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**GUIDANCE NOTE FOR COUNTRIES AND GEF AGENCIES ON PARTICIPATION IN THE
GEF-8 INTEGRATED PROGRAMS**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The [GEF-8 Programming Directions](#) includes eleven (11) Integrated Programs¹ (IPs) focused on tackling drivers of environmental degradation and advancing systems transformation through the integrated approach. The IPs cover the full spectrum of the GEF mandate as financial mechanism of major multilateral environmental agreements. They are also integral to the GEF-8 Theory of Change for achievement of a healthy, productive, and resilient environment which underpins the well-being of human societies. Furthermore, the scope and breadth of issues covered will specifically address the interest and needs of LDCs and SIDs, and as a result support their post-COVID-19 green and blue recovery effort and strengthen their role in safeguarding the planet.

2. The IPs will enable countries to invest focal area resources in a manner that more directly aligns with national priorities for a green and blue recovery, and for advancing transformative change in key systems. With the IPs, countries can harness synergies across focal areas and generate multiple global environmental benefits. As compared with multi-focal area projects, this increases efficiency and maximizes the use of GEF resources and potential for higher co-financing. This approach also allows countries to address drivers of environmental degradation that have links to regional and global supply chains and are therefore not adequately addressed in single country projects.

3. The purpose of this guidance note is to provide information to countries and Agencies on how these IPs will be operationalized to maximize their potential for achieving the outcomes established in the GEF-8 Programming Directions. This document builds on the [Note for Operationalizing the GEF-8 Integrated Programs](#) that was prepared during the replenishment process. It is organized in three main sections: The first section describes how the focal areas will be programmed for the IPs based on indicative focal area amounts in the GEF-8 financial scenario; the second section outlines eligibility criteria for country participation from the Programming Directions document; and the third section describes operational aspects related to selection of lead agencies and countries, including indicative timeline for roll-out of the programs.

¹ IPs are: 1) Food Systems, 2) Ecosystem Restoration, 3) Sustainable Cities, 4) Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes, 5) Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution, 6) Blue and Green Islands, 7) Clean and Healthy Ocean, 8) Greening Transportation Infrastructure Development, 9) Net-Zero Nature-positive Accelerator, 10) Wildlife Conservation for Development, and 11) Elimination of Hazardous Chemicals from Supply Chains

II. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

4. Financial resources for the IPs are embedded within the GEF-8 focal area allocations. The notional allocation of IP resources between focal areas is largely proportional to the nature of drivers being targeted and relative importance of the expected global environmental benefits. As shown in Table 1, the total envelope includes indicative amounts in the following four categories:

- **STAR** represents the total amount within each focal area that will be allocated to countries through the STAR allocation systems;
- **STAR matching incentives** refers to the country project incentive windows that are a part of the STAR focal area set asides, which will be matched to the STAR resources put towards IPs by countries;
- **Non-STAR** focal area contributions represent the amount from non-STAR focal areas that will be invested in the IPs; and
- **Global Platforms** refer to the coordination and knowledge platforms that support each IP and are not country specific.

Table 1. GEF-8 Total Indicative Amounts (US\$ Millions) for IPs

Note: The indicative amounts in this Table will be adjusted to the final replenishment total, keeping the proportionality principle agreed in the replenishment decision.

Amount for Country Programming			(c) TOTAL (a) + (b)	(d) Amount for Global Platforms	TOTAL (c) + (d)
(a) STAR Focal Areas (3:1 ratio)		(b) Non-STAR Focal Area Contributions			
STAR	Incentive				
937	312	135	1384	180	1564

5. The indicative amounts under STAR focal areas (BD, CCM, and LD) includes three of these categories: STAR, STAR Matching incentives, and Global Platforms. Amounts under the two non-STAR focal areas (IW and C&W) include only non-STAR Focal Area contributions and global platforms.

Resource Envelopes for IPs

6. The total envelope for each IP will be determined during programming. The envelope will include amounts for participating countries (STAR + incentive and non-STAR) and an amount for the coordination platform.

