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Agenda Item 19

STRENGTHENING RELATIONS WITH THE CONVENTIONS IN THE GEF NETWORK

Recommended Council Decision:

The Council, having reviewed document GEF/C.40/14, *Strengthening Relations with the Conventions in the GEF Network*, takes note of the steps that it can take to strengthen the relations between the GEF and the conventions that it serves and requests the Secretariat, STAP, Agencies and other relevant actors to take appropriate steps, including from among those listed in the document, to strengthen these relations, as well.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This document outlines the activities and processes in which the GEF already engages that characterize its relations with the conventions that it serves, and suggests further steps that might be taken to strengthen those relations in the future. The current activities defining the relationship between the GEF and the conventions fall roughly into three categories: understanding convention guidance, following convention guidance and communicating with the conventions.
2. The document notes that convention guidance to the GEF emanates ultimately from the CoPs, but is identified and developed through the efforts of the many working groups, subsidiary bodies, and convention secretariats and stakeholders. Thus the GEF engages frequently with the many convention processes and fora, as well as with the convention secretariats, to fully appreciate what this guidance requires.
3. Once convention guidance has been provided and understood, the document continues, it is up to the operating entity of the financial mechanism to operationalize it. Because the GEF's focal area strategies have been developed in light of the relevant CoP's stated priority objectives and desired outcomes, GEF resource programming, which is guided by these focal area strategies, is able to reflect convention guidance.
4. The document also points to another important aspect of the relationship between the GEF and the conventions; namely, communication about the activities that the GEF, as operating entity of the financial mechanisms, has taken to respond to convention guidance. In addition, the document notes, it is important that stakeholders of the conventions understand clearly how to access GEF resources.
5. Finally, the document provides an indicative list of steps that might be taken by the GEF to strengthen its relations with the conventions that it serves, including (i) strengthening existing avenues for communication and developing new ones, (ii) developing more and enhanced avenues for cooperation, and (iii) responding to significant, new convention guidance during replenishment periods.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Instrument for the Restructured Global Environment Facility (GEF) makes the GEF available to operate as the financial mechanism for the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and as the institutional structure, which carries out the operation of the financial mechanism for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). In the case of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Stockholm Convention), the GEF is available to serve as an entity entrusted with the operation of the financial mechanism of the convention.¹ At the December 2006 Council meeting, the Council reviewed the legal, operational and financial implications of an amendment to the GEF Instrument to reflect the designation of the GEF as a financial mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The amendment proposal was reviewed and approved at the GEF Fourth Assembly.² The GEF Council is to “act in conformity with the policies, program priorities and eligibility criteria decided by the Conference of the Parties (CoPs) for the purposes” of these conventions.³

2. The CoPs of these four international environmental agreements have likewise specifically identified the GEF as operating a mechanism for the provision of adequate and sustainable financial resources to eligible recipient countries.⁴

¹ Paragraph 6 of GEF Instrument, March 2008.

² Chair’s Summary of the Fourth GEF Assembly, paragraph 24. The Assembly also approved the second proposed amendment to paragraph 6 of the GEF Instrument, agreed that a new sub-paragraph (b) be inserted into paragraph 6, and that the present paragraph 6 be re-numbered as 6(a) with the new paragraph 6 (b) to read as follows: “The GEF shall be available to serve as a financial mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (UNCCD), pursuant to article 20, paragraph 2(b), and article 21 of the Convention. The Council shall consider and approve arrangements to facilitate collaboration between the GEF and the UNCCD and among countries with respect to affected countries, particularly Africa.”

³ Paragraph 15 of the GEF Instrument

⁴ UNFCCC Article 11: 1) A mechanism for the provision of financial resources on a grant or concessional basis, including for the transfer of technology, is hereby defined. It shall function under the guidance of and be accountable to the Conference of the Parties, which shall decide on its policies, programme priorities and eligibility criteria related to this Convention. Its operation shall be entrusted to one or more existing international entities. 2) The financial mechanism shall have an equitable and balanced representation of all Parties within a transparent system of governance. 3) The Conference of the Parties and the entity or entities entrusted with the operation of the financial mechanism shall agree upon arrangements to give effect to the above paragraphs, which shall include the following: (a) Modalities to ensure that the funded projects to address climate change are in conformity with the policies, programme priorities and eligibility criteria established by the Conference of the Parties; (b) Modalities by which a particular funding decision may be reconsidered in light of these policies, programme priorities and eligibility criteria; (c) Provision by the entity or entities of regular reports to the Conference of the Parties on its funding operations, which is consistent with the requirement for accountability set out in paragraph 1 above; and (d) Determination in a predictable and identifiable manner of the amount of funding necessary and available for the implementation of this Convention and the conditions under which that amount shall be periodically reviewed. 4. The Conference of the Parties shall make arrangements to implement the above-

