Blue and Green Islands (BGI)

ISSUES TARGETED

Occupying less than 0.5 percent of the Earth's land surface, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) support nearly a quarter of the Earth's terrestrial biodiversity and almost half of the world's coral reefs. Yet many SIDS have fragile ecologies, transformed ecosystems, and high levels of endemism. Increased anthropogenic pressures are causing biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, and diminishing freshwater resources, while vulnerability to climate change increasingly affects the health of ecosystems, livelihoods, and key economic sectors.

As identified by the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS, the impacts of the triple planetary crisis are profound in SIDS, given the strong interconnection between people's well-being and a healthy and productive environment. Segmentation of policies and regulations frequently fail to connect the impacts of upstream activities downstream (and vice versa), often resulting in benefits for one sector having negative consequences for another, stressing the importance of integrated management approaches.

THE INTEGRATED SOLUTION

The GEF-9 Blue and Green Islands Integrated Program (BGI) aims to support countries to embark on blue and green development pathways through the maintenance and restoration of healthy terrestrial and marine ecosystems by applying sustainable integrated land and ocean management through a source-to-sea approach. By supporting SIDS in transforming segmented governance, financing, and planning architecture, the program aims to identify barriers and opportunities for improved, integrated land and ocean management.

The source-to-sea framework enables stakeholder collaboration to identify common goals and integrated solutions. Thematic priorities for BGI include ecosystem valuation and accounting, source-to-sea spatial planning, enhanced public and private financing, and upscaling solutions across the source-to-sea system.

Capacity building and knowledge management aspects will strengthen capacities to independently apply, manage, and monitor interventions under the program. Collaborative engagement and collective action will enable SIDS to leverage technical expertise, to mobilize private sector engagement and financing, and to amplify the voice of SIDS in global arena.

PATHWAYS FOR TRANSFORMATION

The program will pursue transformation through four interconnected levers:

- **Policy and governance reform**. The program will foster national-level planning through whole-of-government engagement, strengthening integrated source-to-sea governance mechanisms, and supporting inter-ministerial decision-making and policy coherence.
- **Sustainable financing**. The program will help facilitate domestic resource mobilization, strengthen financial and lending policies to discourage investments which lead to ecosystem degradation, and build capacities within the public and private sector to develop blended finance structures,

instruments, and investments, including mechanisms such as Payment for Ecosystem Services and Conservation Trust Funds.

- **Multi-stakeholder collaboration**. All relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, government, civil society, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, and youth, will be engaged, harnessing collective action for rapid replication across communities, islands, and entire regions and oceans.
- **Knowledge and innovation**. Building on previous experiences, the program will continue to apply knowledge management and learning related to thematic priorities also utilizing local and traditional knowledge and incubate innovative solutions from MSMEs and local communities.

DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

As in GEF-8, the program will be delivered through a series of national projects complemented by global coordination. The global coordination project will provide technical support, capacity building, knowledge management and learning, tools, and guidance on natural capital accounting, policy coherence, blended finance mechanisms, and private sector engagement. It will engage with existing regional governance bodies to scale source-to-sea approaches.

At the country level, national interventions will be based on country priorities and sustainable development strategies aligned with the program's core intervention areas, tailored to each SIDS's specific source-to-sea geography, socio-ecological needs, and development priorities.

The program will utilize and build on the global platform and sub-regional anchors developed under the GEF-8 BGI Integrated Program to facilitate cross-learning and crowd in international private sector engagement and additional financing for improving and maintaining ecosystem health.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

The GEF-9 BGI Integrated Program is expected to deliver multiple global environmental benefits across most of the focal areas of the GEF and multilateral environmental agreements. These include: terrestrial and marine conservation areas created or enhanced landscapes and production seascapes under improved practices, carbon dioxide emissions mitigated, and support for shared water ecosystems under cooperative management, contributing to sustainable transboundary ocean governance and help transition unsustainable fisheries to more sustainable levels.

The program will also support SIDS priorities under the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS including socio-economic co-benefits such as enhanced food and water security, strengthened livelihoods, and improved institutional capacity for long-term integrated environmental governance.

