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Statement on behalf of the Constituency for Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxemburg, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Turkey.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

As the representative of Belgium I am pleased and honored to address the Fifth GEF Assembly here in Cancun, Mexico, speaking for the GEF Constituency of Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxemburg, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Turkey. I would like to start by thanking our hosts for the excellent arrangements for this important meeting and which allow for efficient working conditions in this beautiful setting.

My constituency sincerely welcomes the positive outcome of the GEF-6 replenishment negotiations. After the historic boost of GEF-5, the more modest increase this time reaffirms the commitment of the entire donor community – including our constituency - to the global environmental agenda. This comes at a moment when the economic and financial situation remains challenging in many countries, but in the belief that the new agreement is another crucial step towards meeting the environmental challenges for many developing countries.

Together with the fresh resources we wholeheartedly welcome and fully support the Policy Recommendations for the next four years. They are based on the thorough Fifth Overall Performance Report and are intended to strengthen the aspects where improvement has shown to be possible and needed. We will follow up closely the implementation of these recommendations through the work of the GEF Council and, in this sense, appreciate the important decisions taken by the 46th Council meeting, just a few days ago, on a more equitable System for a Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) and on the issue of co-financing.

Allow me to flag the developments and recommendations that stand out as particularly important for our constituency. We welcome the creation of the integrated Chemicals and Waste Focal Area, including now the recently signed Minamata Convention on Mercury, especially for its synergistic nature, and want to reaffirm, at the same time, our standing commitment with the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depleting Substances.

Without going into great detail, we appreciate the focus on the economic value of ecosystems and biodiversity, the increased attention to non-grant funding, the private sector, technology transfer and the continuing efforts to clarify and enhance the co-financing and improve the project cycle.

We are also pleased that mainstreaming of gender will be intensified. This is a very important element not only for advancing gender equality but also to add value to GEF projects and increase their impact on ground.

As mentioned before, these recommendations are based on the excellent work of the Independent Evaluation Office and I would like to express the sincere thanks of our Constituency to its Director, Mr. Rob Van den Berg, for the outstanding work that he has delivered over the years and from which have benefited all. At the same time we warmly welcome his successor Mr. Juha Uitto.

Finally, let me ensure you that our constituency will continue to stand by the GEF as active partners committed to supporting these policy reforms for a stronger GEF, with more focus on recipient country ownership and results. Not the least because we believe this will allow the GEF to play also an important role in the implementation of the new Framework for Development, post 2015, which is currently under discussion.

I thank you for your attention.