3. Over the years, the GEF's relationships with the conventions have been shaped through both formal and informal interactions. For the most part, these exchanges have resulted in cooperative relationships between the GEF and the conventions, with satisfactory outcomes. Nevertheless, during the discussions for the fifth replenishment period of the GEF (GEF-5), GEF Contributing Participants weighed whether additional steps could be taken to deepen and improve the relationships between the GEF and the conventions, and supported the idea of inviting the convention secretariats "to participate in Council discussions related to focal area strategies and programming," and encouraged the GEF "to work with the convention secretariats to explore additional steps to strengthen the relationships with conventions."⁵

mentioned provisions at its first session, reviewing and taking into account the interim arrangements referred to in Article 21, paragraph 3, and shall decide whether these interim arrangements shall be maintained. Within four years thereafter, the Conference of the Parties shall review the financial mechanism and take appropriate measures. 5. The developed country Parties may also provide and developing country Parties avail themselves of, financial resources related to the implementation of the Convention through bilateral, regional and other multilateral channels.

CBD Article 21: 1) There shall be a mechanism for the provision of financial resources to developing country Parties for purposes of this Convention on a grant or concessional basis the essential elements of which are described in this Article. The mechanism shall function under the authority and guidance of, and be accountable to, the Conference of the Parties for purposes of this Convention. The operations of the mechanism shall be carried out by such institutional structure as may be decided upon by the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting. For purposes of this Convention, the Conference of the Parties shall determine the policy, strategy, programme priorities and eligibility criteria relating to the access to and utilization of such resources. The contributions shall be such as to take into account the need for predictability, adequacy and timely flow of funds referred to in Article 20 in accordance with the amount of resources needed to be decided periodically by the Conference of the Parties and the importance of burden-sharing among the contributing Parties included in the list referred to in Article 20, paragraph 2. Voluntary contributions may also be made by the developed country Parties and by other countries and sources. The mechanism shall operate within a democratic and transparent system of governance. 2) Pursuant to the objectives of this Convention, the Conference of the Parties shall at its first meeting determine the policy, strategy and programme priorities, as well as detailed criteria and guidelines for eligibility for access to and utilization of the financial resources including monitoring and evaluation on a regular basis of such utilization. The Conference of the Parties shall decide on the arrangements to give effect to paragraph 1 above after consultation with the institutional structure entrusted with the operation of the financial mechanism. 3) The Conference of the Parties shall review the effectiveness of the mechanism established under this Article, including the criteria and guidelines referred to in paragraph 2 above, not less than two years after the entry into force of this Convention and thereafter on a regular basis. Based on such review, it shall take appropriate action to improve the effectiveness of the mechanism if necessary. 4) The Contracting Parties shall consider strengthening existing financial institutions to provide financial resources for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

CBD Article 39. Financial Interim Arrangements states " Provided that it has been fully restructured in accordance with the requirements of Article 21, the Global Environment Facility of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development shall be the institutional structure referred to in Article 21 on an interim basis, for the period between the entry into force of this Convention and the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties or until the Conference of the Parties decides which institutional structure will be designated in accordance with Article 21"

⁵ GEF/C.37/3, Summary of Negotiations: Fifth Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund, paragraphs 29-30.

4. This document outlines in greater detail activities and processes in which the GEF already engages that characterize its relations with the conventions, and suggests further steps that might be taken in the future. The document relies in part on the review of the independent GEF Evaluation Office's Overall Performance Study of GEF-4 (OPS4) to capture the current status of the relations between the GEF and the conventions it serves. Most of the interactions are secretariat to secretariat, fewer are secretariat to governing body and not surprisingly, only a few are needed between the governing bodies of these entities. The current activities defining the relationship between the GEF and the conventions fall roughly into three categories: understanding convention priorities and guidance, following convention guidance and communicating with the conventions.

