

63rd GEF Council Meeting
November 28 – December 2, 2022
Virtual Meeting

Agenda Item 08

**MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO:
REVIEW OF THE GEF MANAGEMENT ACTION RECORD**

Recommended Council Decision:

The Council, having considered documents GEF/E/C.63/01, *Review of the GEF Management Action Record (MAR)*, and GEF/C.63/13, *the Management Response*, takes note of the related evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The GEF Secretariat welcomes the IEO's Review of the GEF Management Action Record (MAR). The Secretariat values this informative review that focuses on the main accountability mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of Council decisions related to evaluation recommendations.
2. The Third Professional Peer Review of the Independent Evaluation Function of the Global Environment Facility and IEO Action Plan¹ recommended that: *“GEF Council, the GEF Secretariat and the Independent Evaluation Office should jointly establish an agreed procedure or mechanism that: a) enables the Secretariat to prepare robust and articulate Management Responses and Management Action Records that can be used for a transparent decision-making process about follow-up to recommendations and allows progress in their implementation to be transparently recorded; and b) ensures adequate consideration by Council to the Secretariat's Management Responses and to the Management Action Records.”*
3. This recommendation was subsequently reflected by the GEF/C.59/08/Rev.01: *Report of the Working Group on Governance*,² where decision 22/2020³ states that “[the Council decides to]... Receive and consider, rather than endorse, future evaluation reports and related recommendations and discuss the Management Responses and Management Action Records to evaluations in the Council before deciding to endorse them – or not.”
4. This revised process has been under implementation since the 60th Council of June 2021. From the GEF Secretariat's perspective, this process has led to the preparation of more detailed and analytical management responses to IEO Evaluations. In this context, this Review is timely - while it is inevitable that much of the data upon which the Review is based is skewed to the pre-June 2021 process,⁴ its results nonetheless present a valuable analysis that can inform and enrich the interaction between the Secretariat and the IEO on a number of levels moving forward.

RECOMMENDATION 1

5. ***GEF management should ensure that the action plan included in its management response to GEF IEO recommendations lists specific actions with timelines where appropriate. GEF management should ensure that the management response to an evaluation clearly indicates the level of agreement with each recommendation. Where management fully or***

¹ GEF/E/C.58/Inf.04, *Third Professional Peer Review of the Independent Evaluation Function of the Global Environment Facility and IEO Action Plan*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.E_C58_inf_04_Third_Professional_Peer_Review_of_the_IE_Function_of_the_GEF.pdf

² GEF/C.59/08/Rev.01, *Report of the Working Group on Governance*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.59.08_Rev.01_Report%20of%20the%20Working%20Group%20on%20Governance.pdf

³ GEF/Council.Decisions/2020, *GEF Council Decisions 2020*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-07/GEF_Council_Decisions_2020.pdf

⁴ The Review addresses 186 evaluation recommendations between 2006 and 2021, versus 35 evaluation recommendations since June 2021 when the reforms were implemented.

partially agrees with a recommendation, a clear articulation of timebound actions should be included in the management response which will make it possible to track progress on the implementation of follow-up actions and report on these to the Council. Where additional time is required by the GEFSEC to develop detailed action plans and timelines on certain evaluations, the Council may consider giving the GEF Secretariat time until the next Council meeting to present the details.

6. The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation.

7. Applicable immediately (and as evident in this management response), the GEF Secretariat will clearly state the level of agreement with each recommendation of IEO Evaluations as follows: “The GEF Secretariat agrees / partially agrees / rejects this recommendation.”

8. Where there is full or partial agreement with the recommendation, and if the nature of the recommendation is appropriate to do so, the Secretariat will include into the management response a preliminary time frame for measures/actions, giving a suggested calendar time / year when these will begin and possibly a suggested calendar time / year by when the recommendation may be completely adopted. If the Secretariat is of the view that inclusion of a timeline is not appropriate to a particular recommendation, this will be explicitly discussed with the IEO in upstream consultations, and also explicitly articulated in the management response.

9. The Secretariat would like to emphasize any time frames introduced into management responses may be preliminary in nature. This is due to the fact that (i) timing can sometimes be influenced by factors beyond the Secretariat’s control, and that (ii) the implementation of the recommendations themselves may further inform the process. Therefore, all timelines should be treated with a certain degree of flexibility, and the Secretariat should retain the option to introduce adjustments to these timelines as needed. These adjustments can be reassessed together with the IEO as needed in the preparation of the yearly MARs.