Circular Solutions to Plastics Pollution

ISSUES TARGETED

Plastic pollution is a growing global environmental and development challenge affecting ecosystems, climate, human health, biodiversity, and livelihoods. Without decisive action, plastic waste is projected to continue increasing significantly over the coming decades, while recycling rates remain low and leakage to terrestrial and marine environments persists. Packaging alone accounts for a substantial share of plastic waste, but the use of plastics across sectors including consumer goods, electronics, construction, healthcare, and agriculture also drives pollution.

Addressing the crisis requires more than improved waste management; it demands transformation across the full plastics value chain, from production and design to consumption, reuse, recycling, and end-of-life management. Because plastic pollution is linked to chemicals, climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainable development, an integrated approach is needed to tackle its multiple drivers and deliver lasting systemic change.

THE INTEGRATED SOLUTION

The GEF-9 Plastics Integrated Program seeks to accelerate the transition toward a circular economy for plastics and prevent plastic pollution through systemic, upstream solutions. Building on the foundations and lessons of the GEF-8 Plastic Reboot program, the IP expands from a primary focus on the food and beverage sector to encompass major plastic product categories and value chains.

The IP aims to transform the systems that drive unsustainable plastic production, consumption, and disposal by promoting circularity, reducing unnecessary plastic use, increasing reuse and recycling, and supporting sustainable alternatives where appropriate. The program's integrated approach recognizes that lasting change requires coordinated action across policies, markets, finance, innovation, and consumer behavior. By linking interventions across sectors and stakeholders, the IP seeks to generate benefits across multiple GEF focal areas, including chemicals and waste, climate change, biodiversity, and international waters, while supporting emerging international efforts to end plastic pollution.

PATHWAYS FOR TRANSFORMATION

The Plastics Integrated Program will drive transformation through a set of mutually reinforcing levers.

First, the IP will support policy and regulatory frameworks that enable circular economy approaches, strengthen extended producer responsibility, improve product design, and reduce plastic leakage throughout value chains.

Second, it will mobilize public and private finance to scale circular business models, accelerate market adoption of sustainable solutions, and leverage investment for long-term impact.

Third, the program will foster collaboration among governments, businesses, financial institutions, civil society, research organizations, and local communities to align incentives and accelerate collective action.

Fourth, the IP will promote innovation in materials, product design, reuse systems, business models, and technologies that prevent waste generation and support circularity.

Finally, a strong learning and knowledge agenda will help capture lessons, replicate successful approaches, build capacity, and support adaptive management. Together, these transformation pathways are intended to shift entire plastic value chains toward circularity and generate scalable and replicable solutions that can be applied across countries and sectors.

DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

The Plastics Integrated Program will be delivered through coordinated action at global, regional, and national levels. Country and regional investments will implement interventions tailored to national priorities and local contexts while contributing to shared program objectives and outcomes. These investments will be supported by a global platform that facilitates knowledge exchange, technical assistance, innovation, partnership development, and monitoring of results across the portfolio. Priority intervention areas are expected to focus on upstream measures, circular economy solutions, enabling policy environments, sustainable consumption and production, and private sector engagement.

The program will foster collaboration among participating countries and stakeholders to share experiences, replicate successful approaches, and accelerate adoption of proven solutions. This structure is designed to maximize synergies, increase efficiency, and support scaling of impact beyond individual projects.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

The IP is expected to help reduce plastic pollution and plastic leakage to the environment while accelerating the transition to circular and resource-efficient economies. Anticipated outcomes include stronger policies and institutions, increased investment in circular solutions, improved business practices, and greater uptake of sustainable consumption and production approaches.

Global environmental benefits are expected across multiple focal areas, including reduced pollution, lower greenhouse gas emissions associated with plastics, improved ecosystem and marine health, and decreased exposure to hazardous chemicals. Participating countries will benefit from strengthened capacities, enhanced collaboration, access to knowledge and finance, and more resilient and sustainable economic systems. By addressing the root causes of plastic pollution and supporting system-wide transformation, the IP will contribute to GEF-9 objectives on pollution reduction, circularity, and broader environmental sustainability.

Critical Forest Biomes

ISSUES TARGETED

The Critical Forest Biomes Integrated Program (IP) responds to the accelerating loss and degradation of globally significant tropical forests. Forest conversion, unsustainable land use, weak governance, illegal activities, infrastructure expansion, fragmented financing, and increasing wildfire continue to erode the integrity of forest ecosystems, undermining the resilience of forest-dependent communities and increasingly affecting the environment humanity depends on.

