

GEF/C.8/Inf.6
August 29, 1996

GEF Council
October 8 - 10, 1996

CONCLUSIONS OF THE GEF HEADS OF AGENCY MEETING

JUNE 19, 1996,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

1. The meeting of the GEF Heads of Agency was hosted by Mr. James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank on June 19, 1996, in Washington, D.C. Ms. Elizabeth Dowdeswell (Executive Director, UNEP), Mr. James Gustave Speth (Administrator, UNDP) and Mr. Mohamed T. El-Ashry (Chairman/Chief Executive Officer, GEF) were in attendance.
2. The Heads of Agency welcomed the achievements in such a short time in consolidating the Facility's institutional structure and operational modalities and in promoting high quality assistance to client countries. They also affirmed their full support for, and commitment to, the effective functioning of the GEF, and in particular its role in the successful implementation of the biodiversity and climate change conventions.
3. The agenda for the meeting is attached. Emphasis was placed upon: (i) narrowing the gap between resource commitments and disbursements; (ii) "mainstreaming" the GEF in agencies' own activities; and (iii) enhancing inter-agency coordination and cooperation, particularly at the country and regional levels.
4. The Chairman/CEO briefed the Heads of Agency on the status of programming of GEF financial resource, commitments and disbursements. It was noted that, while the quality of GEF projects has risen appreciably over time, and our ability to commit resources to projects is proceeding satisfactorily, **disbursement** of funds continue to be a problem. The President of the World Bank outlined the steps he is undertaking within the Bank to streamline its project cycle and documentation and indicated that he will ask Bank staff to explore ways to reduce in half the processing time of GEF projects within the Bank's control (a task force has already been convened and will make its recommendation to Senior Bank management in early August). The Heads of UNDP and UNEP indicated that their staff will also explore opportunities for speeding up processing and disbursement in their agencies even further.
5. The Heads of Agency emphasized their commitment to the **integration of GEF activities and objectives in their own agencies' mission** and called upon their senior managers to accord GEF activities the same management attention as those given to the agencies' own activities. They agreed that GEF grant resources can catalyze creative packaging of finance for environment friendly technologies and activities. This would call for fewer "freestanding" projects and more co-funded activities.

6. On **interagency coordination and cooperation**, the Heads of Agency underscored the central importance of demonstrating that the three Implementing Agencies (IAs) can work together towards the common goals and objectives of the GEF. They welcomed progress on that front since their last meeting and noted with satisfaction how joint efforts have added considerably to the quality of the GEF activity as well as the agencies' own in-country assistance. They agreed to circulate a note to their senior managers on better coordination and sharing of information early on in the project cycle in order to take advantage of possible opportunities for cooperation. They also made clear their wish to be informed on regular basis on progress made in this regard.

7. In the context of improved coordination and cooperation, the Executive Director of UNEP outlined her views on current priorities for UNEP as an implementing agency of the GEF as follows: (i) assessments along the line of the "Global Assessment of Biodiversity;" (ii) "enabling activities" to assist countries in preparing their action plans and strategies for implementing the global environmental conventions; (iii) regional efforts, in collaboration with the other IAs, on transboundary issues such as in the International Waters and Biodiversity focal areas; and (iv) backstopping STAP.

8. The Heads of Agency noted the importance of 1997 for the GEF -- its replenishment negotiations and the convening of the first universal Assembly. They indicated their support for an adequate replenishment of the GEF as a continuing mechanism for global environmental improvement, particularly in the context of the successful implementation of the climate change and biodiversity conventions. They also offered their personal assistance to the CEO during the replenishment process which was accepted with appreciation.