10. The Secretariat would like to highlight that, as the required commitments and levels of detail of the management responses increase, this needs to be simultaneously accompanied by an increased preparation time. Since the IEO Peer Review Report in June 2020 and the subsequent adoption of the revised process in June 2021, the Secretariat and the IEO have been engaged in constructive discussions on the lead-time available to the Secretariat for the preparation of these detailed management responses.⁵

11. To this end, the Secretariat greatly appreciates conclusion 5 of the Review which states that “...*If a period of more than 8 weeks prior to presentation of an evaluation is required to*

⁵ Paragraph 153 of the IEO Peer Review Report states that “A reasonable timespan for the preparation of a credible MR is four weeks, to allow adequate consultation and planning at various levels, though some organizations allow longer.” GEF/E/C.58/Inf.04, *Third Professional Peer Review of the Independent Evaluation Function of the Global Environment Facility and IEO Action Plan*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.E_C58_inf_04_Third_Professional_Peer_Review_of_the_IE_Function_of_the_GEF.pdf

develop a detailed action plan with timelines in response to an IEO evaluation, the Council might, in certain cases, consider allowing the presentation of the detailed action plan and timelines by the GEF Secretariat at the next Council meeting. The GEF Secretariat would still present a management response at the Council meeting in which the IEO evaluation is presented.” The Secretariat welcomes the implicit commitment of this conclusion that evaluations will be available to the Secretariat 4 weeks⁶ before the posting deadline for council documents (and therefore 8 weeks before presentation to Council) in order to facilitate timely preparation of the detailed management responses by the required posting date.

12. The Secretariat also values the suggestion of this recommendation that, if needed, additional time can be given to the Secretariat to develop detailed action plans and timelines on certain evaluations. In the cases where that course of action becomes necessary, the Secretariat will present a more general management response at the Council meeting to which the IEO evaluation is presented, clearly explain the reasons that more time is needed for the required detailed action plans and timelines, and commit to the presentation of these outstanding items in the subsequent council meeting.

RECOMMENDATION 2

13. *The GEF should improve the MAR process and reporting through a more participatory approach involving GEF Agencies, where relevant, and develop a suitable platform for tracking the implementation of action plans. Where IEO recommendations are clearly directed towards GEF Agencies or other actors, GEF management should explore ways to incorporate Agencies’ and/or others feedback and comments when preparing action plans to implement IEO recommendations and in assessing the implementation progress of follow-up actions. In this way, Agencies or other actors can respond to recommendations that are directed toward them and will be able to implement and track these recommendations. A suitable platform that centralizes the recording of recommendations, management responses, action plans, and follow-up will help streamline access and improve efficiency in monitoring the status of implementation.*

14. The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation.

15. The GEF Secretariat welcomes the commitment by the IEO to clearly address its recommendations to the specific actors of the GEF Partnership and looks forward to this in all subsequent evaluations. Where recommendations are clearly directed towards GEF Agencies in particular, the Secretariat will explore ways to consult with the Agencies in order to incorporate their input in the preparation of the relevant management response, action plans and timelines. As this may add to the preparation time needed for the relevant management response, the Secretariat would again like to underscore the need for appropriate preparation time, as discussed in the earlier recommendation.

⁶ Ibid.

16. The GEF Secretariat agrees that the MAR process would benefit from a more centralized approach. To this end, the Secretariat would like to highlight the improvements made in its own internal processes on IEO evaluations over the last two years. Since 2020, the GEF Secretariat has adopted a centralized and coordinated Secretariat-wide approach to IEO evaluations that has resulted more efficient, structured, and constructive engagements with the IEO and ultimately to a higher quality of management responses and evaluation uptake. The Secretariat agrees that further improvements to this process can be made and is already working on further strengthening its internal process for the recording of recommendations, management responses, action plans, and follow-up, particularly in light of the many recommendations of the OPS-7 report and its related evaluations. The Secretariat wishes to emphasize, however, that while the recommendation references a “suitable platform” which can imply some new digital solution, this is not envisaged – rather, what is already underway is the deepening of the Secretariat’s centralized process which to date has demonstrated very positive and successful impacts on its engagements with IEO evaluations.

CONCLUSION

17. The GEF Secretariat welcomes the findings of the Review that GEF IEO recommendations are implemented with substantial follow-up actions, the recognition of its efforts since June 2021 in the preparation of more detailed and action-oriented Management Responses, and the improved concurrence over time in the Secretariat’s self-assessment of recommendation uptake relative to the IEO’s validation ratings. The GEF Secretariat also agrees that, while the revised process in place since June 2021 represents a significant step-forward in terms of strengthened accountability and learning, this process can benefit further from several improvements from both the IEO and the GEF Secretariat.

18. To that end, the Secretariat welcomes the conclusions and recommendations of this Review, would like to highlight the increasingly strengthened and structured upstream interactions that now take routinely take place between the Secretariat and the IEO on all evaluations, and looks forward to continuing to work closely together with the IEO on all evaluations, recommendations, and MARs.