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Agenda Item 8

REVIEW OF PROGRESS IN EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXECUTING AGENCIES

Recommended Council Decision

The Council reviewed document GEF/C.15/4, *Review of Progress in Expanded Opportunities for Executing Agencies*. The Council notes the progress being made to expand opportunities for Regional Development Banks and the arrangements to expedite their access to PDF-B resources. The Council commends the efforts of the Regional Development Banks to participate in the GEF and the assistance provided to them by the Implementing Agencies. The Council also approves the arrangements outlined in Part IV to expand opportunities for additional executing agencies. The Council requests the Secretariat to report on the progress being made in expanded opportunities at its May/June 2001 meeting.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Cooperation with a broad range of qualified organizations and executing agencies to promote the objectives and mission of the GEF has long been recognized as essential if the GEF is to catalyze international action to protect the global environment. There are three specific advantages of such cooperation:

- (a) strengthening collaboration with executing agencies having special expertise and close contacts in recipient countries would increase the capacity of the GEF to deliver projects. This will be essential given the continued expansion in country-driven programs and demand and the guidance of the conventions.
- (b) expanded opportunities would increase the number of innovative interventions and diversify the experience on which the GEF as a whole can draw.
- (c) expanded opportunities for those agencies and organizations with a capacity to co-finance and mobilize additional finance for GEF projects would leverage additional resources for the protection of the global environment.

2. The GEF Council discussed this subject at its meetings in November 1994, February 1995, July 1995, March 1998, November 1998 and again in May 1999. At its meeting in May 1999, the Council reviewed document GEF/C.13/3, *Expanded Opportunities for Executing Agencies*. The Council noted the efforts being made to expand opportunities for Regional Development Banks and approved the proposed approach for the participation of Regional Development Banks in preparing and implementing GEF projects and their access to PDF-B resources. The Council requested the Secretariat to provide a report on progress made at its May 2000 meeting.

3. This paper:

- (a) summarizes the previously identified limitations on opportunities (Part II);
- (b) reviews the progress made in overcoming these limitations and the progress in meeting remaining challenges (Part III). The progress made so far has been at the critical first phase of the project cycle: project preparation. The review is based on the inputs requested from the Regional Development Banks (RDBs), the Implementing Agencies (IAs), and on the experience of the Secretariat; and
- (c) outlines criteria for expanding opportunities for additional agencies, on a selective basis and by building on the positive experience with RDBs, in order to meet particular emerging needs of the GEF (Part IV).

4. The GEF Heads of Agency -- at their meeting on March 9, 2000 in New York -- welcomed further efforts for expanded opportunities for executing agencies based on the positive experience gained with the Regional Development Banks and consistent with the tripartite arrangement and partnership between the three IAs and the GEF.

II. PREVIOUSLY IDENTIFIED LIMITATIONS ON OPPORTUNITIES

5. The RDBs had identified¹ the factors that had hitherto inhibited their participation in GEF processes. First, lack of staff training had prevented many RDB ideas from becoming eligible GEF projects. Second, the structure of the GEF added an extra step of IA decision-making onto RDB decision-making. Third, the GEF-eligibility of RDB project ideas did not get the consideration they deserved when those projects fell outside an IA's institutional priorities or country strategies.

6. The Secretariat's own experience through the concept review process with the RDBs has been extremely positive. The Program Managers have found RDB staff very well informed about GEF and very responsive to comments. Project concepts have been received from all four banks concerned, and 13 projects (from three of the RDBs) have so far entered the pipeline. Six projects are under preparation with PDF-B resources, while the remaining projects are held pending the completion of the streamlined transfer of PDF resources. (See Annex 1 for details of project progress.)

7. In expanding the opportunities, several general barriers needed to be overcome. The following barriers had been identified in May 1999 and overcoming them was the focus of the subsequent action:

- (a) operational uncertainties;
- (b) RDBs' initial lack of understanding of GEF policies and procedures;
- (c) GEF's perceived lack of commitment to RDB participation; and
- (d) the perceived lack of credibility of RDBs in their member countries as GEF partners.

