

## THE PACIFIC CONSTITUENCY STATEMENT AT THE GEF 5 ASSEMBLY

CANCUN, MEXICO. 29 May 2014.

**Delivered by His Excellency Winston Thompson, Ambassador of the Republic of the Fiji Islands and the Pacific  
Constituency Council Representative.**

*Mr. Chairman*

*Dr. Naoko Ishii*

*Excellencies*

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

I am honored to take the floor on behalf of the Pacific Constituency that includes 14 Pacific Island Countries (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) together with Indonesia, Philippines, and Timor Leste.

May I take this opportunity to extend our sincere appreciation to our gracious hosts, the Government and People of Mexico and the GEF Secretariat for the excellent organization and support that has enabled many of our countries to attend this 5th GEF Assembly in such a historic and beautiful setting. The Pacific Constituency acknowledges and appreciates the support of the GEF for its significant contribution to our national and collective efforts towards achieving our sustainable development agenda and to our donor partners or their generous support. We look forward to contributing to this continuing collective effort as we move into GEF 6.

However, before we look forward, we must also acknowledge the great work undertaken by the Independent Evaluation Office (of the GEF) in ensuring continual improvement of GEF processes and delivery of projects, in particular the 5th Overall Performance Study and the Mid-Term Evaluations of STAR.

Mr. Chairman, I note that they also completed the Country Portfolio Evaluation Report for Vanuatu and SPREP 1992-2012. The recommendations of this report showed the immense impacts and results that the GEF projects achieved in Vanuatu specifically and the Pacific Island Countries as a whole. I wish to highlight recommendation 3 of that report - that the GEF Secretariat work towards reducing as much as possible the time it takes to approve projects. We acknowledge the GEF Council decisions in June 2012 to streamline measures for the GEF-5 project cycle which we hope will mean less time consumed for developing projects in GEF-6.

Recalling the recommendations of these reports, we would like to emphasize the need to effectively implement the recommendations of these reports and the Comprehensive Assessment Report, in particular that the GEF Secretariat:

- works toward reducing the time it takes to approve projects in GEF 6.
- continues to mainstream its support through the Multilateral Environmental Agreements to deliver on national priorities in an efficient and effective manner in GEF 6.

I congratulate and thank Mr. Robert Van De Berg for his outstanding service and leadership and on behalf of my constituency give him our best wishes for his future endeavors.

As we come to the end of GEF-5, we reflect on the successes and challenges that we as a constituency face together and to highlight some pertinent issues that we feel are critical as our key lessons learnt to strengthen GEF 6.

## **2. GEF-6 STAR**

Mr. Chairman, we are pleased to note that the recently completed replenishment discussions have adopted the Mid-Term Evaluation's recommendation for the STAR to continue in GEF 6. This is important for our constituency as we feel the STAR provides our countries with a share of GEF resources.

Moreover, we are extremely delighted to learn of the changes to adjust the weighting of the formula for calculating national allocations to favor the Least Developed Countries, a decision we took to mean that more resources will be made available jointly to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) .

While this is good news, our constituency noted with disappointment the decision to raise the aggregate floor level from USD 4 million to USD 6 million for **LDCs only**. As I raised during the Council meeting, we strongly feel that this increase in the STAR aggregate floor amount should equally apply to SIDS, and would like to see this reflected in the official report for the 5th GEF Assembly. It has become the common understanding that LDCs and SIDS are recognized as special cases in the MEAs and are referenced collectively; we do not understand why the GEF, the Financing Mechanism of the three Rio Conventions, Stockholm and Minamata Convention chooses to separate the SIDS from the LDCs.

Mr. Chairman, SIDS and LDCs are both the most vulnerable to the impacts of environmental degradation and should therefore receive the same treatment. Both LDCs and SIDS are constrained with scarce resources and prospects, low capacity and populations strongly reliant on a healthy local environment for their livelihoods. This coupled with high transaction costs means both require special financial support consideration from the GEF.