Tropical primary forest biomes host the planet's most valuable forest in terms of carbon storage, biodiversity, ecosystem services, and cultural richness, and they are among the most threatened. Approximately 4.5 million hectares of tropical primary forests have been lost annually over the last 10 years, an area significantly above the previous decade.

As the pressures on these forests cut across sectors, borders, and levels of governance, the IP promotes an integrated approach aligning land use, conservation, development, finance, and community stewardship across landscapes and biomes.

THE INTEGRATED SOLUTION

The Critical Forest Biomes IP aims to safeguard tropical primary forest biomes by transforming the systems that drive forest loss and degradation. It focuses on the major biomes in the Amazon, Congo, Guinean Forests, Mesoamerica, and Southeast Asia and the Pacific, helping countries move beyond fragmented, site-based interventions toward coherent biome-scale and whole-of-society strategies. The IP's integrated approach connects protected and conserved areas, territories of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, production landscapes, and finance mechanisms. The proposed integrated solution brings together biodiversity conservation, climate mitigation, land restoration, sustainable livelihoods, and governance reform to promote greater policy coherence.

The IP adds value by supporting individual countries while fostering cooperation among them and with regional and global initiatives. It helps countries address shared challenges, strengthen policy and institutional frameworks, mobilize public and private finance, and generate learning within and across forest regions. Thematic priorities include conservation, restoration, forest-friendly economies, inclusive governance, and long-term financing for durable results at scale.

PATHWAYS FOR TRANSFORMATION

The Critical Forest Biomes IP will advance transformation through mutually reinforcing pathways.

First, it will strengthen policy coherence and governance so that land use planning, conservation, agriculture, infrastructure, and environmental commitments are aligned and mutually supportive.

Second, the IP will promote inclusive landscape management by enabling Indigenous Peoples and local communities, governments, and private actors to conserve forests, restore degraded areas, and improve sustainable production practices with particular attention to vulnerable groups, including women.

Third, it will mobilize finance for forest-positive development, including mechanisms that reward conservation, attract private investments, promote blended finance, and reduce reliance on short-term project funding.

Fourth, the program will foster regional and global collaboration to address cross-border pressures, create and share knowledge, promote innovation, and build a common evidence base for decision making. These levers are designed to move beyond isolated investments and create the institutional, financial, and social conditions needed for systemic and durable transformation at scale.

DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

Delivery will combine country-led investments with regional and global coordination platforms that support knowledge exchange, capacity building, and strategic alignment at the regional level and across the five targeted regions. The coordination platforms will also build synergies with relevant initiatives outside the IP, including with other relevant GEF-funded IPs. Country projects will focus on priority landscapes, including transboundary landscapes, where biodiversity, carbon, ecosystem services, and community livelihoods are highly significant and where integrated action can generate important and measurable global environmental benefits.

Regional platforms will address shared ecological, governance, and market-related challenges by providing learning, technical assistance, monitoring, and portfolio-wide visibility, including at the global level. The IP is expected to support countries committed to advancing forest conservation and sustainable development through integrated landscape approaches, strong stakeholder participation, and alignment with national strategies and GEF-9 priorities.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

Expected outcomes include stronger conservation and governance of critical forest landscapes, reduced deforestation and forest degradation, restoration of priority areas to alleviate pressure on primary forests and strengthen ecological corridors, enhanced recognition of stewardship by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and increased sustainable finance for forest-positive pathways promoting conservation and sustainable economies.

The program will generate global environmental benefits by protecting biodiversity, maintaining ecosystem connectivity, increasing and conserving carbon stocks and sinks, enhancing climate resilience, and combatting land degradation. Participating countries will benefit from stronger institutions, more integrated land-use planning, improved livelihoods, gender-responsive approaches, and improved access to knowledge and finance that can sustain results beyond the GEF investment period. By linking conservation, climate, restoration, and development objectives, the program will support GEF-9 targets and help countries advance their commitments under the global biodiversity, climate, and land agendas.