OPERATIONAL UNCERTAINTIES

8. The main issue was operational uncertainty. A year ago, the IAs had considerable influence on whether, when, and how RDB proposals would be presented to the GEF and that introduced a great deal of uncertainty about the timing and the prospects of the RDB proposals.

9. According to some of the RDBs, the situation has changed decisively at the front end of the project cycle. Direct submission of proposals to the Secretariat for eligibility rulings (pipeline entry) has been instrumental in this, and has overcome the considerable operational uncertainty associated with indirect submissions through IAs. Through upstream consultation with the Secretariat on individual projects, and the relative ease in scheduling review meetings involving the IAs (three so far, and quarterly henceforth), the RDBs are generally pleased with the nature and timing of the approval process.

10. A legal agreement is now being finalized between the Trustee and the RDBs on the financial transfers and as memorandum of understanding between the Secretariat and the

¹ GEF/C.13/3. Expanded Opportunities for Executing Agencies: Recent efforts and current proposals to expand opportunities for Regional Development Banks. May 1999

RDBs on the general understandings concerning project preparation. These agreements will overcome the significant operational uncertainty RDBs have reported concerning the timing and conditions of transfer of approved PDF-B funds, which must currently pass through an IA to the RDB. (In some cases, this has delayed project preparation by a few months. Until now, RDBs have partly overcome this by using internal resources as stop-gap financing to allow project preparatory activities to proceed on schedule.)

INITIAL LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF GEF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

11. Until last year, operational experience in preparing, reviewing, processing and implementing GEF projects had largely been confined to the immediate GEF family. To overcome the barrier to RDBs posed by a lack of understanding of GEF policies and procedures, the Secretariat has included the four RDBs in the twice-yearly GEF Staff Familiarization Seminars and mounted specific familiarization workshops for the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and the Inter-American Development Bank at their respective headquarters. A workshop will also be held at the African Development Bank in the near future. UNDP and the World Bank have also made concerted efforts of their own to provide training and to develop collaboration on implementation.

12. For their part, each RDB has also identified a GEF coordinator, who is thoroughly trained in GEF policies, criteria, and procedures, and who is charged with

- (a) further disseminating information internally on GEF policies, criteria, and procedures;
- (b) advising the operational units on GEF;
- (c) managing relations with the GEF Implementing Agencies and Secretariat;
- (d) coordinating the preparation and submission of documents;
- (e) ensuring that appropriate quality and consistency checks have been applied;
- (f) managing RDB participation in the GEF project review process; and
- (g) assisting the negotiation of appropriate legal instruments to give effect to RDB participation in GEF.

13. RDBs report that their legal, accounting, and co-financing staff have also become familiar with GEF through their negotiations on the various Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs) -- with IAs on implementation, with the Trustee on financial procedures, and the Secretariat on substantive responsibilities in relation to project preparation. In some cases, RDBs have conducted briefing seminars for their own management and Board of Directors on the expanded opportunities. In addition, they report finding the GEF web page to be an extremely useful resource for staff generally.

14. As a result of all these efforts, well over 100 RDB staff from projects, programs, and legal, accounting, co-financing, and environment divisions have become familiar with GEF policies and criteria.

15. Informal discussions at a technical level with IA staff have also been constructive. Progress on specific project concepts though has sometimes been delayed by the need for IA and RDB staff to reach agreement on the framework for collaboration. Additional effort is also required to overcome any lack of understanding of the new approach by field staff.

PERCEIVED LACK OF COMMITMENT

16. Another issue of concern to the RDBs had been the perceived lack of commitment by GEF. To help address this, the Secretariat has established a GEF Secretariat/RDB review process to review project concepts submitted by the RDBs, to recommend concepts for pipeline entry, and to recommend PDF-B proposals to the CEO. The reviews involve the concerned Implementing Agency, in order to begin collaboration as early as possible with the RDB during preparation and implementation. The RDB projects accepted into the pipeline (in March 2000 there were 13 – see Annex 1) are published in the same way as those of the IAs.