UNDERSTANDING CONVENTION PRIORITIES AND GUIDANCE

5. Convention Guidance to the GEF emanates ultimately from the CoPs, but this guidance is identified and developed through the efforts of the many working groups, subsidiary bodies, and convention secretariats and stakeholders. To fully appreciate this guidance requires the GEF to engage frequently with the many convention processes and fora, as well as with the convention secretariats.

6. During GEF-4, several changes deepened the understanding between the conventions and the GEF. For example, the UNFCCC and GEF secretariats held a retreat to discuss a range of issues related to financing activities under the convention and CoP guidance to the financial mechanism; the CBD and GEF secretariats had a retreat in January 2011 to review COP 10 decisions and implications for GEF programming. Retreats with other secretariats (UNCCD, Stockholm Convention, another with UNFCCC) are being planned. The GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) continued its relations with the conventions' scientific subsidiary bodies, and its secretariat undertook missions to each of the convention secretariats to further strengthen their ties. At the national level, many of the convention focal points are now part of the GEF national committees and therefore are part of the decision-making process for prioritization exercises.⁶

7. Moreover, staffs of the GEF and convention secretariats have regularly attended meetings of each other's governing and technical bodies. The GEF Secretariat participates in or observes the CoPs, relevant contact groups, as well as the appropriate technical bodies of the various conventions, such as the:

- UNFCCC Ad Hoc Working Group on Long Term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA),
- UNFCCC Ad Hoc Working Group on the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP),

⁶ OPS 4 page 50

- UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Implementation
- UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
- UNFCCC Expert Group on Technology Transfer
- CBD Ad Hoc Working Group on Article 8(j)
- CBD Ad Hoc Working Group on the Review of Implementation
- CBD Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group on Access and Benefit Sharing
- CBD Ad-Hoc Working Group on Protected Areas
- CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
- UNCCD Committee for Review of Implementation of the Convention
- UNCCD Committee on Science and Technology
- Stockholm Convention Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) Review Committee

8. By engaging in the many convention processes and fora, the GEF Secretariat can provide information from the perspective of the financial mechanism. At times, the convention Parties have engaged the GEF Secretariat as the conventions have shaped guidance to their financial mechanism. The GEF has provided input to the CBD as the convention has rationalized and consolidated past guidance to the financial mechanism. An idea for improving the process by which guidance to the financial mechanism is developed at meetings of the Stockholm Convention CoP is under discussion.

9. Cooperation between the GEF and the conventions allows information to flow, helping the convention Parties to think through difficult emerging issues and to shape convention guidance to the GEF with a more fulsome understanding of how the GEF works, and in particular the boundaries of the GEF's mandate to fund agreed incremental costs to generate agreed global environmental benefits. For example, the Stockholm Convention Parties recently added nine new POPs to the convention, which consequently requires the Parties to review and update their national implementation plans (NIPs). In that regard, the GEF has recently approved a medium size project for the development of guidelines for updating the NIPs and include the nine new chemicals. This project will be implemented by UNIDO partnering, in particular, with the Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention.

10. Good cooperation also allows the secretariats to improve their support to their governing bodies. For example, an information document by the GEF Secretariat provided technical input to the CBD CoP's discussion on resource mobilization strategies.

11. In addition, some Members of the GEF Council also represent their governments at the CoPs and in the technical bodies of the conventions; while others participate in the intragovernmental processes in preparation for these meetings.

12. The STAP interacts with the conventions through their scientific and technical bodies and associated expert workshops. Representatives of the conventions are invited to biannual STAP meetings and to relevant expert workshops convened by STAP, allowing an interchange of ideas between STAP and the convention secretariats on STAP activities. STAP also participates in, and contributes to, expert workshops organized by the subsidiary bodies of the conventions. The STAP Chair co-chaired the scientific review panel of the third edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook in 2009. In the same year, STAP took part in the First Scientific Conference organized by the UNCCD's Committee on Science and Technology. The STAP Chair participates in meetings of the Chairs of Scientific Advisory Bodies of Biodiversity-Related Conventions. These interactions provide a link between the scientific processes of the conventions and the GEF.

13. To ensure that the GEF Council better understands the priorities and emerging issues of the various conventions, the GEF invites the heads of the convention secretariats to make annual formal statements at GEF Council meetings, answer questions posed by the GEF Council, and to speak at GEF Assembly meetings. The conventions have likewise participated in GEF replenishment meetings as observers. Representatives of the various convention secretariats regularly participate in GEF Council meetings and contribute to programmatic issues related to financing in their respective focal area. These efforts will be strengthened during GEF-5.

