

Statement from Dr. the Hon Denis Lowe
Minister of the Environment and Drainage of Barbados
On the Occasion of the
Fifth (5th) Global Environment Facility (GEF) Assembly
Moon Palace Resort,
Cancun, Mexico
May 28-29, 2014

Madame Naoko Ishii, Chief Executive Officer and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility, it is through you that I wish to extend to the Government of Mexico the gratitude of the Government and people of Barbados on the occasion of hosting this Fifth (5th) Assembly of the Global Environment Facility.

At the outset, Barbados wishes to associate itself with the statement presented by Dr. the Hon. James Fletcher, Minister of Sustainable Development, Energy, Science and Technology of St. Lucia, on behalf of the GEF Caribbean Constituency comprising the territories of Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Suriname.

At the Fourth (4th) GEF Assembly convened in Punta Del Este, Uruguay, Barbados had the honour to present the statement on the behalf of the Caribbean Constituency as its representative on the GEF Council. That message –

- a) called for the deliberate consideration of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) issues by the GEF in all its undertakings, commensurate with the level accorded in the Conventions that it serves and other multilateral instruments;
- b) supported several of the policy reforms that were advanced, particularly the System for the Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) which provided guaranteed funding levels to support activities in the Climate Change, Biodiversity and Land Degradation Focal Areas; and
- c) advocated the need for the development of a special mechanism for SIDS engagement with the GEF Partnership that takes cognizance of our respective vulnerabilities, socio-economic challenges, and low resilience opportunities.

On the latter point, the message forecasted that the SIDS framework likely to be revealed through such an examination would include –

- special and simplified rules and procedures for access to GEF resources;
- support and training for national project planning and implementation units, including funding the position of National GEF Operational Focal Point;
- improved mechanisms to facilitate country driven engagement with the GEF, particularly with regards to projects and programme design, and partnership arrangements with Implementing Agencies; and
- a significantly reduced timeframe between project identification, planning and execution.

Despite the well intentioned efforts and support provided over the GEF-5 period, Barbados is of the view that many of the concerns expressed in Uruguay four years ago still remain relevant today.

On reviewing the documents considered over the course of the GEF-6 Replenishment negotiations, we oftentimes found great difficulty in recognizing language that reflected serious and comprehensive consideration of SIDS issues and concerns. Given the passage of time from the 1994 SIDS Conference to Rio+20, and with the recognition of 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States, it is indeed incredible that we still have to make the case for special and deliberate consideration. GEF's examination of the policy and programming instruments applied over GEF-5 through a SIDS lens, as well as its proposals to the 6th Replenishment Committee, remains elusive and disappointing.

Barbados is pleased with the retention of the STAR model for application in GEF-6 particularly as it has clearly been demonstrated to be a more acceptable and equitable proposition than the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) that was applied in GEF-4. The clear expression of an increase in the minimum STAR allocation to Lesser Developed Countries (LDCs) to US\$6 million is noted, and welcomed, but the glaring absence of a similar increase for SIDS is also noted with great disappointment.

The issue of co-financing has been a vexing one for Barbados and Caribbean SIDS precisely for many of the reasons cited in the Fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS5). Therefore, the formulation of a new co-financing policy to offer clarity to its applicability is welcomed. As small vulnerable economies, honouring co-financing commitments

beyond in-kind support by SIDS territories will always be a function of the vagaries of the prevailing economic climate. Accordingly, in GEF-6 we expect greater support from the GEF partners in achieving the co-financing qualification for project/programme viability as was originally intended at the founding of the Facility.

Even as we assemble in Cancun, Barbados has no clear understanding of the funds available under the STAR framework to support activities that are consistent with the national obligations under the relevant Conventions to which they will apply. Nor do we have a clear understanding of the approach that Implementing Agencies will undertake in interpreting the new co-financing policy, or the degree of responsibility that these agencies will be expected to assume in supporting the co-financing qualification bar and aiding countries with the pursuit of their respective sustainable development aspirations.

Again, Barbados wishes to urge the GEF to undertake a careful and deliberate examination of the factors affecting the full engagement of SIDS with the GEF in order that it may inform and improve the relevance of the Facility to this community. Such a consideration would represent a first step in addressing the mandate accorded to the GEF through paragraph 265 of the Rio+20 Declaration – The Future We Want.

Ministry of Environment and Drainage

Bridgetown

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