17. The RDBs are also consulted on the development of the Corporate Business Plan and on those policies that have direct relevance to them. (By contrast the IAs, which have a deeper role than the RDBs as well as a budget for specific corporate services to the GEF, are regularly consulted on all policy papers and participate in the work of STAP, the Monitoring and Evaluation unit, and the various interagency task forces.)

18. The RDBs report that these activities have strongly signaled GEF's commitment and have bolstered their own dedication. The RDBs believe that the conditions are now in place for developing a strong pipeline and for preparing innovative GEF-eligible projects. However, as none of their GEF projects is yet sufficiently well advanced in preparation for implementation, they report it is too early to judge the strength of commitment to expedite their execution of the resulting projects.

CREDIBILITY

19. In spite of the fact that the RDBs are the major (and sometimes the largest) providers of development assistance in their respective regions, they suffered from a common misperception in their member countries that there was no significant role for them in matters pertaining to the GEF.

20. Over time the delivery of high quality GEF projects will ensure that the RDB are regarded as highly credible partners of GEF by their member countries. To become established, though, some initial exposure is necessary. To do this, the Secretariat issued a letter to all GEF Operational Focal Points informing them of the expanded opportunities for RDBs, and the RDBs report that this has been helpful. The RDBs have themselves initiated discussions with Operational Focal Points in order to obtain letters of endorsement, and this has also had the effect of building country awareness. The RDBs are eagerly awaiting further information on the Country Dialogue Workshops, and intend to participate actively in these if requested to do so by the countries concerned.

III. PROGRESS IN PREPARING RDB GEF-FINANCED PROJECTS

21. Very good progress has been made on expanding the opportunities for RDBs. One year ago, only three RDB GEF-financed projects had been attempted (two successfully), compared with 13 new RDB projects currently under preparation. The operational progress in FY00 can be credited to the following characteristics of the partnership:

TIMELY AGREEMENT BETWEEN RDBS AND IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES

22. The RDBs have not encountered difficulty in securing “in principle” agreement from an IA to act on their behalf for projects in the pipeline (Annex 1). They all very much appreciate the flexible and helpful stance adopted by IAs in this regard. Two practices in particular are now helping in securing such timely agreements.

- (a) The first is the inclusion of IAs in the discussions between the RDB and the Secretariat at the time pipeline entry and PDF-B proposals are considered. This allows for a one-time discussion of all relevant GEF eligibility issues from both the Secretariat and any IA. As RDB documents are circulated to the IAs at the same time as to the Secretariat, it allows for comments to be made within the same service norms as comments on any other project (two weeks from time of circulation).
- (b) The second has been the development of a minimum set of activities needed to assure IA accountability for the GEF operational policies, strategies and decisions of Council (Annex 2). This can be used as the basis for identifying at the project review meeting which additional tasks (if any) it is necessary for the IA to undertake in order to maintain its accountability. As with all other project proposals, the project preparation phase itself would then be used to develop detailed implementation plans specific to the RDB project.

DIRECT ACCESS TO PROJECT PREPARATION FUNDS

23. Through agreements with the GEF Trustee and the GEF Secretariat, RDBs can now obtain direct access to PDF-B resources to prepare eligible projects for inclusion in the Work Program. This is expected to overcome a temporary difficulty in the transitional period when it was necessary to pass funds first to an IA and then through another agreement to the RDB.

STREAMLINED DOCUMENTATION

24. The IAs, the RDBs, and the Secretariat share the common objective of streamlining project documentation requirements. Specifically, they all wish to avoid duplicate sets of documents – one prepared for GEF and one prepared for the agency’s own management. The Secretariat has therefore been working with the IAs to ensure that the IAs’ own documentation (supplemented by standard annexes showing the project’s conformity with GEF policies and criteria) would be adequate to meet the various decision criteria in the GEF Project Cycle. Given that there are now seven agencies preparing documents (three IAs, and four RDBs collaborating with those IAs), the need to streamline project documentation is even more apparent. In fact the decision on expanded opportunities in May 1999 specifically calls upon IAs to streamline their procedures to expedite RDB proposals.