FOLLOWING CONVENTION GUIDANCE

14. Once convention guidance has been provided and understood, it is up to the financial mechanism to operationalize it. OPS4, like Overall Performance Study of GEF-3 (OPS3), concluded that the GEF has been generally responsive to the guidance of the conventions by incorporating their guidance into GEF strategies, adjusting GEF policies accordingly, and/or approving suitable projects. GEF responsiveness to convention guidance has been important to maintaining good working relationships with most of the conventions.

15. The foundation upon which the GEF has sought to respond to convention guidance is the GEF focal area strategies, which are discussed and approved every four years in correspondence with the replenishment negotiations. Additionally, at the national level, many of the convention focal points are now part of GEF national committees and may participate in the decision-making process to prioritize GEF projects.⁷

7 OPS4 page 50

16. OPS4 pointed to some exceptions to this general finding of responsiveness, such as where group allocations under the GEF-4 resource allocation framework had led to underutilization of GEF resources by countries within the groups, which impacted the way GEF's responsiveness to conventions was perceived.⁸ Where possible, the GEF has taken steps to respond to the deficiencies noted by the Evaluation Office. In response to the above critique, the group allocations were abolished in the allocation framework established for GEF-5 (the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources).

17. Another problem impeding responsiveness arises due to the fact that the replenishment negotiations of the GEF are less frequent than the CoP meetings. Consequently, there is often a gap in time between the issuance of guidance to the GEF and its incorporation into GEF strategies. This time disjunct only permits the GEF Secretariat to map existing focal area strategies with current guidance from the respective COPs. For example, in the case of COP-9 and COP-10 guidance from the CBD, the GEF Secretariat was able to clearly map the GEF strategy and demonstrate its coherence with much of the evolving guidance of the COP and the new strategic plan of the CBD agreed at COP-10. This resulted from a constructive engagement amongst the COP, the CBD Secretariat and the GEF Secretariat to align strategic planning and prioritization to achieve a mutual benefit for all parties. Nevertheless, as the need to create the Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund evinces, such an effort is not always sufficient. Sometimes evolving convention guidance is not captured within the existing strategies.

18. The GEF Secretariat includes the convention secretariats as key participants in the relevant Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs) that develop the GEF focal area strategies and strive to "map" convention guidance against the strategies. This mapping is such an important part of GEF responsiveness to convention guidance that, as a new UNCCD financial mechanism, the GEF is currently clarifying how its land degradation focal area strategy will directly contribute to implementation of the UNCCD, including its ten-year (2008–2018) Strategic Plan and Framework adopted by the eighth CoP. When developing the latest strategy for the land degradation focal area, the TAG included a representative of the UNCCD, who provided guidance as the TAG explicitly sought to accept the CoP's invitation to the GEF "to take into account this [ten-year] strategic plan and to align its operations accordingly in order to facilitate effective implementation of the Convention."⁹ The development of the Poznan program on Technology Transfer characterized a different but highly cooperative effort by the GEF Secretariat and a convention to develop a major new strategic programming area.

⁸ OPS4 presented evidence that the level of utilization for countries within the climate change group was low (37%) relative to the countries with individual allocations (68%).

⁹ ICCD/COP(8)/16/Add.1 page 12. In addition, paragraph 24 of the 10-Year Strategy specifically states that "*the COP may invite the GEF to take into account this strategic plan and to align its operations accordingly in order to facilitate effective implementation of the Convention.*"

19. Moreover, the convention secretariats are sometimes invited to participate on the relevant focal area Task Forces, which are composed of representatives from the GEF Agencies, conventions, STAP and other significant GEF actors. Task Force members work with GEF Secretariat Cluster Leaders, Team Leaders and staff to address a range of challenges and opportunities, including (but not limited to): project development and implementation, programmatic approaches, administrative issues (all types), technical issues, results-based management (RBM) and tracking tools, co-financing, coordination and leveraging opportunities, monitoring and reporting, and other topics. These meetings have provided an environment for the convention secretariats to discuss how CoP guidance is being followed that offers a better understanding of the challenges, as well as of the ways the GEF Agencies and Secretariat operate.