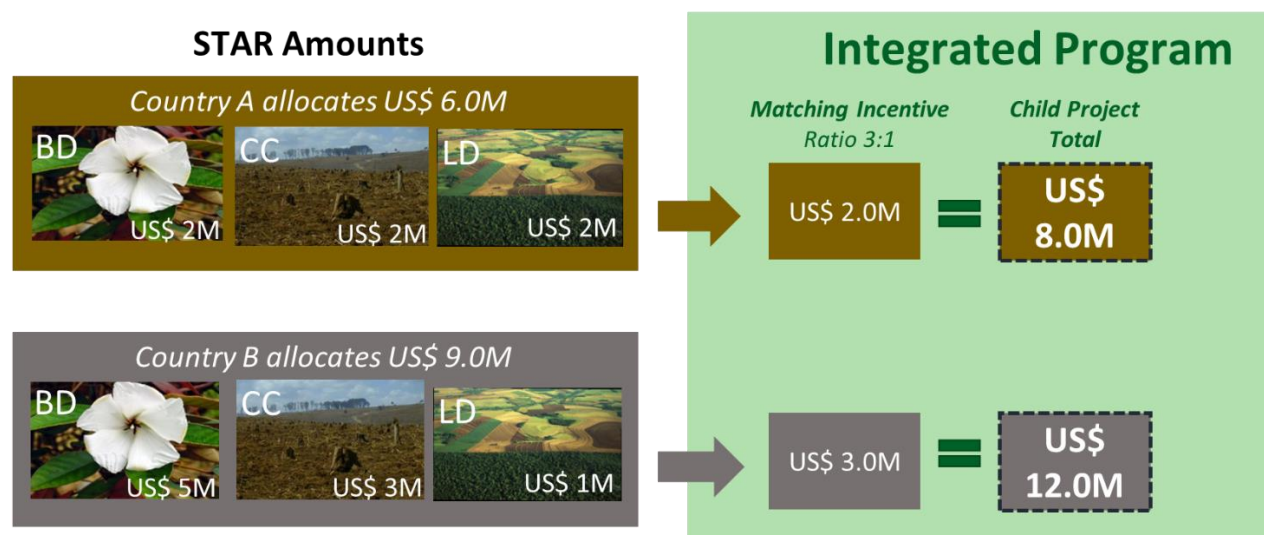
Country Financing

7. Participating country projects will be financed through a combination of **STAR focal area resources** and **matching incentive** set-aside for each IP. In addition, countries will be able to access the **non-STAR focal resources** under IPs for which these resources are prioritized. Countries will decide on amount of STAR resources to allocate, which will then be matched at the ratio of US\$3 of STAR resources to US\$1 of IP incentive set-aside established during the replenishment process. As full-flexibility of STAR allocation will be implemented in GEF-8, participating countries can allocate STAR amounts for their projects based on relative importance of focal areas and potential for contributing GEBs.

8. In order to expand opportunities for countries to participate in more than one IP, while keeping a volume of resources compatible with the achievement of impacts on the ground, a minimum threshold for STAR amount has been set at US\$2 Million. For example, with the STAR to matching incentive ratio of 3:1, a country that allocates only this minimum US\$2 will have an incentive of US\$0.67 million, giving a total of US\$2.67 Million for its project under the program.

9. Figure 1 illustrates how the financing would work using two countries allocating different amounts from their STAR. Both countries have the same total STAR, but *Country A* allocates only US\$6 million drawn equally across the focal areas, while *Country B* allocates US\$9 million with varying amounts from the focal areas. Both are selected to participate in an IP and therefore get the matching incentive at the 3:1 ratio, bringing the total grant amounts for child projects to US\$8 million (Country A) and US\$12 million (Country B). By being part of the IP, both countries also benefit from program-level support through the separately funded Coordination Platform child project.

Figure 1. Illustration of Country Resource Programming for IPs



10. Contributions from the non-STAR focal areas will be prioritized for IPs that specifically address the IW and C&W focal area priorities as part of the overall programming approach to achieve transformational change. This includes focus on transboundary marine and freshwater systems for IW, and reducing mercury and POPs for C&W. The amounts to be programmed will be based on demands expressed by countries selected to participate in the IPs. The resources will enable more robust programming that benefits a greater diversity of countries across larger geographical areas, with LDCs and SIDS as priorities.

Platform Financing

11. As stated earlier, focal area resources for the IP platforms are exclusive of country allocations. The actual amount for each IP platform will be based on size of the overall program portfolio, such as number of countries selected, geographical scale, and need for leveraging diverse initiatives and stakeholders. The platforms will be designed as separate child projects focusing on program-level priorities, including governance, knowledge management, and monitoring and reporting.

III. PROGRAMMING MODALITIES

12. The GEF-8 programming architecture builds on the successful approach in GEF-7 of investing in integrated programming, to maximize potential for more impactful outcomes in key economic systems. The eleven (11) IPs are framed to collectively address major drivers of environmental degradation and deliver multiple benefits across the many thematic dimensions of the GEF mandate. Furthermore, the thematic scope and geographical coverage of these programs are consistent with global aspirations for development pathways that are nature-positive, climate-neutral and with reduced pollution. The programs will make use of relevant global or regional platforms that are attracting a multitude of stakeholders and resources in response to commitments linked to MEAs. The IPs also allow the GEF to better crowd-in other stakeholders, including the private sector, enhance knowledge sharing and learning, and ensure a more effective use of GEF resources.

Criteria for Participation

13. To ensure that each IP achieves a robust programming towards impactful outcomes and results, countries must be able to target those IPs that offer them the best possible opportunities for supporting a green and blue recovery. Annex 1 provide details on objectives, priorities and requirements for each IP, which countries can use to assess their interest and eligibility to participate. Given the linkages between the programs, countries may wish to consider IPs with criteria that offer the best possible opportunity for harnessing national-level policy options toward impactful environmental outcomes. This may include, for example, alignment with large-scale development initiatives as baseline for co-financing, approach to achieving policy coherence, and existing or planned institutional frameworks or policies to scale-up financing for global environmental benefits.

