

**Statement by His Excellency Dr. Seyed Alimohammad MOUSAVI
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Director General for International Environmental and Sustainable
Development Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Islamic Republic of Iran
At the Sixth Assembly of the Global Environment Facility
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**Mr. / Madam Chair,
Ms. Ishii, Chief Executive Officer and Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen.**

At the outset, on behalf of the Constituency of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for hosting GEF 6th Assembly. I hope that during this assembly, we could engage into serious talks on how to best serve the objectives of the Global Environment Facility and how to overcome the challenges ahead of us. The objective of the GEF has been and still is to assist developing countries in their efforts in conservation of their nature and to pay a share in keeping our planet safe to continue to home us. This cannot be achieved without a clear commitment to the environment and only to the environment. We cannot and should not arrange our behavior in the GEF based on our political agenda and a double standard policy. GEF is home to a number of environmental conventions to shape the steps that are needed to save our environment. Those conventions, look to sustainable development as a collective tool, free of political aspirations, to maintain the level of degradation in nature reduced. This makes our fund a real global fund that helps much to developing countries to keep the pace on their conservation policies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We might look at the GEF as a donor centric institution, supported by donor's resources. But even from that perspective, we must avoid polarizing the Fund

between member states. However, we could look at GEF as an implementing instrument, including, for the Rio conventions. If we look at the GEF from this angle, then we need to deal with all member states on an equal footing. Let me give you an example. Allocations of my constituency, Iran, from GEF5 and GEF6, have been blocked by one of the donors, since early GEF5 period.

We have submitted a Project Identification Form (PIF) for "Sustainable Land Management in the Illam Province" and one for "Rehabilitation, Expansion and Sustainable Management of Arid and Semi-Arid Landscapes of Western Iran" in January and February 2016, respectively. We have not heard anything yet from the Secretariat, while we should have been requested to either modify the PIFs or have them confirmed during the first 4 weeks of their submission. We are told that one member state has blocked these PIFs.

We also requested 1.6 million US \$ of our STAR allocation for our SGP in February 2016 and we received indication from UNDP immediately that it had been confirmed. However, once again and against all rules and regulations, we were told that even SGP fund is not applicable for us. This is a clear manifestation of politicizing the GEF process.

**Mr. / Madam Chair,
Distinguished delegates.**

As you are well aware, Small Grants Program is not for the government, but it supports CBOs, Civil Societies, Communities, NGOs and the like. Blocking this allocation means, the party that has done so, has nothing to do with environment and development. This proves that how far they are prepared to go in paralyzing the proper functioning of the GEF in relation to Iran.

Distinguished delegates,

Environmental issues are global by nature and need to be addressed in a coordinated manner. Environmental challenges in Iran are not exception and require international assistance, to be dealt with, effectively and adequately. Iran, as a bona fide Participant of the GEF, has always tried to effectively use available GEF resources to tackle its environmental challenges. Our record in GEF and SGP indicates that we have learnt much from GEF legacy in Iran and our conservation efforts depends on international cooperation.

**Madam CEO,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Conservation of the environment in Iran is a priority in my government's plans. The domestic financial resources have been tripled in the current National Development Plan. Since we are located in the center of desert belt, our challenges are also doubled in number and more severe in nature. Deep drought in the last 20 years in the region has badly affected the entire neighborhood. Sand and dust storms in recent years have ripped through west half of Iran and many other countries in the region. Desertification is on expansion on an unprecedented pace. With these and many other challenges, we cannot fail in our fight for our environment. Therefore, I would like to draw the attention of the Assembly and the Council to this important issue and save the GEF of being politically paralyzed.

I thank you so much