20. Because the GEF's focal area strategies have been developed in light of the relevant CoPs' stated priority objectives and desired outcomes, GEF resource programming, which is guided by the focal area strategies, is able to reflect convention guidance.¹⁰ Moreover, moving into GEF-5, some recipient countries have elected to undertake voluntary national portfolio formulation exercises (NPFES) to provide a framework for programming GEF resources. Through the participation of convention secretariats in these exercises, this new policy for GEF-5 might further convention participation in GEF programming deliberations at the national level.

21. The quality of the design of programs and projects also impacts on how well convention guidance is followed by the GEF network. The Evaluation Office and the Agencies have been instrumental in helping the network learn lessons from past efforts and incorporate that knowledge into future activities. GEF Agencies have collaborated to develop lessons learned publications of relevance to the conventions; for example, in 2003, all ten GEF Agencies developed a report on their joint activities in support of the UNCCD, with a strong focus on GEF funded work. Currently, the GEF Secretariat is developing a robust knowledge management strategy to learn methodically from projects and programs to improve the design and effectiveness of future activities.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE FINANCIAL MECHANISM AND THE CONVENTIONS

22. Another important aspect of the relationship between the GEF and the conventions lies in the communication about the activities that the GEF, as financial mechanism, has taken to respond to convention guidance. The conventions should be consistently updated on how well the activities of the financial mechanism align with their stated priority objectives and desired

¹⁰ UNEP has established a "MEA Information Knowledge Management Initiative" (INFOMEA) to provide an on-line portal to review and search all decisions taken by the CoPs of the conventions. This search engine helps to show linkages between conventions, and facilitate the understanding of the decisions.

outcomes. In addition, it is important that stakeholders of the conventions understand clearly how to access GEF resources.

23. The GEF reports to the convention CoPs at every session. These reports are cleared by the GEF CEO and approved by the GEF Council. The Memoranda of Understanding between the GEF Council and the conventions, as well as a number of CoP decisions, prescribe the information that is to be included in the reports. The reports include, among other things, information on how the GEF has responded to convention guidance and about approved projects that support the objectives of the conventions. As well, these reports contain any additional information requested specifically by the relevant CoP. These reports also contain tables or texts that specifically articulate how the GEF has responded to the different CoP decisions that guide the financial mechanism.

24. Less formally, there is frequent communication between staff from the GEF and the convention secretariats, including at the level of the GEF CEO and the heads of the convention secretariats. The GEF CEO participated in a high level dialogue with the CBD COP 9 Bureau, organized by the CBD Secretariat in 2007. Both parties found this exercise informative and useful. As already noted, the secretariat staffs also attend important meetings organized by each other throughout the year.

25. The GEF Secretariat has organized corporate activities designed to provide convention focal points with greater knowledge about the GEF and has included convention focal points and secretariat staff in activities to increase awareness about the GEF. In April 2009, the GEF hosted a Familiarization Seminar where the UNFCCC convention focal points were invited to a series of information sessions about how the GEF functions globally and at the national level, particularly as related to the climate change focal area. The GEF National Dialogue Initiative has involved convention focal points in its series of country-level multi-stakeholder dialogues to raise awareness about the GEF and GEF-related issues and themes. Convention Focal Points are regularly invited to each STAP formal meeting, as well as relevant technical workshops.

26. GEF-5 has introduced changes to GEF corporate programs, which will provide further opportunities for integration of the conventions into GEF activities. GEF-5 reforms to the Country Support Programme (CSP), for example, provide for one expanded GEF constituency workshop a year that will now include the participation of convention focal points and civil society representatives, along with the GEF national focal points. These workshops are designed to keep all stakeholders abreast of GEF strategies, policies and procedures, and to encourage coordination. The GEF and CBD secretariats are currently coordinating to allow the CBD secretariat to hold a one day seminar for GEF and CBD focal points back to back with the expanded GEF constituency workshops.

27. The GEF Secretariat and Agency staff have likewise participated in outreach events and workshops organized by the conventions, such as training workshops of the UNFCCC Least Developed Countries (LDCs) Expert Group. The GEF is supporting and participating in four regional workshops in 2010, under the LDC Expert Group with the purpose of providing technical training to LDCs to move forward with the process of the National Adaptation Programs of Actions implementation. The GEF Secretariat has also actively participated in awareness raising workshops on new POPs and the process for reviewing and updating the NIPs under the Stockholm Convention, as well as in side events on financial resources during CoP 4 of the Convention.