14. In addition to the criteria specific to each IP, countries are also expected to demonstrate alignment and consistency with the following GEF priorities:

- *Delivery against core indicator targets* – Focus will be given to countries and their respective projects that offer demonstrable evidence of their potential to deliver significant contribution to the GEF-8 core indicator targets through IPs. The GEF-8 Results Framework and proposed targets will serve as the basis for assessing potential contributions by country.
- *Leverage potential* – The updated GEF-7 Policy on Co-financing emphasizes the need for countries to mobilize significant co-financing, including leveraged investments. The IPs are expected to play an important role in achieving portfolio level co-financing targets.
- *Private sector engagement* – The GEF-7 Programming Directions includes an emphasis on engagement with the private sector. Countries will need to demonstrate commitment to engaging the private sector through, (i) the potential to influence businesses toward sustainable practices and options that generate multiple environmental benefits, and (ii) the potential to catalyze investment opportunities that can scale-up innovative technologies for global environmental benefits.
- *Gender integration* – In accordance with the goals and principles as set out in the GEF's Policy on Gender Equality, all GEF investments are required to address gender equality as a priority. The GEF Gender Implementation Strategy outlines strategic entry points for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of the GEF-8 programming.

15. To ensure coherence and consistency in the overall delivery of each IP, countries must demonstrate commitment to work closely with the global/regional platform that is designed to coordinate and support program-level activities. This requires allocation of funding to facilitate participation in learning and knowledge exchange activities, as well as other Regional/Global Platform activities as needed, which will strengthen alignment of child projects and increase potential for transformational impact.

IV. OPERATIONAL MODALITIES

16. This section focuses specifically on processes involved in developing the IPs, which would culminate in Program Framework Documents to be included in Council Work Programs. The processes include selection of lead agencies for each IP, selection of countries for participation, and preparation of the PFDs.

Lead Agency Selection Process

17. The Lead Agency² will be selected through a consultative process among participating Agencies, facilitated by the GEF Secretariat. The Lead Agency selection process will build on experiences from GEF-6 and GEF-7, with improvements to enhance greater clarity of roles and responsibilities based on recommendations from *OPS7 Formative Evaluation*. The process will enable Agencies to demonstrate their capability to carry out the responsibilities associated with the role, including comparative advantage to coordinate the program, and willingness to work with participating countries and other GEF Agencies. The *OPS7 Formative Evaluation* particularly emphasized collaboration with other GEF Agencies as a critical role for the Lead Agency as this will strengthen program level monitoring and evaluation.

18. All 18 GEF Agencies will be given the opportunity to express interest in taking a role as Lead Agency. A separate *Note on Lead Agency Terms of Reference and Selection Process* has been prepared with detailed guidance for GEF agencies, including criteria and requirements for each IP.³ While each IP is expected to be led by a single GEF agency, the Note also specifies expectations on *co-leadership* for agencies seeking to submit such proposals. Because lead agencies are required to be fully engaged with programming of the IPs early on, the selection process will precede those for countries. Furthermore, lead agencies selection process will be done concurrently for all 11 programs, as this will enable the GEF secretariat to consult on the best possible options to achieve balance among the Agencies submitting proposals.

Country Selection Process

19. Countries interested in joining one or more IPs must participate in the selection process. Hence, early in GEF-8 the GEF Secretariat will focus on *upstream country engagement* as a priority for programming the IPs. The upstream engagement will help countries prepare for *expressing interests* in the programs, and at the same time foster dialogue and consultation between countries and GEF agencies on opportunities for collaboration.

² Selection of an Agency to serve as Lead for an IP does not preclude its selection by a country or countries to serve as Agency for child project(s) under that IP.

³ GEF/C.62/05 GEF-8 Integrated Programs Lead Agency Terms of Reference and Selection Process

Upstream Country Engagement

20. The GEF Secretariat would invest in early outreach to make countries aware of the various opportunities available to them for programming through the IPs, and clarification of the processes to facilitate their participation.⁴ Through Country Engagement Strategy processes,⁵ the GEF Secretariat will provide briefings on the IPs and address any concerns related to the criteria and requirements for participation (see Box 1). The briefings will also cover program-level priorities to demonstrate the added-value for countries, such as potential for regional cooperation or transboundary cooperation, south-south exchange and learning, and the opportunity to harness technical expertise for developing local capacity.

Box 1. Harnessing the Country Engagement Strategy for Programming IPs

The process for rolling out Integrated Programs (IPs) will benefit greatly from the GEF-8 Country Engagement Strategy (CES) to be implemented by the GEF Secretariat. Specifically, the Upstream Programming Support will offer opportunities to provide adequate guidance that will help countries decide how to prioritize their interests in the IPs. Detailed briefings will be prepared on both substantive and operational aspects for presentation and discussion during technical dialogues with countries as well as the Regional GEF-8 Rollout workshops.

a) Upstream Technical and National Dialogues

Because these dialogues are based on countries' demands for support to strategic portfolio development, the GEF Secretariat will harness them as opportunity to establish how the IPs could be aligned and targeted by each specific country. The engagement will also help the country to clarify national level priorities for advancing systems transformation through the IPs, including specific "levers" and cross-cutting issues to be addressed. The GEF Secretariat anticipates organizing 50 country dialogues in GEF-8.

b) Regional GEF-8 Roll-Out Workshops

These workshops will bring together groups of countries to provide a high-level view and understanding of the GEF-8 Architecture and Strategy. Detailed breakout sessions are planned, which will create opportunities for high quality technical interactions on both substantive and operational aspects of the IPs as well as the training of participants in the "how to" of GEF-8. The workshops will also be invaluable for programming IPs that are geographically focused (e.g. Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes IP), as well as those that require multiple countries to engage across national boundaries (e.g. Clean and Healthy Ocean IP, and Green and Blue Islands IP).

