

GEF/C.8/Inf.5
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GEF Council
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GEF FOCAL POINTS

POLITICAL AND OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINTS OF THE GEF

1. According to the *Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured GEF*, the GEF "shall operate, on the basis of collaboration and partnership among the Implementing Agencies, as a mechanism for international cooperation for the purpose of providing new and additional grant and concessional funding to meet the agreed incremental costs of measures to achieve agreed global environmental benefits...." The Instrument also provides modalities for the governance and operation of the GEF, making it a distinct entity dedicated to the specific global concerns for which it was established. The dimensions of these concerns (climate change, biological diversity, international waters and ozone depletion, along with land degradation as it relates to these four areas) are such that, at the country level, responsibilities for dealing with them are typically stretched across a large number of Ministries, Departments and agencies. It therefore became necessary for the GEF to request each country to nominate a *focal point* to whom all GEF related information and correspondence could be sent. In view of the constituency system of the GEF, these focal points could also serve, within each constituency, as the points of contact for Council Members and vice versa.

2. The Council has consistently emphasized the need to ensure that projects were country driven, with the full involvement of operational agencies of the country in an internally coordinated manner. Further, the GEF undertakes operations through its 3 Implementing Agencies - UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank - but these agencies normally have different 'nodal' institutions in the same country. There was no single entity that could pull together all GEF activities in a country, often leading to a fragmented view of what was being done. In February 1995, it was proposed that the GEF encourage the "identification of a GEF national focal point that will act as the principal contact point for all [GEF related] Implementing Agency activity in the country, provide feedback on GEF activities, review project ideas and concepts, facilitate broad-based as well as project-related consultation, and facilitate national interagency discussion on issues of substantive interest to the GEF." In approving the GEF project cycle, the Council requested the Secretariat to invite recipient Governments to identify national *operational focal points* which could be assigned these responsibilities.

3. As a result of these decisions, the GEF focal points nominated for the purposes mentioned in paragraph 1 above are now referred to as *GEF political focal points*, to distinguish them from the *GEF operational focal points* as described in paragraph 2. The nature of their duties clearly implies that while political focal points are required for all GEF participants, operational focal points are relevant only for countries eligible for project funding from the GEF ('recipient countries'). In August 1995, the CEO of the GEF wrote to all recipient countries requesting them

to nominate operational focal points, outlining the functions which they would be expected to perform. This request has recently been reiterated by the CEO.

FUNCTIONS

4. The need for the two kinds of focal points will be clearer from a listing of the functions that they are expected to perform :

GEF Political Focal Points (i) To receive from the Secretariat all documents (*All GEF Participants*) and correspondence related to the governance

of the GEF and to distribute that information to appropriate officials and interested parties in the country,

(ii) to communicate its Government's views/comments/suggestions on these matters to the Secretariat,

(iii) to serve as the contact point for other members of the constituency in which it is included and in particular for the Council Member representing that constituency,

(iv) to serve as the contact point within the country on GEF governance matters, to inform interested parties, including country's focal points for the two conventions, about GEF activities, and to facilitate in-country consultations on GEF governance matters.

GEF Operational Focal Points (i) To ensure that GEF proposals and activities in (*Recipient countries only*) the country are consistent with country priorities and the country commitments under global environmental conventions,

(ii) to identify project ideas to meet country priorities,

(iii) to endorse project proposals,

(iv) to facilitate broad based in-country consultations on GEF operational matters, and

(v) to provide feedback on GEF activities, including implementation of projects.

5. A country could, of course, choose to nominate the same individual or agency to be the political and the operational focal point. The only suggestion that the GEF Secretariat has made is that, given the need for the operational focal point to coordinate its Government's views and responses on GEF's operational activities in the country, it is advisable for such a focal point to be located within the country's capital with easy access to the relevant ministries, departments, agencies and representatives of other concerned organizations. Further, it is expected that the political and operational focal points within a country will keep each other appropriately informed about their GEF related activities.

6. Updated lists of political and operational focal points are annexed. A country wishing to change its focal point(s) should formally write to the GEF Secretariat in this regard, but any errors in names, addresses or numbers in the annexed lists should be brought to the Secretariat's notice at the earliest. It is requested that where there is more than one focal point listed, the country should inform the Secretariat as to the one individual or entity that should be retained as the focal point.