28. Some joint initiatives of common interests to both the GEF and the conventions have been undertaken in response to convention guidance or in support of the intergovernmental process. For example, the UNFCCC and the GEF Secretariat are jointly establishing a Finance Portal to present information on the funding flows via the GEF as the operating entity of the financial mechanism. This joint initiative will facilitate the intergovernmental process. The Finance Portal was launched at CoP 16.

29. The GEF Secretariat is responding also to a request of the UN FCCC Secretariat to provide technical support and policy advice to design the Green Climate Fund, approved by a Decision at UN FCCC COP 16, Cancun, Mexico.

30. At the UNCCD, the GEF Secretariat and UNEP have worked together with the UNCCD secretariat to develop a Performance Review and Impact Assessment System (PRAIS) to support indicator-based reporting by Parties and other reporting entities, including the GEF, itself.¹¹ This system will enable more effective tracking of GEF investments to support implementation of the convention, as the UNCCD performance indicators and reporting systems are consistent with those of the GEF land degradation focal area strategy. The GEF will also support scientific assessment and refinement of the impact indicators approved by the CoP for reporting to Parties. STAP is supporting this process by helping UNCCD develop methodologies to measure their sub-set of minimum indicators, and align these indicators with the RBM of the land degradation focal area.

31. The CBD invited the GEF Secretariat to join the Task Force on the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB). This Task Force was formed to ensure coordinated implementation of the IYB strategy and action plan across relevant agencies in order to enhance public awareness on the importance of conserving biodiversity, promote innovative solutions to reduce underlying threats to biodiversity, and initiate dialogue among stakeholders on necessary steps for the post-2010 period.

¹¹ For the fourth reporting cycle, the UNCCD CoP has requested the GEF to report through the Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

32. During GEF-4, several changes improved the relationship between the conventions and the GEF network. Despite a laudatory track record of responding to convention guidance and essentially good relationships between the GEF and the conventions it serves, there is an appetite for further improvement. What has been done in some contexts might be repeated in others, and developments in GEF-5 may open up new avenues for enhancing the relationship between the GEF and the conventions. The following provides an indicative list of steps that might be taken by the GEF to strengthen its relations with the conventions that it serves:

Existing avenues for communication could be strengthened and new ones developed:

- i. The current practice of ongoing informal consultations between the GEF and the convention secretariats, which clearly has positively shaped these relationships, could be increased to keep each other abreast of items of common interest.
- ii. The GEF and conventions secretariats could, where budgets allow, organize annual working retreats to exchange views and discuss common strategies to better assist the Parties to the Convention. Some conventions have expressed an interest even to agree on an agenda of activities, meetings, workshops and interactions on a yearly basis.
- iii. Annual meetings of heads of convention secretariats and the GEF CEO could provide a worthwhile opportunity for high-level managers to develop a shared vision, common commitment and concrete actions to enhance the relationship.
- iv. The GEF and convention secretariats could collaborate at the technical level to suggest refinements to the GEF reporting process to the conventions and other means to improve communication. The GEF should continue to communicate specifically on contributions of GEF activities to the implementation of convention guidance.
- v. In addition, more real time information flows between the GEF and the conventions might be instituted. The ways in which information exchanges between the GEF and the conventions can connect the dots between high-level guidance (decisions), field implementation (projects), and actors (organizations & people) should be more fully explored, including possibilities for linking relevant parts of databases and websites.¹² The Finance Portal precedent from the UNFCCC experience might be emulated for the other conventions.

¹² The CBD has expressed an interest in using Web 2.0 technologies, which use reliable communication protocols based on open standards with software tools that facilitate interoperability between various information systems, to automatically list GEF projects on convention websites (by program, country, and time) and provide links to the

- vi. The GEF network could develop more lessons learned publications derived from GEF project implementation to inform the development of convention guidance and priorities. Convention secretariats could organize regular meetings with the GEF network to learn lessons from the operationalization of convention guidance.