⁴ The Secretariat has normally used Country Dialogues, Extended Constituency Workshops, and consultations on margins of regional and global forums to engage with OFPs on such programming issues. The new Country Engagement Strategy has further streamlined this to include Upstream Technical Dialogues.

⁵ GEF/C.62/Inf.16 GEF-8 Country Engagement Strategy Implementation Arrangements

21. This aspect of the country engagement strategy will ensure that countries identify and prioritize the IP(s) for which they are best placed to demonstrate efficient use of their STAR, maximize potential for generating global environmental benefits, and contribute significantly to the program level goals of each IP. Countries will then be able to respond to Calls for Expression of Interests (EOIs) when launched by the GEF Secretariat. LDCs and SIDS will be prioritized for engagement to ensure they are prepared to fully explore suitability of the IPs for their national interest, and in some cases, sub-regional or transboundary engagement. The countries will also be in position to harness programming and financing opportunities created to maximize their participation in the IPs, including:

- **the US\$2 Million threshold for triggering the IP incentive.** This will expand opportunities for countries to participate in more than one IP, while keeping a volume of resources compatible with the achievement of impacts on the ground.
- **the imposition of a ceiling⁶ on incentive amounts** to ensure eligible LDCs and SIDS or countries with smaller STAR allocations are not overwhelmed by those with higher allocations. For each IP, LDCs and SIDS that meet the minimum threshold requirement will be prioritized first for the incentive amounts.
- **the 3:1 ratio for STAR and matching incentives.** This ratio will ensure that the matching incentive available for each program will accommodate as many eligible countries as possible, including LDCs and SIDS, while at the same achieving the robust portfolio needed for influencing transformative change.

Calls for Expression of Interests

22. Prior to programming each IP and after the Lead Agency selection process has been completed, a Call for Expression of Interest will be issued to all countries through the GEF Operational Focal Points. The Call will be accompanied by a template with detailed instructions for completion, including requirements for eligibility, details for demonstrating commitment toward the program-level objectives, and potential for multiple global environmental benefits. Countries will be allowed to submit EOIs for any of the IPs they deem as appropriate to their national interest.⁷ However, only one EOI per IP will be allowed for any country. Countries will decide on GEF Agencies of their choice for the EOI and, if selected, subsequent preparation of the child project. The process for preparing the EOI represents a timely opportunity for countries to engage with the GEF agency they choose to work with for their proposed child project. The selected agency will therefore be well-placed to provide technical support and address any concerns from countries related to GEF requirements for the IPs.

⁶ The actual amount for a ceiling will be determined at the time when countries have been selected and the IP portfolio is being decided.

⁷ Countries selected for multiple IPs will need to ensure that there is efficient coordination and alignment between the projects where appropriate to harness synergies.

23. For the IPs to achieve maximum impact, the EOI review and decision on country selection will initially prioritize criteria that will be defined under each individual IP. In addition, consideration will be given to the following priorities for advancing systems transformation:

- extent of contributions to GEBs,
- integration of cross-cutting themes and levers for transformation,
- potential for financial leverage, and
- commitment to engage with coordination platform.

24. Specific details of what is expected for each of these will accompany the EOI template for the IPs.

25. Countries interested in an IP for which a Call for EOI is launched will have up to one month to complete and submit the template. The template must be signed by the OFP or accompanied by a signed official letter from the OFP. Either the Agency selected by the country or the OFP can submit the completed template to the GEF Secretariat. Specific instructions on this will be included in the Call for EOI.

26. Review of the submitted EOIs and selection of countries will be made by the Secretariat in consultation with the IP Lead Agency, with inputs and recommendations of a review committee that includes representation from STAP and independent expert. To avoid conflict of interest, the Lead Agency for an IP will recuse itself from reviewing any EOI for which it is the Agency selected by the country. Both the Lead Agencies and Agencies selected by countries for country-specific projects are expected to ensure the quality of programs and projects in a way to maximize impacts along the agreed objectives under each of IPs.

27. For IPs where incentive funds are used for programming, countries that are not sufficiently competitive in securing the funds will have the option of aligning their eligible proposal with an IP, provided it is submitted and approved as a standalone project. This alignment will enable the countries to make use of their respective STAR allocations for the standalone project and also benefit from knowledge exchange and learning platform established under the IP. As with child projects under the IP, the standalone project will need to allocate funds to cover participation in the platform during program implementation.

Program Design Process

28. Countries selected to participate in each IP will work with their respective GEF Agencies to complete and submit a Concept Note Template that outlines the proposed project in accordance with the GEF requirements that will be addressed. This Concept Note can draw from information provided in the EOI and include, amongst others, specific details on how the project will deliver multiple global environmental benefits through the proposed program approach to systems transformation. It will also outline how GEF policies and guidelines on

Environmental and Social Safeguards, gender equality⁸ and stakeholder engagement,⁹ and specifically with Indigenous Peoples¹⁰ where such engagement is critical for achieving program goals.

29. The lead agency will be responsible for preparation of the Program Framework Document, which will include a detailed description of the program, theory of change, and results framework. This will serve as basis for subsequent development and design of all child projects, to ensure overall coherence and consistency in delivering the IP. The PFD will include explicit guidance to all participating countries on specific issues that must be addressed during child project design stage.

