need to work toward a resilient green and just COVID-19 recovery.
- Such a recovery cannot be done with a business-as-usual mindset. Africa must use this opportunity to rethink how environment can be better integrated into our development aspirations and processes.
- The Global Environment Facility's has a unique mandate of supporting Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), including the Rio Conventions.
- For the last three decades, the GEF has been a strategic partner for tackling environmental challenges across Africa. Its knowledge, networks and experience, makes it uniquely suited to lead at this moment.
- The GEF is uniquely placed to target the root causes of inter-related threats to our environment, and the African continent can once again count on this strength for a transformative programming framework during the 8th replenishment phase.
- Thus, I would like to implore on the GEF to maximize opportunities for supporting integrated approaches through the 8th replenishment. This will allow the achievement of multiple objectives and encourage greater coordination and collaboration, leading to more cost-effective implementation of actions on the ground.
- The Africa region benefits greatly from the GEF's ability to bring together government, civil society, and private sector agents of change in supporting innovative solutions that can be scaled up.
- However, the GEF's current funding is not enough when compared to the challenge before us.
- The next decades will be critical to the achievement of global environmental ambitions and needs, with a focus on systems change and environmental restoration at scale.

- A successful scaled up GEF-8 will be critical to the achievement of these global environmental ambitions, and delivering on SDGS as well as needs of countries like Nigeria. This will no doubt position the GEF for an even more robust replenishment in GEF-9, to continue its support for transformative change across the African continent.

- **THANK YOU.**