25. The IAs agree that the RDBs will now have the same flexibility as IAs and may use their own documents, provided they show how they address the relevant GEF criteria, e.g., through attaching standard annexes showing the project's conformity with GEF policies and criteria.

CERTAINTY ABOUT THE APPLICABLE FEE

26. Determining the fee for both the IA and the RDB at the time of Work Program inclusion will provide a necessary financial assurance to both organizations at the time they commit themselves to project implementation. This determination would be made at the time of Work Program inclusion on the basis of the fee system that is common to all GEF-financed projects. The overall fee would have two parts: a basic fee that applies to the project in question and a "premium" that recognizes the additional costs of collaboration. The basic fee would be paid to the RDB and the premium to the IA, but with adjustments in respect of any specific tasks that it is agreed would be undertaken by the IA *instead* of the RDB.

CONFORMITY WITH GEF OPERATIONAL POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND DECISIONS OF COUNCIL

27. The IA for a given RDB project is accountable to Council for that project conforming to the GEF operational policies, strategies and decisions of Council. IAs will need to undertake actions of two types to ensure their accountability for this:

- (a) At the institutional level, the IA will need to undertake a due diligence review of the policies and practices of the RDB. This would include a review of the RDB's policies on reporting, public participation, and information disclosure to ensure consistency with GEF policies. Such reviews are not specific to any particular project and the IA's costs will be covered in the corporate budget.
- (b) At the project level, there are other activities that an IA must undertake if it is to be accountable for that project conforming to GEF criteria and procedures. These activities would be covered by the IA portion of the fee. The Secretariat, with inputs from the IAs and RDBs, has therefore identified a specific minimum set of basic activities that would be necessary for an IA to ensure conformity with these GEF requirements (see Annex 2). Such activities could be undertaken by the GEF coordinating unit of the IA.

IV. EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR OTHER EXECUTING AGENCIES

28. As envisaged in the Instrument (paragraph 28), the Secretariat and the Implementing Agencies, under the guidance of the Council, would cooperate with other international organizations to promote the purposes of the GEF. These organizations include:

- (a) RDBs, which are already covered by the current policy on expanded opportunities;
- (b) specialized agencies and programs of the United Nations, other international organizations, and bilateral development agencies; and

- (c) national institutions, non-governmental organizations, private sector entities, and academic institutions.

29. As country demand continues to grow and as the GEF begins to respond to new global environmental issues, there will be a growing need to collaborate with additional executing agencies, such as the above, taking into account their comparative advantages in efficient and cost-effective project execution. The delivery capacity of the GEF system can be enhanced through expanding opportunities for further agencies with the required specialized experience, proven delivery capacity, and complementary regular work programs.

30. Building on the positive experience in expanding opportunities to the first group (RDBs), it is now proposed to expand the opportunities for the second group. This would be done on the following basis:

- (a) the organization in question must have previously collaborated in the development and/or execution of a GEF project with an IA (KfW and several UN Specialized Agencies are in this category);
- (b) the IA would need to complete a due diligence review of the organization's policies, and those policies must be in conformity with GEF operational policies, strategies, and decisions of Council;
- (c) the organization must have a comparative advantage in a field where GEF needs to operate (e.g., in the case of persistent toxic substances, FAO and UNIDO) and demonstrated capacity to mobilize additional resources, with commitment to do so in support of GEF projects; and
- (d) the opportunities would then be expanded in the same way as has been done for RDBs.²

31. The Secretariat will prepare a progress report on expanded opportunities for Council consideration at its meeting in May/June 2001.

32. Consideration would be given to selectively expanding opportunities for additional organizations, in group (c) of paragraph 28 above, on the basis of experience with the current organizations.

² This is set out in GEF/C.13/3 and in the current paper.