30. Upon approval of the PFD by the Council, Agencies selected by participating countries, in coordination with the Lead Agency and other participating stakeholders, will proceed with preparing their respective Child Projects for CEO Endorsement/Approval. Consistent with existing policies, and with the expectation that most of them are submitted within the Program Commitment Deadline, all child projects under the IPs will be circulated to Council for review and comment four weeks in advance of CEO endorsement/approval.

⁸ GEF Policy and Guidelines on Gender Equality, <https://www.thegef.org/documents/gender-equality>

⁹ GEF Policy and Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement, <https://www.thegef.org/documents/stakeholder-engagement>

¹⁰ GEF Policy and Guidelines on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples, <https://www.thegef.org/documents/indigenous-peoples>

ANNEX I: IP SPECIFIC CRITERIA FOR COUNTRY ELIGIBILITY

Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes Integrated Program

OBJECTIVE: To invest in the conservation and effective governance of critical forest biomes that sustain the health of the planet and flow of vital ecosystem services that underpin human well-being. Because of the three very distinct biome priorities targeted for achieving this objective, it is envisaged that the IP will be delivered through three discrete platforms.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- The Amazon and Congo Basins are prioritized for the program by virtue of their global importance for IFLs, which justifies direct engagement and cooperation of all riparian countries.¹¹ Basin countries should demonstrate commitment to ambitious policies that will prioritize maintenance of forest integrity, halting deforestation, and restoration of degraded areas. The proposed strategies and policies must explicitly consider both carbon stocks and biodiversity.
- Forests in other regions considered as “critical biomes” for IFLs are based on evidence of globally important biodiversity, high carbon storage and carbon dioxide removal capacity, potential for restoring ecosystem integrity at the regional scale, and high threats. Priority targets include the Indo-Malaya ecoregion, Guinean forests of West Africa, and Mesoamerica. A key criterion for selection of countries in these biomes is the potential to target IFLs across national borders, which requires engagement by all countries involved.
- Evidence of policies that recognize land tenure, access and resource rights, and transparent co-management strategies with IPLCs.
- Baseline information and co-financing opportunities for more transformative actions to safeguard and sustainably use tropical forests, including for creation and effective management of protected areas, sustainable forest management, integrated approaches to tackle drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.
- Evidence of commitment to best practices for protection and governance of IFLs, including models, policies, financial frameworks, information, and social systems.
- Evidence of commitment to engage with neighboring countries where appropriate to increase connectivity of ecosystems in transboundary IFLs and support coordinated management at the regional level.

¹¹ **Amazon Basin Countries:** Brazil, Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Suriname, Guyana, Ecuador, and Venezuela

Congo Basin Countries: Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and Central Africa Republic

Blue and Green Islands Integrated Program

OBJECTIVE: To apply Nature-based Solutions¹² in key ecosystems that support socio-economic development in SIDS countries. This will place nature at the center of human well-being and generate multiple global and local environmental and societal benefits.

SELECTION CRITERIA: All SIDS are eligible to participate in the program, with each country applying upstream activities to address cross-cutting challenges and downstream activities specific to one or more of the sectors that are dominant in their specific contexts. The Program will consider the following criteria for the selection of projects.

- Ability to generate multiple and significant environmental and societal benefits through nature-based solutions across biodiversity, land degradation, chemicals and waste pollution, and climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience.
- Countries which can demonstrate one or more of the following:
 - Clear evidence of the threatened or degraded ecosystems
 - Intact ecosystems of biodiversity or other GEB significance
 - Threats to GEBs
- Projects that will build on pilots of the proposed NBS or other existing NBS initiatives to deliver results at a larger scale.
- Demonstrated political will across key ministries/agencies (agriculture, environment, forests, finance, tourism, investment etc.) to engage in integrated and cross-ministerial approaches at national and sub-national levels for nature-positive development.
- Solid evidence of existing ability to engage and mobilize the private sector with a view to meaningful involvement through investments, application of innovative nature-based solutions and/or involvement in rolling out sustainable finance mechanisms.
- Potential and willingness to engage in multistakeholder partnerships at national, inter-regional and intra-regional levels across SIDS sub-regions as well as effectively include to include IPLCs, women and youth.
- Opportunities to mobilize both private (domestic and external) and public sector financing.
- Demonstration of innovation in nature-based solutions and the potential to drive transformational change at the national level.

¹² Nature-based solutions were defined at UNEA-5 as ‘actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services and resilience and biodiversity benefits.’

Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution Integrated Program

OBJECTIVE: To catalyze circular economy approaches to reduce plastic production, consumption, and waste in the food and beverage sectors. The IP will include country-specific child projects as well as a limited set of cross-cutting thematic child projects that build on the integrated nature of the IP. As elaborated in the GEF-8 Programming Directions, these projects will focus on sharing best practices and lessons learned among the national projects; fostering collaborations between global plastic consuming corporations (e.g. Nestle, Pepsi, Coca-Cola) and the national projects; establishing guidance, including indicators, on what constitutes “circular plastic-reducing products and services”; establishing transparent tracking mechanisms for the global trade of plastic products; and, raising public and stakeholder awareness circular concepts and solutions.