Similarly, more and enhanced avenues for cooperation might be developed:

- *The GEF Secretariat and STAP should increase their engagement in convention activities:*
 - i. The GEF Secretariat should continue to fully support, when requested by the convention Parties, efforts to improve convention guidance to the financial mechanism, such as the activities undertaken in the context of the CBD. This could, in part, be aimed toward improving the focus of the guidance and reducing its cumulative nature by withdrawing older guidance.
 - ii. Similarly, the GEF should continue to participate fully in relevant contact and working groups during and between CoPs and in convention committees and subsidiary bodies whenever invited to do so. CoP Bureaus might wish to invite the GEF CEO to participate in their meetings more frequently.
 - iii. STAP panel members might engage more frequently in discussions with the scientific bodies of the conventions.
 - iv. Moreover, the GEF could increase its participation, where appropriate, in the various workshops, seminars and awareness raising, and scientific and technical activities organized by the conventions, as it has, for example, in a large number of Stockholm Convention training workshops.
 - v. The GEF and convention secretariats might more frequently co-organize side events at the various CoPs and perhaps even at other meetings, such as those held in respect of IYB.
- *The GEF should engage the conventions more extensively in GEF activities:*
 - i. The convention secretariats might be invited to participate and thus take a more active role in existing GEF corporate activities, such as multi-stakeholder

GEF website for details. A second phase might establish more connections (to decisions, organizations, and people), eventually making it possible from each convention website to see, for each program and decision, what is being done where and by whom.

dialogues and expanded constituency workshops. This will encourage better understanding and coordination all around.

- ii. The convention secretariats could be encouraged to follow the example of CBD GEF secretariat cooperation and schedule convention and GEF focal point meetings back to back with GEF expanded constituency meetings.
 - iii. To ensure widespread awareness among various conventions' stakeholders of the operations of the GEF, the GEF Secretariat, convention Parties, GEF Agencies and other stakeholders could jointly organize activities, such as knowledge exchange fora to discuss specific thematic issues. GEF Familiarization Seminars will be offered in all convention focal areas.
 - iv. Involvement of convention focal points in the NPFs can encourage better absorption of convention guidance in national programming. In addition, the outcomes of the NPFs are being systematically shared with the conventions.
 - v. GEF Agencies should ensure that national convention focal points are consulted during project preparation, as appropriate.
 - vi. Engagement of the conventions at the GEF Council meetings should be enhanced, at the very least by including the statements of the heads of the conventions as information documents to be circulated four weeks prior to the opening of the Council meeting. The GEF Council could occasionally invite a CoP President to brief the Council, when there is a development of significant political dimension, to provide a snapshot of the political landscape as a complement to the technical briefing provided regularly by the heads of the conventions.
 - vii. Chairs of conventions' scientific and technical subsidiary bodies could be invited to participate in biannual STAP meetings, in addition to convention secretariat staff.
 - viii. It might also make sense to encourage more engagement of the conventions during the GEF replenishment process. For example, conventions might be invited to brief the replenishment participants on emerging issues and high priority objectives.
- *The secretariats might, depending on resource availability, undertake additional joint and mutually beneficial exercises.*
 - i. Cooperation in major outreach opportunities, as was done for IYB, should be continued. The Stockholm Convention and GEF secretariats are beginning to explore joint activities for the International Year for Chemicals Management.

- ii. The secretariats could continue to and more frequently organize field trips to GEF project sites through joint efforts with the host country.

Finally, mechanisms by which the GEF can respond to significant new convention guidance during replenishment periods must be established.

- i. The GEF Council could set up guidelines for the establishment, for example, of interim vertical funds or a standing fund with flexible windows within the GEF to finance activities in new directions identified by a CoP mid-replenishment period and direct the Secretariat, as appropriate, to employ this option.

TABLE 1
INNOVATIVE STATUS OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Recommendation	Past Precedent Continued/Strengthened	Innovative Elements	Notes
Increase current practice of ongoing informal consultations between GEF and convention secretariats	Yes		To keep each other abreast of items of common interest
GEF and convention secretariats could, where budgets allow, organize annual working retreats	Yes, And more are currently being planned		To exchange views, discuss common strategies to better assist the Parties to the conventions and possibly to agree on an annual agenda of activities, meetings, workshops and interactions
Annual meetings of heads of convention secretariats and the GEF CEO	Yes, but meetings currently done separately with CEO	Bringing all the convention heads together at the same time with the GEF CEO	Provide an opportunity to develop a shared vision, common commitment and concrete actions to enhance the relationship
GEF and convention secretariats to collaborate at the technical level to suggest to the CoPs means to improve communications from the GEF to the CoPs	Yes		GEF would continue current reporting, specifically on contributions of GEF activities to the implementation of convention guidance and GEF Secretariat would put forward proposals for improving communications