Drylands and Drought Management

ISSUES TARGETED

The Drylands and Drought Management Integrated Program addresses the interconnected environmental and development challenges posed by increasing drought, particularly in dryland regions. Key environmental challenges include land degradation, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, declining ecosystem resilience, groundwater depletion, and climate change impacts. These contribute to reduced agricultural productivity, food insecurity, ecosystem degradation, and increased disaster risks. Social issues include poverty, livelihood loss, migration, conflict over scarce resources, and heightened vulnerability of women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and smallholder farmers. These issues are significant because drought affects nearly every sector, from agriculture and water resources to health, economies, and social stability. An integrated approach is therefore essential, combining proactive drought monitoring, early warning systems, sustainable land and water management, ecosystem restoration, policy coherence, and cross-sector collaboration.

THE INTEGRATED SOLUTION

The program aims to proactively manage drought while enhancing ecosystem resilience and sustainable livelihoods in dryland countries. It seeks to transform the reactive, crisis-driven approach to drought management into a proactive, systems-based model that integrates prevention, preparedness, risk assessment, early warning, and resilience building. The program addresses the interconnected drivers and impacts of drought across land, water, biodiversity, climate, and socioeconomic systems through coordinated, cross-sectoral action. Its integrated approach strengthens policy coherence, promotes regional and transboundary collaboration, and mobilizes partnerships and financing to achieve greater scale and impact.

Thematic priorities include drought monitoring and early warning, drought-smart land management, sustainable groundwater and water resource management, ecosystem restoration, biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, inclusive governance, and capacity development for vulnerable communities.

PATHWAYS FOR TRANSFORMATION

The Drylands and Drought Management IP will drive transformation by strengthening policy coherence and governance through the implementation of national drought plans and alignment with biodiversity, climate, and land degradation strategies. It will mobilize financing by leveraging GEF resources, blended finance, private sector investment, and partnerships with global drought initiatives to scale implementation.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration is central to the Integrated Program, engaging governments, regional organizations, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, civil society, women, youth, and the private sector to ensure inclusive and coordinated action. The program promotes regional and transboundary cooperation for shared water resources and knowledge exchange and will advance innovation and knowledge through early warning systems, drought risk assessment tools, ecosystem-based solutions, drought-smart land and water management practices, and the integration of Indigenous and traditional knowledge. Together, these levers enable systems change, strengthen resilience, and deliver sustainable environmental and socioeconomic benefits at scale.

DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

The Integrated Program combines country-led investments with global coordination and regional collaboration. Projects in participating countries will implement integrated drought management actions tailored to national priorities, focusing on early warning systems, drought-smart land and water management, ecosystem restoration, groundwater management, biodiversity conservation, and capacity building. A Global Platform will provide project design support, technical assistance, coordination, partnerships, and knowledge exchange while facilitating implementation of national drought plans.

Regional networks and partnerships will promote transboundary cooperation, innovation, private sector engagement, and sharing of lessons learned. Participating countries will contribute experience and innovations while benefiting from technical support, stronger partnerships, and coordinated action that scales impact across countries and regions.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

The program will deliver transformative outcomes by shifting from reactive drought response to prevention, preparedness, and resilience building. It will restore degraded ecosystems, improve sustainable management of production landscapes, and enhance drought resilience across drylands through integrated land, water, biodiversity, and climate actions.

Global environmental benefits include reduced land degradation, improved ecosystem health, biodiversity conservation, enhanced water security, and increased climate resilience. Socioeconomic benefits include strengthened livelihoods, food and water security, and improved resilience of vulnerable communities, particularly women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, smallholders, and pastoralists. Participating countries will benefit from improved drought policies, early warning systems, capacity development, investment mobilization, and regional cooperation.

The program will contribute to GEF-9 targets through restoration of degraded lands, sustainable management of landscapes, improved drought resilience, and increased numbers of people benefiting from sustainable land management investments, while advancing UNCCD, CBD, and UNFCCC objectives.

Food Systems

ISSUES TARGETED

Food systems are essential for food security, nutrition, livelihoods, and economic development, yet they are also major drivers of environmental degradation. They account for approximately 35 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions and are responsible for about 80 percent of deforestation, 70 percent of biodiversity loss, and 50 percent of freshwater withdrawals. Rising food demand, food loss and waste, pollution, and unsustainable resource use are increasing pressures on land, water, ecosystems, and climate. These challenges are interconnected with persistent rural poverty, food insecurity, unequal access to markets and finance, and the exclusion of women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and small-scale producers from economic opportunities and decision-making processes.

Because food systems are shaped by interactions among production methods, value chains, markets, food environments, and consumption patterns, addressing these pressures requires an integrated approach that generates environmental, social, and economic benefits simultaneously.

