

GEF/C.8/8
August 30, 1996

GEF Council
October 8 - 10, 1996
Agenda Item 12

NOTE ON GEF ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCTION

1. At the Council meeting in April 1996, the CEO shared with the Council some initial thoughts on the organization of the first meeting of the GEF Assembly in late 1997. The CEO was requested to prepare a brief organizational note describing the Assembly, and to circulate the note to Council Members and GEF Participants for comment. The CEO invited any country that had an interest in hosting the Assembly to contact him at its earliest convenience.
2. The CEO prepared a preliminary note on the organization of the GEF Assembly and circulated it to Council Members and GEF Participants in May 1996. In the circulation letter, the CEO stated that "the note reflects our early thinking and raises quite a number of issues that require more thought and deliberations. Since this will be the first meeting of the Assembly, it is especially important that we receive the ideas of a wide range of Participants and interested parties as to the organization of the meeting."
3. The CEO received a limited response to the note. In order to have a better understanding of the views of a wide range of Participants, he will be continuing his consultations on this matter in the period leading to the Council meeting, and will report to the Council at the October meeting on the information emanating from his consultations.
4. In order to facilitate discussion at the Council meeting of the issues raised by the CEO in his note, the note is attached herewith.

PRELIMINARY NOTE ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE GEF ASSEMBLY

Scope of meeting

The Instrument provides that the Assembly, comprised of representatives of all Participants, is to meet once every three years. The primary purpose of the Assembly is to review the policies and operations of the GEF.

Representation

At present there are 155 governments participating in the GEF. Assuming an average of two representatives per participating country, it may be estimated that 300 representatives will participate in the meeting.

- *An important issue to be considered is what level of representation should be sought. Should the Assembly be, in whole or in part, a ministerial level meeting?*

Observers

The rules of procedure for the GEF Council provide for a number of observers in paragraphs 10 to 13. It is assumed that these same observers will be invited to the Assembly.

- *Consideration will need to be given as to whether additional observers, including representatives of other organizations and entities, should be invited to the Assembly.*
- *At present, over 200 NGOs are accredited to the GEF. Should all NGOs accredited to the GEF be able to observe the meeting?*

Timing and Length

The Instrument specifies that the Assembly is to meet once every three years. As discussed at the GEF Council meeting in April 1996, it seems advisable to convene the first Assembly towards the end of 1997. The exact date for the meeting will be dependent on a number of factors, including any established dates for major international meetings dealing with environment and development and the views of the host government.

- *A check by the GEF Secretariat of dates of major international meetings indicates that early October 1997 is a viable date. Should we fix the second week of October as the period in which the Assembly will be held?*

The length of the meeting will also need to be determined in light of the agenda and format for the meeting.

- *Assuming a ministerial level meeting, would 3 days be sufficient for the substantive segment of the meeting?*

Format

Consideration will need to be given to the format for the meeting.

- *Some questions to be considered will include: Will the Assembly only meet in plenary? Would it be useful to follow the model established in the Commission on Sustainable Development of convening panels of experts and senior-level advisors on special topics?*

Documentation

A number of relevant reports will be prepared concerning GEF operations and operational policies. In addition, the Secretariat and others might prepare background documentation to assist the Assembly in its review of the GEF.

The Assembly will need to approve its rules of procedure.

- *Should these rules be based on the Council's rules of procedure?*
- *What additional information or documentation should be prepared for the Assembly?*

Host Government

At the Council meeting in April 1996, the CEO invited any government interested in hosting the Assembly to contact the GEF Secretariat. The host government would be expected to collaborate with the Secretariat in organizing the logistical arrangements for the Assembly, including conference facilities, offices, hotels, support personnel, security, field trips and exhibits.

Cost sharing arrangements would be determined by the GEF Secretariat and the host government. The Secretariat would be guided by UN and World Bank rules in developing the cost sharing arrangements. Normally, the host government would be expected to cover direct costs involved in rental of conference facilities, personnel, security, and equipment rental. Other costs may also need to be met by the host government.

Financial considerations

The GEF Secretariat's administrative budget for FY98 will need to include funds to cover the costs of the Assembly borne by the Secretariat. These costs will be dependent upon the resolution of a number of issues raised in this note, such as length and format of the meeting, location of the meeting, and agreement with the host government for cost sharing.

- *In addition to the direct logistical costs of organizing the meeting, consideration should be given to the availability of funds for assisting recipient country representation at the meeting. A number of options may be considered, including contributions from the host government and/or bilateral organizations or additional contributions to the GEF voluntary fund for this specific purpose.*

Preparations

It is clear that the Assembly would benefit from the active involvement of the Council in the preparations for the meeting. The Secretariat would welcome receiving the views of Council Members as to how best to involve them in the preparatory process.

- *In addition, should regional consultations or preparatory meetings be convened prior to the Assembly?*

Parallel Events

Some suggestions have been made that it would be useful to organize an event or events in parallel with the Assembly. One proposal would be to organize scientific/technical expert panels looking at global environmental issues in a separate forum (unless these panels are integrated into the meeting itself). Another suggestion is to consider inviting interested parties to participate in a trade/technology exhibition relevant to the work of the GEF. It might also be useful to organize field visits to GEF projects if appropriate arrangements can be made with the host government.

- *The views of Participants on this issue would be welcome.*