SELECTION CRITERIA: The Plastics IP will consider all recipient countries seeking to tackle plastic pollution through circular economy solutions. The GEF will prioritize countries that demonstrate potential for achieving transformational change based on the following criteria:

- Contribution to the global state of plastic pollution based on high and escalating levels of virgin plastic production, importation, consumption and/or non-recycled waste
- Opportunity to address multiple global environmental benefits, including reduction of POP and GHG emissions, and improved marine habitats as well as drive socioeconomic benefits, such as greater livelihood options
- Political commitment (e.g., as evidenced by national action plans) to tackling plastic pollution throughout the lifecycle of plastics, including taking measures related to importation, production, consumer behavior tied consumption, collection, recycling, creating demand for recycled materials, and raising public awareness on the need to reduce plastic production and consumption and improve waste management
- Private sector engagement in reducing plastic pollution by major producers of food and beverages in single use plastic packaging (e.g., Nestle, Pepsi, Coca-Cola) and/or by emerging innovators for system change (e.g. refill food packaging systems in a country)
- Creation of public-private, cross-sector, interagency collaborations to mainstream plastic-reducing practices and ensure policy coherence across varying government agencies and business sectors
- Commitment to engage in cross-cutting projects that will foster innovative, systemic change that will provide insight and tools to benefit multiple countries
- Ability of partners to leverage financing from both public resources and private capital to achieve large scale impact; and,
- Engagement in regional and global fora to share and catalyze change beyond national boundaries, such as serving as regional centers of excellence.

Clean and Healthy Ocean Integrated Program

OBJECTIVE: To address hypoxic zones by curbing coastal pollution from agricultural, industrial and municipal sources through infrastructure investments combined with NbS. By limiting nutrient inflow from point and non-point source pollution into the coastal zone, the coastal ecosystem will become richer in biodiversity, which will lead to expansion of the local livelihood opportunities, as coastal ecosystem integrity and resilience increases. The potential of deploying NbS for nutrient run-off and wastewater treatment will provide entry points for local anchoring, engagement and economic opportunities.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- With a focus of 2-3 LMEs, one of which prioritizes the needs of SIDS, this program will target countries contributing to the nutrient load in Large Marine Ecosystems with a ministerially endorsed Strategic Action Programme¹³ (SAP), and in which nutrient pollution impacts the formation of hypoxic zones. The IP will consider upstream countries discharging via rivers into the LME.
- Countries that show political leadership and aspire towards cross sectoral collaboration in curbing coastal nutrient pollution, including by advancing NbS solutions that deliver on multiple GEBs and enhanced resiliency.
- Ability of countries and partners to leverage financing (e.g., domestic resources, private capital, loans, grants).
- Innovative approaches with explicit potential for resource reuse and pollution avoidance and potential for upscaling and delivery of multiple global environmental and socio-economic benefits.
- Strategic engagement with stakeholders including the private sector to leverage their expertise and resources for innovation and scalability of sustainable solutions.

¹³ Note this can include A) upstream countries discharging via rivers into the LME while B) IP activities must align with a signed SAP specific to the LME in question and which showcase commitment at ministerial level.

Ecosystem Restoration Integrated Program

OBJECTIVE: To generate multiple environmental and socio-economic benefits by applying integrated approaches for restoration of degraded ecosystems. The Program will focus on restoration of ecosystem types with a high potential to generate multiple benefits, such as:

- Converted or degraded ecosystem types and habitats, such as wetlands, peatlands, headwaters and watersheds, estuaries, riverine forests, mangroves, coastal areas, including near-shore coral reefs and seagrass ecosystems, native woodlands, shrub and grasslands, ecological networks and corridors, and steppingstone habitats, using best practices for ecological restoration;¹⁴
- Degraded natural forest landscapes, drylands, grasslands and pastures, applying a range of best practices and cost-effective interventions such as natural regeneration and assisted natural regeneration to restore ecosystem functions and services; and
- Degraded agro-ecosystems in mosaic landscapes with a high potential for multiple environmental benefits, through investments in sustainable land management, including agro-silvo-pastoral models and agro-ecological diversification, and rangeland restoration.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- The contribution to generating multiple GEBs and the desired outcomes for ecosystems, species and genetic diversity, as well as cost-effectiveness, can be enhanced by evidence-based prioritization of the areas to be restored.¹⁵
- Selection criteria for targeted ecosystems will further consider drivers of degradation, the potential and scale of restoration, including soil properties, landscape features, habitat and species connectivity, and climate stressors and risks. It will thus consider the prospects for multiple benefits in biodiversity, sustainable land management, climate change mitigation and adaptation to support sustainable development and secure livelihoods.
- Investments under the program will be based on existing restoration targets set by countries under the MEAs and will require strong baselines for success such as established relevant multi-stakeholder platforms and partnerships, potential leverage of public and private sector funding, engagement opportunities with the private sector, involvement of local actors and IPLCs, gender equality and women's empowerment, and potential for scaling up.

¹⁴ SER 2019. [International Principles and Standards for the Practice of Ecological Restoration, 2nd edition](#).

¹⁵ Strassburg et al. (2020) have recently proposed an optimization approach based on various criteria that can be applied for this purpose. Strassburg et al. 2020. [Global Priority Areas for Ecosystem Restoration](#). *Nature* 586, 724–729.

