

**GEF CEO/Chairperson Opening Remarks
GEF-6 First Replenishment meeting
Paris, April 3, 2013**

1. Welcome

Welcome and thank you for joining us here. I am excited to be here to begin the journey of the replenishment with all of you. I have three hopes: (1) to set the course for GEF of the future, (2) to make one year long replenishment process successful to everybody, and (3) to kick-off the process here in Paris.

I am personally excited because in my twenty years in the field of development, I have seen a fundamental transformation in our dialogue on the environment. 20 years ago when the GEF was born on the eve of the Earth Summit in 1992, there was much more tension between the environment and development. At that time I was working as an IMF economist for Kenya. I remember that the issue of the environment did not occur at all in our conversations with the government. Today, the environmental commons are seen as the foundation upon which sustainable development must occur. The dialogue has changed from how do we protect nature from development to how do we invest in nature for development--nature is no longer considered a cost, but an integral part of development. We have already crossed this important bridge but we have a long journey ahead. And I believe the GEF plays a significant role in this journey.

2. The GEF has played an important role in this transformation over the past 20 years

I am proud of the contribution the GEF has made to this course of convergence between development and environment. The GEF's work helped not only protecting environment but promoted economic development and enhanced resilience. The GEF has slowed down deforestation that threatened the health of the Amazon forest in collaboration with the Brazilian government, partners and communities transformed renewable energy market in China by helping the government introduce policy framework, helped fight desertification by working together with 11 African countries to create Great Green Wall south of Sahara. These are just a few examples of where the GEF has played its catalytic role.

3. If we continue with business-as-usual, by 2030, the global commons will reach a tragic state

In the coming decade, the GEF's work will be even more important. As we all know, the earth is very sick. We have already crossed or are about to cross safe planetary boundaries of some of key earth ecosystems.

If we continue business as usual, by 2030, we sadly may need to describe our world like this: it will be much warmer and extreme weathers become new normal; coral reefs, comprising of a quarter of ocean biodiversity, completely disappear in certain regions; 120 million hectares of forest – more than twice the size of this country France – converted into agricultural land; 700 million people could be displaced by water scarcity.

Moreover, any gains in poverty reduction achieved in the past decades will be easily wiped out in the world like this.

A few global trends lie behind this course. Growing population, combined with 3 billion new middle class citizens living mostly in urban areas. These mega-trend leads to: a 70% increase in demand for energy, a doubling of car fleet, and a 50% increase in demand for food

In order to protect the global commons, we must step up our focus on these underlying drivers; for instance, we need to work in sectors like food and agriculture, energy, transport, and with partners like private sector and the cities in the world.

At the same time, we should never forget the importance of the local story where most environmental action starts. Global and local actions need to be mutually reinforcing. Only in this way can we address the underlying drivers in a more systemic and durable way.

We are at a special stage of human development where our interaction with ecosystem is outpacing its carrying capacity.

This is a make-or-break decade. We are racing against time.

4. The severity and urgency of these trends place a large and shared responsibility on all of us who are responsible for the GEF of the future.

If we want to be proud of the GEF 10 years from now, we need to acknowledge the worsening symptoms, understand their underlying drivers, and find a way to turn around the trends.

For the GEF, the challenge is how to build on GEF's unique strength and how to catalyze other players' efforts for transformational change.

5. GEF 2020 and how it links to the replenishment process

To help us tackle these big challenges, we have initiated the GEF2020 visioning exercise. We want to ensure visioning exercise and the replenishment process reinforce each other. The long-term vision should provide a guiding path for identifying short-to-medium term actions that we need to take. I believe the replenishment process is the first step towards laying the foundation for the GEF of the future.

6. Objectives of this meeting:

Our top priority for the next 2 days is to LISTEN to all of you. In the strategic positioning document, we have put forward 10 operational questions. We have also put a lot of effort into fresh thinking about how together we can reshape our programming for higher impacts. As a part of programming exercise, we have proposed innovative, integrated approaches to address the drivers in a systemic way.

An important objective during the next two days is to know if we are asking the right questions or missing important questions, and to hear your perspectives and thoughts on these questions, as well as on these new programming proposals. It is critical for Secretariat to understand where we are as a group on those key issues in order to prepare for the next steps.

However, in order to effectively discuss these questions and programming proposals I believe it is important for us to take a step back and think through a number of strategic issues. In my mind, there are 5 key strategic issues in this regard:

1. What are the key drivers of environmental degradation?
2. Who are the key players influencing these drivers, and what opportunities exist for GEF to help shape them?
3. What does the GEF do well today? What is our strength?
4. What do we need to do better in the future in order to successfully tackle these drivers?
5. How do we organize ourselves for success?

I hope thinking through those key strategic issues together and sharing common information will help us deal with 10 operational questions and proposed programming in a most effective manner.

7. This is a family affair

It is my strong belief that the GEF's greatest asset is its extended family of countries, conventions, implementing agencies as well as CSOs and research community to work for global environmental commons. Their contribution to and ultimate ownership of the GEF of the future is essential if GEF is to be successful in catalyzing the change to the future course of the global commons.

As we go forward, let me in particular highlight the important role played by the Evaluation Office, STAP, and the Trustee. We need your help to continuously improve our ability to address the urgent challenges ahead of us. It is my hope that the replenishment process can foster a strong sense of ownership around GEF. Together we need to think big. In that spirit, we have designed an innovative program for interactive discussions today that will help us think outside the box.

It is a challenging time. We know that you all face constraints at home. But there has never been a better time for us to come together as a family to create the GEF of the future. I am excited because I believe we have an institution which can truly capture this opportunity and make a difference for the global environmental commons.

Thank you.