

**Constituency Address: Fifth GEF Assembly (Australia, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand)**

**28-29 May 2014**

**Mr Ewen McDonald**

**Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

Distinguished Chair, Secretary Guerra Abud; CEO of the GEF, Dr Naoko Ishii; Excellencies; Distinguished Delegates; ladies and gentlemen...

On behalf of the Constituency of Australia, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand, I am pleased to be here to address the Fifth Assembly of the Global Environment Facility.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend our appreciation to the Government of Mexico for hosting this important occasion in Cancun—part of a unique and environmentally important region.

I also thank the GEF Secretariat and the Trustee for their hard work during the replenishment negotiations and for bringing together the members of the GEF network this week.

As you know, our impact on the environment at a global, regional and local level is compounding existing social and economic problems.

Natural resource depletion and ecosystem degradation will impose additional costs and can undermine long-term economic growth.

Poor and vulnerable people, in particular, are disproportionately affected by environmental and unsustainable resource depletion.

Australia, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand are long-term supporters of the GEF in its work to effect positive, inter-generational outcomes in sustainable development—being members since its inception.

As individual member countries and as a constituency in the Asia-Pacific region, we are pleased to contribute to another replenishment of the GEF.

We support the GEF as an effective and efficient multilateral institution.

The GEF is achieving impressive results for environmental protection and sustainable resource management in developing countries.

This in turn has a durable impact on sustainable economic growth which is critical to raising living standards of poor communities dependent on the natural environment.

The GEF's activities are particularly relevant for securing livelihoods of dependent and fragile communities, especially in our constituency's region.

Promoting biodiversity, sustainable fisheries and water use, management of chemical waste, including mercury, and the protection of coastal and forestry resources is important for the Asia-Pacific. We welcome GEF's commitment to addressing these important challenges in our region.

We are particularly pleased with the recent progress with the Ridge to Reef program in the Pacific, which works at both national and regional levels to improve the livelihoods of the region's poor and tackle critical environmental needs.

We welcome the progress made in the GEF-6 replenishment negotiations.

Particularly, we support institutional reforms being put in place under the guidance of Doctor Naoko Ishii; the strategic direction contained within the GEF's Vision 2020, and; improvements to co-financing arrangements and the allocation methodology.

The GEF-6 objective to further enhance the GEF's engagement with the private sector is particularly important.

Addressing global environmental issues requires funding well beyond what can be provided through public financing alone.

If the GEF is to continue to effectively catalyse finance towards addressing global environmental issues, increasing engagement with the private sector is key.

Australia, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand are committed to partnering with the GEF through this coming replenishment period.