Elimination of Hazardous Chemicals from Supply Chains Integrated Program

OBJECTIVE: To prevent chemical pollution from the supply chains of fashion and construction as well as significantly improve the sustainability of these sectors. The program also seeks to create circular and closed loop supply chains in fashion and construction.

SELECTION CRITERIA: The selection criteria for countries and supply chains to be relevant for this program will focus on:

- Countries that can demonstrate the large global environmental benefits for the chemicals and waste focal area.
- Supply chains that have the highest percentage of hazardous chemicals will be prioritized.
- Projects must at a minimum have global environmental benefits for chemicals and waste MEAs and meet multiple global environmental benefits under other MEAs including CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD.
- Projects that bring together the major private sector partners that are engaged in the supply chain or sub-supply chain.
- Projects that use regenerative design, implement reverse logistics and green procurement as a base component to transform the supply chains.
- Projects that can influence behavioral changes in consumer, private sector, and government to facilitate responsible sourcing of materials and products.
- Countries that have a commitment to greening of supply chains.

Food Systems Integrated Program

OBJECTIVE: To catalyze the transformation to sustainable food systems that are nature positive, resilient, and pollution reduced. The IP will seek to reduce environmental degradation and negative externalities in food production systems (food crops, major agricultural commodities, livestock, and aquaculture) and on the demand side across supply chains.

SELECTION CRITERIA: The Food Systems Integrated Program will consider all recipient countries seeking to catalyze systemic change by delivering integrated solutions that lead to multiple benefits at national, subnational and global scales. The GEF will prioritize countries that demonstrate potential for achieving transformational change based on the following criteria:¹⁶

- The country strategy should be underpinned by science with clear long-term pathways for how the country's food systems will meet national development needs, generate high impact global environmental benefits at landscape and country level, and contribute globally to Food Systems transformation;
- The enabling policy and regulatory environment are conducive to generating positive results through implementation of the program, including clear opportunities to engender cross-ministerial support (e.g. environment, agriculture, finance, economy, trade, etc.) necessary to address challenges through a 'whole of government' means. This will create opportunities to foster coherence and cross-institutional integration in formulating "enabling" policies and ensure that environmental priorities are mainstreamed at all levels;
- Private sector entities with the ability to have on-the-ground impact are interested and willing partners, including companies and SMEs involved in various stages of the supply chain (producers, aggregators, processors). Partnerships should also be sought on the demand side with multi-national companies, including traders, manufacturers and consumer facing companies, as well as those financing food production;
- Promotion of sustainable and effective agricultural production can be shown to better support women farmers and their rights to the land they cultivate, and strengthen the voice of women at all levels of the food system, including through the backing of women smallholder and women farmers organizations, business networks, workers unions, and consumer organizations;
- Results from smallholder, farm and landscape can be reasonably sustained and converted into larger scale impact at subnational and national levels. Such scaling is necessary so that positive results generated by an on-ground intervention do not simply lead to poor practice shifting to a different landscape or region, thus generating negative environmental impact (e.g. deforestation, increased GHG emissions, ecosystem degradation, etc) 'leakage' from one place to another. This is

¹⁶ Please refer to STAP's transformation brief (https://stapgef.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Achieving_transformation_through_GEF_investments_-_FINAL_0.pdf)

key to both generating significant global environmental benefits and ensuring net contribution to global food systems transformation;

- Strong safeguards are in place or can be developed to ensure that the techniques applied do not increase likelihood of negative environmental impacts, or leakage;
- Ability to adopt food systems value chain approaches that recognize the risks of environmental impacts and zoonotic pathogen transmission, including potentially from livestock production, in order to mitigate and manage *Healthy Planet, Healthy People* risks and reduce environmental impacts;
- Willingness to factor crop and systems resilience and prevention, reduction, and reuse of food waste along the length of the food systems value chain, including the potential for scaling-up innovations that will increase efficiency from farm to fork.

Greening Transportation Infrastructure Development Integrated Program

OBJECTIVE: To enable countries to develop portfolios of transportation infrastructure projects at national or land/seascape levels that build in sustainability from inception. To maximize global environmental benefits, the program will focus on built transportation infrastructure likely to create the greatest harm—or nature-based infrastructure solutions with the greatest potential benefit—in areas of high biodiversity and potential for greenhouse gas emission reductions and/or contributions to climate resilience, and threat of land degradation, based on the latest global science.

SELECTION CRITERIA: Priority infrastructure investments for attention under the program will include roads, rail, and ports. Interest is expected from countries that have:

- Desire and political will to apply the approach;
- Historical engagement with the theme (*working on upstream policies that create enabling conditions for sustainable infrastructure and/or biodiversity mainstreaming in sectors like forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, extractive industries*). This could include ongoing work with development banks, private banks, or the NGO sector which has created a baseline upon which the project could build;
- Large-scale transportation infrastructure investment aspirations in the sub-sectors of greatest impact: Roads, railroads, and ports;
- Intact habitats providing high biodiversity and/or climate benefits in areas where infrastructure could possibly be placed (high potential for maintenance of GEBs and avoided loss of GEBs).
- Demonstrated country capacity in developing and implementing successful biodiversity mainstreaming policy initiatives with GEF or other support.

