

**50<sup>th</sup> GEF Council Meeting**

**June 7, 2016**

**Opening of the Meeting**

**Remarks by Naoko Ishii, GEF CEO and Chairperson**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Welcome everyone.

It's a great pleasure to open this council meeting.

In two ways, I believe this is a very significant event.

First, it is our 50<sup>th</sup> meeting, and marks our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

25 years ago, on the eve of the Rio Earth Summit, the GEF was established to address the world's most challenging environmental issues.

What started as a pilot program has developed today into a unique partnership that unites 183 countries, 18 partner agencies and a growing network of civil society, academia and the private sector.

I'm very pleased to see so many of the GEF family here with us today, and look forward to celebrating our achievements at the Smithsonian Natural History Museum tonight.

Our anniversary is also an occasion to look to the future, and the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The worsening global environment is an ever increasing threat to our global aspirations for growth, jobs, security and prosperity. In many ways, the GEF's support for Earth's life support systems is needed more than ever. I sincerely believe we can achieve much more!

This brings me to the second reason why this Council meeting is so important.

We're meeting in 2016, the year of implementation of the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement.

The adoption of the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement clearly recognized that the health of the global commons, our oceans, land, forest and water, biodiversity and of course climate system, are fundamental to our future development prospects.

For so long, we have taken the global environmental commons for granted. Scientists tell us that we have pushed the Earth system to its limit. Now is the time to change the course.

But now finally, it seems that the world, has woken up and has started to work together to move from “tragedy” of the global commons to “opportunity”.

The adoption of SDGs and Paris agreements was the result of leadership from the top, but also, importantly, the engagement came from communities, local government, business and citizens all over the world.

In my mind, what we want to do is to make the Global Commons everybody’s business. We need to build on the momentum created by the SDGs and Paris and strengthen this emerging global movement for safeguarding the global environmental commons.

It’s the wisest investment we can make.

At the GEF, we have a unique opportunity, a moment in time to drive this agenda forward.

We want to help create platforms to bring diverse stakeholders together to solve issues around the global commons; from communities to cabinets, from smallholders to shareholders, from philanthropy to finance, and many more.

I am convinced that only when everybody plays their part, can we achieve the massive transformation in our economies that we need to safeguard the global commons.

This brings me to the Council agenda before us.

We are two years into GEF2020 implementation and at the mid-point of GEF6. It’s a good time to reflect and make new decisions.

This morning we start with an update of GEF2020. GEF2020 was adopted two years ago with the aim at frontally addressing (or even reversing)

environmental challenges in the most effectively manner, with a clear focus on a driver focused, multi-stakeholder platform approach, and delivering integrated solutions. We will take stock of where we are on GEF2020.

At the outset of GEF6, we have embarked on comprehensive reform of our delivery machinery including RBM, KM, Gender, streamlining of project cycle, and IT upgrading. We will update you of some, if not all, of the work ongoing, and seek your decisions. This includes the introduction of the scorecard, and policy paper on project cycle.

The future direction of accreditation, which will be discussed this afternoon, is another important agenda item as the discussion will be conducted within the context of future business model of the GEF.

The Paris Climate Agreement gave us a lot of work. One key success factor to the Agreement is its bottom-up approach, building on countries' NDCs. Transparency of reporting is the linchpin to the credibility of, and mutual confidence in, the agreement. To help developing countries in their efforts to enhance capacity for reporting of their progress, the COP requested the GEF to support the establishment of Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT).

I am honored that countries have put their trust in the GEF to take on this important task. Please know that I am fully committed to support the CBIT. I also want to express my appreciation to donor countries, who are considering to make voluntary contributions.

Now I move on to our work program and want to mention three points.

First this work program employs in a big way “driver focused approach”. The proposed projects and programs will more directly engage the major actors and stakeholders to deliver solutions that are practical, effective, and long-term in areas of land use change and habitat restoration, over-exploitation of marine fisheries, and unsustainable practices in the agriculture sector, as well as toxic chemicals and waste management.

Second, some projects are starting to make direct links to their respective Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) as part of the Paris Agreement. This is a welcome beginning of an alignment between country priorities, Convention commitments, and GEF financing.

Third, we will update you on the progress of IAPs, Integrated Approach Pilots. The last six months has been a very busy and productive period for the IAPs, with a wide range of activities at national level in participating countries, and at regional or global level by stakeholders and Agencies. Stakeholder consultations have played a major role in advancing the design of child projects, and I am particularly pleased to highlight launching of the Global Platform on Sustainable Cities as a major achievement in this regard.

Friends, colleagues

As we move towards planning for GEF-7, I hope we can draw on our 25 years of experience, and explore a new way of thinking. I think we need to recognize shifting to a low-carbon and resilient economy is both **needed** to prosper within Earth's safe operating space and **good** for economic growth, jobs and security.

With your support, the GEF is moving in the right direction.

But we are not moving alone. Tomorrow, we will have a session with **Executive Secretaries of the Conventions** to reflect how we all together can move our common agenda forward.

We will also hear from **STAP**, our independent science advisors, on what approach the GEF will need to take to help achieve its mission.

**IEO** as always tell us what works and what does not. This time we will discuss the approach paper for OPS6, which is critical for foundation of GEF7.

Lastly but not the least, IEO provided us with its evaluation of **CSO network**, our important partner. We will have discussion on how to ensure the value of the network to the goal of the GEF be enhanced.

I am looking forward to celebrating with you tonight the GEFs achievements so far over the past 25 years, and to work with you to make the GEF partnership stronger, and even better equipped to deal with the growing environmental challenges we all face.

Together, we can be on the right side of history. Thank you.