Recommendation	Past Precedent Continued/Strengthened	Innovative Elements	Notes
Institute more real time information flows between the GEF and the conventions, including linking relevant parts of databases and websites	Yes, Finance Portal precedent from the UNFCCC experience might be emulated for the other conventions		GEF Secretariat to identify opportunities and see whether practices in the context of one convention might translate well in another convention
GEF network could develop more lessons learned publications relevant to the development of convention guidance and priorities.	Yes		New GEF Knowledge Management Strategy calls for intensified production of these tools.
GEF Secretariat to continue to fully support, when requested by the convention Parties, efforts to improve, rationalize convention guidance to the financial mechanism	Yes, precedent from CBD might be emulated for other conventions		
GEF should, when invited, participate in relevant convention contact and working groups, committees and subsidiary bodies	Yes		
GEF CEO to participate in CoP Bureau meetings when invited	Yes		GEF CEO could inform the other conventions of positive outcome of CEO participation in CBD Bureau meeting

Recommendation	Past Precedent Continued/Strengthened	Innovative Elements	Notes
STAP panel members might engage more frequently in discussions with the scientific bodies of the conventions.	Yes		
GEF could, where budgets allow, increase its participation in the various workshops, seminars and awareness raising, and scientific and technical activities organized by the conventions	Yes, GEF has participated, for example, in a large number of Stockholm Convention training workshops		GEF would more actively seek opportunities but undertake them only when the benefits clearly outweigh reasonable costs
GEF and convention secretariats to, where budgets allow, co-organize outreach activities at various CoPs and perhaps other meetings	Yes, for example side events held in respect of IYB		GEF would more actively seek opportunities but undertake them only when the benefits clearly outweigh reasonable costs. Stockholm Convention and GEF secretariats are beginning to explore joint activities for International Year for Chemicals Management

Recommendation	Past Precedent Continued/Strengthened	Innovative Elements	Notes
Invite convention focal points and secretariats to GEF corporate activities, such as multi-stakeholder dialogues, and constituency-level workshops	Yes, Convention focal points usually have participated in national dialogues	Yes, Convention focal points are now being invited to participate in expanded constituency workshops, for example.	Focal area-focused GEF Familiarization Seminars will continue to be offered to keep all convention focal points and convention secretariat staff abreast of GEF strategies, policies and procedures
Convention and GEF secretariats could schedule convention and GEF focal point meetings back to back with GEF expanded constituency meetings	Yes, but only with CBD		
Jointly organize, where budgets allow, with convention Parties, GEF Agencies and other stakeholders, activities to discuss specific thematic issues	Yes		More actively seek opportunities but undertake them only when the benefits clearly outweigh reasonable costs to ensure widespread awareness among various conventions' stakeholders of the operations of the GEF
Involve convention focal points in the NPFES and systematically share the outcomes of the NPFES with the conventions.		Already under implementation, but a GEF-5 innovation	To encourage better absorption of convention guidance in national programming

Recommendation	Past Precedent Continued/Strengthened	Innovative Elements	Notes
Agencies should ensure that national convention focal points are consulted during project preparation, as appropriate.	Yes, but not consistently		
Enhance engagement of conventions at GEF Council meetings	Yes		More actively seek opportunities. For example, could include statements of heads of the conventions as information documents and/or GEF Council could occasionally invite CoP President to brief Council on development of significant political dimension
Chairs of conventions' scientific and technical subsidiary bodies could be invited to participate in biannual STAP meetings, in addition to convention secretariat staff		Invitations were sent out for the first time to the convention science body chairs for STAP's March 2011 meeting	
Encourage more engagement of conventions during GEF replenishment process	Yes Currently, convention secretariats invited as observers		More actively seek opportunities. For example, conventions might be invited to brief replenishment participants on emerging issues and high priority objectives

Recommendation	Past Precedent Continued/Strengthened	Innovative Elements	Notes
Secretariats could continue to and more frequently, where budgets allow, organize field trips to GEF project sites through joint efforts with the host country	Yes, such as field trips organized after the last GEF Assembly and as part of every expanded constituency workshop		More actively seek opportunities but undertake them only when the benefits clearly outweigh reasonable costs
GEF Council could welcome the establishment, for example, of interim vertical funds within the GEF to finance activities in new directions identified by a CoP mid-replenishment period	Yes, LDCE/SCCF is precedent	Yes, could set up a rules-based procedure for allowing the establishment of interim funds.	