Net-Zero Nature-Positive Accelerator Integrated Program

OBJECTIVE: To accelerate implementation of nature positive, net-zero pathways by investing in nature and new technologies. The IP aims to push the ambition of national climate plans beyond the current levels and contribute to closing the gap that currently exist between the expected combined impacts of adopted national policies and the well-below 2 C degrees path enshrined in the Paris Agreement. Building on the consideration that the climate change and biodiversity loss impact human societies in a deeply interlinked fashion, and the fact that bold solutions that integrate environmental and societal objectives are required, the IP will support investments that fully incorporate nature-positive climate strategies.

SELECTION CRITERIA: The NZNP Integrated Program will consider submissions from all GEF recipient countries seeking to catalyze systemic change towards the program’s objectives. The GEF will prioritize national project proposals that demonstrate potential for achieving transformational change based on the following criteria:¹⁷

- Commitment to long term deep decarbonization action consistent with the ultimate objectives of the Paris Agreement. Several aspects will be considered to assess this, including for instance whether the country has (in order of priority): (i) adopted an NDC that is aligned with a net-zero path to be reached around 2050; (ii) adopted an around 2050 net-zero target or long-term strategy (outside the NDC); and/or (iii) made commitments or announced intention to adopt a net-zero target/LTS at highest levels of political representation.
- Potential of the proposal to effectively integrate nature-positive practices and approaches, including biodiversity and land restoration, into climate mitigation and net-zero plans.
- Potential of the proposal to generate global environmental benefits at scale.
- Evidence of strong willingness to engage at the highest level of policy decision-making.
- Direct participation in the project governance of multiple line ministries relevant to long-term planning for nature-positive net-zero goals, including the ministry of finance.
- Potential of the proposal to engage with and mobilize private sector actors, leverage co-financing and spur investments at scale for the downstream components of each national project.
- Commitment to ensure a broad national stakeholder consultation to ensure wide acceptance and sustainability of the proposed interventions including the impacts on women and girls.

¹⁷ Please refer to STAP’s transformation brief (https://stapgef.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Achieving_transformation_through_GEF_investments_-_FINAL_0.pdf)

- Consideration of measures to promote behavioral change compatible with nature-positive net-zero goals including, for instance, with respect to dietary and mobility habits.
- In addition, the final selection of countries will also take into consideration the need to reflect participation of different groups of countries (SIDS, LDCs, middle income), to maximize the opportunities for knowledge management and dissemination for each of such group.

Sustainable Cities Integrated Program

OBJECTIVE: To advance the integrated urban and territorial planning and implementation with a focus on developing innovative sustainability solutions and creating an enabling environment to deliver large scale climate, biodiversity, resilience, and inclusion benefits.

SELECTION CRITERIA: The Sustainable Cities Integrated Program will consider the following criteria for the selection of cities and projects:

- Cities in highly urbanized or rapidly urbanizing regions, especially in LDCs and SIDS where the integrated approach to urban sustainability can be adopted to tackle environmental degradation (GHG emissions, biodiversity loss, land degradation and pollution).
- Demonstrated political leadership, cross sectoral collaboration and whole of government approach by countries and cities towards tackling environmental degradation
- Ability of cities and partners to leverage financing from both domestic resources and private capital, to achieve large scale impact.
- Integrated, systems based and innovative project approaches with explicit and clear entry points for delivering multiple global environmental benefits through the program.
- National and/or local level policies and governance models that create an enabling environment for achieving global environmental benefits targets in relation to MEAs and avoid negative subsidies which contribute to environmental degradation in cities.
- Potential to deliver key socio-economic co-benefits such as increasing resilience and inclusion and reducing air pollution.
- Strategic engagement with multiple stakeholders including the private sector and civil society to leverage their expertise and resources for innovation and scalability of sustainability solutions. Participation of cities in the global platform for knowledge exchange and learning.

Wildlife Conservation for Development Integrated Program

OBJECTIVE: The objective of the WCD IP is to conserve wildlife and landscapes by transforming the drivers of species loss and ensuring that countries and communities are benefiting from these natural assets. The IP will include targeted activities in areas that national projects have a challenging time addressing, such as: i) international trafficking and transboundary issues; ii) behavior change for reducing consumer demand for illegal or unsustainable wildlife (prioritizing high-zoonotic risk and nationally and internationally illegally traded and consumed wildlife); iii) support for One Health approaches to reducing zoonotic spillover risks; and iv) global and regional donor coordination and knowledge management, with emphasis in South-South collaboration.

SELECTION CRITERIA: The program will include the following criteria for financing:

- Role of the country in supply chains of globally significant wildlife species, including those that pose a high zoonotic risk;
- Presence of high poaching risk at sites of global significant biodiversity;
- Increasing/emerging threat of illegal trade including shifting consumer demand;
- Potential benefits for conservation and livelihoods from wildlife-based economies;
- Potential to cooperate with other countries to address threats to wildlife, habitats and ecological connectivity;
- Opportunity for strong multi-focal area, interventions producing multiple benefits while contributing to GEF focal area objectives; and
- Testing and scaling innovations for wildlife management, human wildlife conflict, sustainable livelihoods, wildlife monitoring, enforcement, and zoonotic surveillance etc.