

61st GEF Council

December 6, 2021

Virtual Meeting

Opening of the Meeting

Remarks by

**Carlos Manuel Rodriguez,
GEF CEO and Chairperson**

As Delivered

Thank you

Good morning everybody and welcome to the 61st GEF Council meeting.

Like the past 3 Council meetings this session is being held virtually due to the pandemic.

I hope that all of you, your family, friends and colleagues are well and look forward to meeting physically together in person, hopefully next year.

Normally when we begin an event like this one, we say that this is a critical meeting, that is the most important meeting that we have ever had.

When I look at the state of the world and read all the scientific evidence.

When I reflect on what just happened recently in COP26. I cannot disagree that that this is one of the most important Council meetings that we have ever had.

This is an extremely important moment for all of us. But particularly for the next generation.

Last week, last Friday, we had a super interesting event, in the context of the CSO network event with the youth. It was really compelling, really emotional, to hear these young leaders calling our attention.

So yes, it is a major moment for all of us, but particularly for the next generation.

It's also a great moment for the GEF as we celebrate a special occasion. It has been 30 years since the GEF was established on the eve of the Rio Earth Summit and 30 years since the GEF has been providing support for environmental action worldwide in facilitating the implementation of major international environmental conventions.

I'm proud of the progress and past achievements that we have made so far, but we are definitely at a crossroads.

Glasgow kept 1.5 degrees on life support, and nature was finally integrated in the center of the climate conversation and discussions like never before.

So, COP 15 part one and COP 26 got us off to a good start.

But sadly, the pandemic still continues to impact many parts of the world and is causing significant costs for all on our daily lives.

And day by day, week by week, from floods, to fires and droughts, the Earth continues to demonstrate that we're pushing it beyond tolerable natural limits.

Last Friday at the Civil Society Consultation, we heard passionate, powerful pleas from youth leaders that we must deliver on our promises. They told us that their future is totally compromised by today's actions.

The GEF-8 replenishment is an opportunity that we must collectively seize so we can contribute to deliver solutions for the post pandemic era.

Even though the GEF's funding is tiny compared to the scale of global need, a strong replenishment will enable us to scale up high impact initiatives that support global environmental benefits in an efficient and effective way.

Dear friends,

I don't need to tell you that a healthy environment is the basis of a prosperous life. This foundation is facing severe threats.

Without an urgent and coordinated action, environmental threats will intensify and harm human development, livelihoods and justice in the near term.

This Council meeting can contribute to positive action.

Also, it is a great pleasure to welcome again my co-chair Mette Møglestue, Council member for the constituency of Norway, Denmark, Latvia and Lithuania.

This is the second time that I'm working with Mette as elected chairperson. And at the onset I would like to thank her and Lauren for all the support, commitment, and effort they have dedicated to this role.

This Council meeting is the second to last under GEF-7, our four-year funding period which ends in June 2022.

We have a few busy days in front of us and important issues on the agenda.

I'm extremely pleased that despite operational challenges will be presenting a high quality, forward looking, trust fund work program for both the GEF and the LDCF/SCCF

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, we at the GEF have been working hard to keep day-to-day work on-going and supporting all different countries.

The latest GEF-7 work program will provide grants and blended finance for 43 countries expected to benefit 25 million people in the project areas while generating global environmental gains.

This new work program reflects the GEF's commitment to tackle environmental challenges in an integrated way. Many projects will contribute directly to a blue and green recovery from the pandemic.

At this Council meeting we will be presenting to you other reports and updates. Some of them include:

The GEF Monitoring Report 2021, which highlights the progress made by the portfolio project under implementation the past year, and for the second time we'll be presenting to you the share of GEF financing in agency portfolios.

In addition, the independent third-party review of UNDP will be discussed during an executive session and the GEF secretariat, and UNDP will be providing Council an oral report on actions taken in response to previous Council decisions.

We will also hear from representatives of GEF supported conventions, STAP, and IEO.

One important part of the ongoing GEF-8 replenishment is the work of the IEO. In this regard, the IEO will present an executive summary of OPS 7 which is drawn from numerous evaluations and organized along three themes all related to the overall operation of the GEF.

We will also present to you an assessment of the one-year pilot on co-chairing arrangements of the Council meeting as well as provide an update on the Organization of the 7th GEF Assembly.

Lastly, we plan to end the meeting on Thursday this week with a celebration of the GEF 30th anniversary.

A publication with contributions from across the GEF community will be shared with you. We will also hear messages from our partners, colleagues past and present.

Dear friends,

for the last 30 years the GEF has addressed the planet's biggest environmental challenges, the next step will be even more important.

We need to work together to defuse the crisis in front of us from climate change, biodiversity, wildlife habitat loss, land degradation, ocean pollution and the impact of hazardous chemicals.

These emergencies need to be addressed together, not one at a time, and with everyone at the table. Such steps are needed to build a nature positive, carbon neutral, pollution free world.

Well let's get down to work.

Thank you so much, dear friends.