

63rd GEF Council Meeting
GEF CSO Consultations
November 23, 2022 | Virtual
7:00 – 10:00 a.m. EST (UTC-4)

Draft, November 9, 2022

**A GEF Partnership dialogue on civil society engagement with the Global
Environmental Conventions that the GEF Serves**

Introduction

Empowered civil society groups play critical roles influencing and setting national and global agendas and delivering on environmental outcomes. They innovate local actions and solutions and bring citizens' voices to elevate local priorities and needs in national and global strategies and debates. Local actions conceived and executed by civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) are critical to conserving and restoring the environment and enhancing well-being and livelihoods at the community level and beyond.

The Updated Vision to Enhance Civil Society Engagement (2017)¹, stressed, among other things, the importance of enhancing engagement of civil society during GEF Council meetings. Since the approval of the updated vision, the Council has invited CSOs and the GEF Secretariat to facilitate CSO Consultation to highlight experiences of local CSOs during project implementation and relevant topics prior to GEF Council meetings. Since they were introduced, seven consultations with CSOs have been held with topics approved by Council².

In line with the updated Vision to Enhance Civil Society Engagement, adjacent to the GEF 63rd Council meeting in November 2022, a GEF Consultations with Civil Society is scheduled for Wednesday November 23rd from 7:00 to 10:00 a.m. EST (GMT-4). The topic for this CSO consultations is *“A GEF Partnership dialogue on civil society engagement with the Global Environmental Conventions that the GEF Serves”*.

¹ https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.53.10.Rev._01_CS0_Vision_0.pdf

² **Connecting Environmental Impact and Gender Equality**, December, 2018

(https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/Agenda%20Council-CSO%20Consultations%20rev_December%2013.pdf)

Plastic Pollution, June 2019 (<https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/Agenda%20for%20CSO%20Consultations%2056th%20Council-June%209%20final.pdf>)

Combating Illegal Wildlife Trade, December 2019 (<https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/FINAL%20Agenda%20for%20CSO%20Consultations%2057%20Council.pdf>)

Application of Traditional Knowledge by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, December 2020 (https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/Final%20Agenda%20CSO%20Consultation%20TK%20%20Simple%20Dec2_Final.pdf)

Enhancing Climate Resilience , June 2021

(https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/events/CSO%20Consultation_ClimateResilience_%20Concept%20Note_Ver_June1.pdf)

Youth led Advocacy and Solutions, December 2021 (https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2021-12/2021_12_03_Consultations_Civil_Society_Flyer.pdf)

Inclusive Microfinancing, June 2022 (<https://www.thegef.org/events/gef-consultations-civil-society-inclusive-microfinancing>)

This topic was proposed by the GEF Secretariat in consultation with the GEF CSO Network and approved by the GEF Council that recognized the important role that civil society play to support the work and implementation of global Environmental conventions. The organization of this session is the results of a collaborative process among the GEF Secretariat, the GEF CSO Network, the GEF Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG) and the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) with engagement and support from MEA Secretariats.

The session has been designed to put spotlight on MEA engagements with civil society and gather insights from diverse youth and youth-led civil society, women groups, indigenous peoples and local community organizations on their priorities, roles and interests. The upcoming consultations come at pivotal time as the GEF Partnership is defining a renewed ambition to enhance engagement with civil society.

Building on previous GEF CSO Consultations on topics such as youth, gender equality and Indigenous Peoples, this session seeks to facilitate a constructive and forward-looking interaction with civil society actors at the national, regional and global levels connected with work or implementation of environmental conventions. It will jumpstart a strategic dialogue with the GEF council, the Secretariat as well as the CSO network on current challenges and suggestions to strengthen the GEF's partnership to support these actors and networks. The consultations will contribute to formulating priorities for the GEF engagement with non-state actors at GEF Assembly in 2023. It will also inform the GEF Secretariat, in collaboration with the GEF CSO network, the GEF Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group, and the GEF Gender Partnership, in efforts to further strengthen GEF's engagement with civil society in GEF-9 and beyond.

Background

The GEF's financial and policy support helps countries meet their obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Minamata Convention on Mercury, and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. These conventions are placing renewed importance on the needed roles of civil society in delivering national environmental goals and MEA objectives. The GEF has a long history bringing together countries, private sector and civil society stakeholders to tackle environmental challenges. The recent increased size, diversity, and complexity of civil society actors and networks, however, require new and innovative ways for the GEF to better support and engage these civil society actors. Building on longstanding engagement of civil society partners in GEF projects and guidance of the GEF CSO network, the GEF is looking to further explore opportunities to increasing the conditions/ability of civil society actors to participate in environmental negotiations, hold public and private institutions accountable, and delivering the needed local, national and regional solutions to achieve global environmental commitments.

Understanding that the current state of the environment puts their future at stake, civil society actors, youth, women and IPLC groups, are increasingly leveraging the power of their collective voice to advocate, lobby and lead campaigns towards adopting environmentally friendly practices and policies. The global movements against climate change led by young activists in many countries around the world, for example, has been well publicized, covered by the media and highlighting the powerful voice of youth for change. In addition, there are many more, and lesser-known efforts pioneered by local civil society leaders and advocates at the national and local levels that are determined to mobilize and spearheading positive changes in their own communities and countries. Together, these efforts ranging from local initiatives to international campaigns continue to adopt both conventional and unconventional methods to contribute to environmental sustainability and advocating with governments, the private sector, and the public for urgent needs and solutions to the environmental crisis.

The GEF has a long history of promoting meaningful stakeholder consultations and engagement in its operations as well as in its project and programs: from the formulation of strategies, policies and guidelines to consultations and direct participation in project identification, design, execution and monitoring and evaluation. The GEF has increasingly strengthened the engagement of civil society, including indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLC), women and youth through the Country Support Program (CSP), the civil society forums at the GEF Assemblies, the biannual GEF Council meetings and the Pre-Council Consultations with civil society and IPLC.

The GEF partnership recognize that any efforts to constructively engaging civil society will require a longer term inclusive and long-term approach and strategy. The GEF understands that this CSO consultation is a step in the effort to help inform this longer-term process and to distill additional ideas and recommendations towards a more intentional and effective approach for the GEF partnership to engage and support youth and youth-led civil society, women, indigenous peoples and local community organizations in their work and implementation of the environmental conventions that the GEF serves.

Consultation Objectives

This GEF CSO Consultations is an important dialogue leading up to the CSO Forum planned for the GEF Assembly in June 2023. It will help inform the GEF Partnership about the interests and roles of civil society actors active at global as well as local levels in the MEAs that the GEF serves. It will help inform the GEF's renewed ambition to engage civil society. The main objective of the Consultation is to:

Facilitate an interactive and constructive dialogue between civil society actors, GEF Secretariat, Council, GEF MEA Partners and exchange information on priorities, challenges and opportunities for civil society to shape outcomes and implementation of global multilateral agreements



The consultations will include simultaneous translations in French and Spanish and opportunities for participants to engage via the chat which the GEF Secretariat will help to moderate.