ANNEX A RDB PROJECTS IN THE GEF PIPELINE

Country	GEF Agency/IA	Focal Area	Portfolio Status	GEF Allocation	Project Name
Cambodia	ADB/UNDP	Biodiversity	Pipeline Entry/ PDF B Approval 06/03/00	\$0.350	Integrated Resource Management and Development in the Tonle Sap Region
China	ADB/World Bank	Biodiversity	Pipeline Entry 09/1999		Songhua River Flood and Wetland Management Project
			PDF B Approval 21/12/99	\$0.330	
China	ADB/UNDP	Biodiversity	Pipeline Entry 10/1999		Yunnan Comprehensive Agricultural Development and Biodiversity Conservation Project
			PDF B Approval 27/10/99	\$0.350	
China	ADB/UNDP	Climate Change	Pipeline Entry 09/1999	-	Wind Power Development
Philippines	ADB/UNDP	Biodiversity	Pipeline Entry/PDF B Approval 28/2/00	\$0.335	Integrated Coastal Resources Management Project
Solomon Islands	ADB/UNDP	Biodiversity	Pipeline Entry 09/1999	\$0.15	Fisheries Management and Marine Biodiversity Conservation Project
Sri Lanka	ADB/World Bank	Biodiversity	Pipeline Entry 09/1999		Protected Area Management and Wildlife Conservation
			PDF B Approval 13/09/99	\$0.33	

Country	GEF Agency/IA	Focal Area	Portfolio Status	GEF Allocation	Project Name
Azerbaijan	EBRD/UNDP	Climate Change	Pipeline Entry 09/1999	-	Efficient Use of Natural Resources
Moldova	EBRD/UNDP	International Waters	Pipeline Entry 09/1999	-	Upgrading of Chisinau Waste Water Treatment Plant
Regional (Bosnia, Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia)	EBRD/UNDP	International Waters	Pipeline Entry 09/1999	-	Danube Pollution Reduction Programme
Russian Federation	EBRD/UNDP	Climate Change	Pipeline Entry 09/1999	-	Mutnovsky Geothermal Power Plant
Jamaica	IADB/UNDP	Biodiversity	Pipeline Entry 09/1999	-	Coastal Zone Management in Portland Bight
Regional (Belize, Guatemala, Honduras)	IADB/World Bank	International Waters	Pipeline Entry 09/1999	-	Gulf of Honduras Maritime Transport Pollution Control Project

ANNEX B DIVISION OF BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PROJECT CYCLE MANAGEMENT

The IA responsibilities below are considered the minimum necessary to ensure accountability for conformity of a project with GEF operational policies, strategies and decisions of Council. Additional responsibilities may need to be discussed at the project review meeting in the context of a specific project.

RDB	IA	GEF
PRELIMINARY PHASE: IDENTIFICATION AND CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT		
Develop <i>Concept Document</i> for Pipeline Entry Review	Advise on concept upon request	
Present concept eligibility at an RDB/IA/GEFSec Meeting to consider Pipeline Entry and PDF Approval.	Provide comments on concept within the standard two-week service norm prior to the review meeting. Inform GEF of willingness to act as Implementing Agency for the project resulting from RDB's preparation of the agreed concept.	RDB-GEFSec review meeting with IAs invited to attend. GEF Pipeline Entry.
Formulate <i>PDF-B Document</i> (if appropriate) and obtain government endorsement	Advise on PDF-B upon request. Provide comments on PDF-B within the standard two-week service norm prior to the review meeting.	RDB-GEFSec review meeting with IAs involvement. May be the same meeting as above. CEO approves PDF-B allocation.
PHASE 1: PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT		
Prepare project and implement PDF-B (if required) to meet the GEF criteria for Work Program inclusion		
Discuss with government officials and executing partners; obtain Operational Focal Point endorsement		
Prepare <i>Project Brief</i>	Advise on <i>Project Brief</i> preparation and review Project Brief for compliance with GEF	