To reflect this vulnerability, we call for greater resources to be allocated to understanding, measuring and reporting on the vulnerabilities faced by the SIDS, as a future measure for GEF resource allocations.

Given our specific vulnerabilities to climate change, we further call for greater support to be given to the Special Climate Change Fund as this modality established under the UNFCCC provides specific support for climate change adaptation.

In our Pacific constituency the recent graduation of some of our SIDS members means that only 4 Pacific SIDS remain as LDC states. However, few will dispute the fact that our Pacific SIDS remain some of the most fragile on earth and are just as fragile as LDCs. While proud of our efforts to graduate many are still at a crucial stage where one major natural disaster or other catastrophic event could slide them back into LDC status. What is even more concerning is that in some emerging scenarios some Pacific SIDS may receive less STAR funding under GEF 6 compared to GEF 5, while the problems continue to get worse beyond the economic capabilities in most of our member countries. In the GEF context raising the aggregate floor level would help towards solving both these problems.

Mr. Chairman, we call on the donor community to respond to these challenges, especially in this year “The International Year of SIDS. “ Let’s put SIDS plight front and centre. As many of you may know, global attention is now on the 3rd SIDS Conference in Samoa in September this year and we urge this Assembly to align its outcomes to also take into account the overall theme for the SIDS conference which is “The Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States through Genuine and Durable Partnerships.” It is such partnerships that can enable us to address the issues faced by the SIDS and LDCs. Wouldn’t it be a wonderful legacy for GEF if we could announce that we have taken note of the special case of SIDS, and have taken the necessary steps to ensure that we address their special vulnerabilities. Raising the floor level would be a concrete action in this direction. This is the sort of lasting and wide reaching impact that such forward looking action could take as highlighted in the Country Portfolio Evaluation Report for Vanuatu and SPREP 1992-2012 I outlined earlier in my remarks.

Mr Chairman, as we speak our Pacific Island communities continue to grapple with the increasing impacts of climate change, biodiversity losses and land degradation to name a few. The GEF was set up to assist the poorer and most vulnerable countries to respond effectively to environmental degradation through generating global environmental benefits. We need to demonstrate that the GEF takes SIDS unique circumstances into account and address them in a manner that is transparent, inclusive and accountable. Therefore, we again wish to encourage the Assembly to adopt the same approach to allocating resources to SIDS and LDCs alike.

### **3. Co-Financing Policy**

Third, our constituency is grateful to the GEF Secretariat for preparing the revised co-financing policy which we hope will shed more clarity on this key requirement. We note that the revised co-financing ratio of 6:1 is set for the whole GEF-6 portfolio. We are mindful of the limited co-financing opportunities in some of our member countries to secure

larger portions of funding for co-financing and hope that this will be considered in relevant cases so as to not affect these countries ability to develop projects and access funding for GEF-6.

#### **4. GEF Accreditation**

The pilot project for accreditation of GEF project agency will be completed by the end of the year. We note the success of this project and encourage either an extension of the first round deadline or second round to allow for more institutions, in particular regional institutions, to apply.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, to conclude I would like to quote the UN Secretary General's remarks at the Abu Dhabi High Level Ascent at the beginning of this month that ***"The planet is sending us clearly a message that nature is now sick. We must listen. That is why I am saying to world leaders: Don't be on the losing side of history. Change is in the air. Solutions exist. The race is on. It's time to lead."***

Our Constituency stands ready to take up the UNSG's challenge to lead. With the help of our partners and under the dynamic leadership of CEO Dr. Naoko Ishii, and with appropriate financial support, we will create the new reality.

Our constituency wishes to reiterate our sincere appreciation and gratitude to our host, the Government of Mexico and the GEF for the opportunity to address you all this morning.

Finally, our region through Samoa is hosting the upcoming 3rd SIDS Conference from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> September this year. We look forward to welcoming your delegations to our shores.

I wish us all a successful meeting and look forward to continuing our partnership in GEF 6.

Vinaka vakalevu.