RDB	IA	GEF
<p>Arrange for review by expert from the STAP roster.</p>	<p>operational policies, strategies and decisions of Council</p>	
<p>If required, request IA to provide specific services for management of the project cycle (e.g., arrange for public participation plan).</p>	<p>If acceptable, agree to provide the specific services requested.</p>	<p>RDB-GEFSec project review meeting with attendance of the relevant IA.</p>
<p>Present <i>Project Brief</i> at the RDB/IA project review meeting with GEFSec, with respect to all aspects.</p>	<p>Present <i>Project Brief</i> at the RDB/IA project review meeting with GEFSec, with respect to conformity with GEF operational policies, strategies and decisions of Council.</p>	
<p>Request fee for managing project cycle in accordance with the prevailing principles and procedures for fee determination. Such fee will cover services in all phases of the project cycle, including (retroactively) preparation.</p>	<p>Request fee for the costs of partnership with the RDB and (if appropriate) any specific project cycle management services that the IA agrees to carry out directly. Such fee will be in accordance with the prevailing principles and procedures for fee determination, and cover services in all phases of the project cycle, including (retroactively) preparation</p>	<p>GEFSec reviews project, project cycle management plan, and fee proposals of the RDB and IA.</p> <p>CEO agrees to include project in the Work Program.</p> <p>Council approves project, allocation, and fees as part of the Work Program.</p>
<p>PHASE II: APPRAISAL</p>		<p>Forward written summary of Council comments and Council member comments that were received within the comment period to RDB and IA</p>

RDB	IA	GEF
Consider and respond to Council and other comments concerning technical design and implementation.	Consider and respond to Council and other comments concerning conformity with GEF operational policies, strategies and decisions of Council.	
Appraise the project (including any essential supporting baseline activities linked to but not financed by GEF) according to RDB procedures.	Inform GEF Secretariat of responses made.	
Prepare for regular RDB approval (e.g., Input Specification, Equipment Lists, Budgets, Terms of Reference, Work Plans, Monitoring and Evaluation Schedules, Risk Assessment and Pre-requisites, and Capacity assessments of executing agencies).		
Obtain government approval (including negotiating changes to <i>Project Document</i> with Government.)		
Prepare final <i>Project Document</i> (“Appraisal Report”)	Review <i>Project Document</i> for compliance with GEF operational policies, strategies and decisions of Council and submit to CEO for endorsement.	CEO endorses project prior to final approval by RDB.
PHASE III: APPROVAL AND SUPERVISION		
Submit project to RDB Board for approval		
RDB and IA launch project jointly		
Make arrangements for project	Perform any additional project	

RDB	IA	GEF
management	cycle management functions agreed with RDB.	
<p>As necessary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake implementation trouble shooting • Update Project Document as necessary • Provide technical backstopping • Undertake negotiations with country 		
Supervise procurement and report to GEFSec in accordance with GEF requirements and formats.	Verify that procurement reporting meets GEF requirements and formats.	Prepare annual Procurement Report covering GEF projects generally.
Undertake supervision and prepare supervision reports.		
Prepare quarterly update on implementation status.	Submit quarterly update on implementation status in accordance with GEF procedures and project tracking norms.	Publish overall report on status of implementation (Operational Report on GEF Programs – ORGP)
Prepare material for the annual Project Implementation Review , and participate in the review process.	Submit information to the annual Project Implementation Review ; participate in the review process in relation to the GEF operational policies, strategies and decisions of Council.	Manage annual Project Implementation Review ; facilitate any Council review of overall agency accountability.
Verify expenditures, advance funds, prepare combined delivery reports.	Review annual financial reports.	
Undertake annual audit	Review annual audit.	
PHASE IV: EVALUATION		
Prepare Completion Report .	Verify from the documentation that the project was completed in conformity with GEF operational policies, strategies and decisions of Council.	Completion Review

RDB	IA	GEF
Arrange independent evaluations (hiring personnel, mission planning).	Review independent evaluations.	Provide reports to Council as appropriate.