THE INTEGRATED SOLUTION

The Food Systems Integrated Program (FSIP) aims to scale up transformational changes towards nature-positive, low-emission, and pollution-reduced agri-food systems that are inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. The program will help countries transform food systems from production to consumption through integrated approaches that address biodiversity loss, land degradation, climate change, pollution, food loss and waste, and nutrition outcomes.

The FSIP combines policy, governance, finance, innovation, market transformation, and investment support to strengthen sustainable production systems, value chains, food environments, and consumption patterns. The program promotes circularity, resource efficiency, nutrient recycling, and equitable value creation while improving food security, nutrition, and livelihoods.

Priority areas include sustainable and regenerative agriculture, integrated crop-livestock-aquaculture systems, sustainable livestock and fisheries, biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, sustainable value chains, food loss and waste reduction, and nutrition-sensitive food systems.

PATHWAYS FOR TRANSFORMATION

Five mutually reinforcing levers will support food systems transformation at scale:

- **Policy and governance**. Strengthen policy coherence, regulatory frameworks, public procurement, and coordination across agriculture, environment, health, trade, and finance.
- **Finance**. Improve access to public, private, and blended finance while strengthening investment readiness and sustainable food system business models.
- **Partnerships**. Foster whole-of-society collaboration among governments, producers, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, youth, civil society, research institutions, financial actors, and the private sector.

- **Innovation**. Advance regenerative and nature-positive production systems, digital solutions, circular economy approaches, sustainable value chains, food loss and waste reduction, and nutrition-sensitive approaches.
- **Knowledge and capacity**. Strengthen institutions, communities of practice, South-South exchange, Indigenous and local knowledge systems, and learning for scaling successful approaches.

Together, these levers will catalyze systems change, reduce environmental pressures, strengthen resilience, improve livelihoods, and scale sustainable food system solutions from production to consumption across value chains, markets, and food environments.

DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

The FSIP combines country-led investments with a Global Platform that serves as the coordination, knowledge, innovation, and partnership hub for the program. Projects in participating countries will implement integrated food system interventions across production systems, value chains, markets, food environments, and consumption pathways. Interventions may include regenerative agriculture, sustainable livestock and dairy systems, blue foods, integrated crop-livestock-aquaculture systems, ecosystem restoration, food loss and waste reduction, market access, nutrition-sensitive solutions, and sustainable value chains.

Managed by the lead agency and partners, the Global Platform will provide technical assistance, knowledge exchange, innovation support, partnership development, and investment facilitation. It will help countries strengthen project design, mobilize investment, engage private-sector actors, and scale successful approaches through regional and global learning networks.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

The FSIP will deliver integrated environmental, social, and economic benefits while strengthening the ability of countries to transform food systems sustainably. Food system outcomes include stronger governance, institutions, investment readiness, sustainable production systems, value chains, food environments, and consumption practices. Global environmental benefits include reduced pressures on biodiversity, land, water, climate, and ecosystems through sustainable production, restoration, pollution reduction, improved resource efficiency, and reduced food loss and waste.

The program will contribute to biodiversity conservation, climate mitigation and adaptation, land restoration, improved water quality, and reduced impacts from hazardous chemicals and waste. Socioeconomic benefits include improved food security, nutrition, dietary diversity, livelihoods, income generation, and resilience, particularly for women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and smallholders. Participating countries will strengthen policies, partnerships, investment pipelines, and access to technical assistance, innovation, and finance.

Global Wildlife for Development

ISSUES TARGETED

Wildlife populations have declined by 73 percent over the past 50 years, with rapid loss and fragmentation of marine, terrestrial, and freshwater habitats. This decline weakens ecosystems, threatens food, health, and human security, and undermines livelihoods worldwide.

Two interconnected drivers are primarily responsible: habitat loss and fragmentation; and unsustainable (legal and illegal) overexploitation and trade of wildlife. Illegal wildlife trade is now one of the largest illicit global markets, generating up to $23 billion a year through complex criminal networks. Human-wildlife conflict is also intensifying, with consequences for people and wildlife. These pressures are rooted in economic and human systems that cross borders and sectors, so no single site, country, or intervention can solve them alone.

An integrated, systems-based approach is essential to reverse wildlife loss; achieve human wildlife coexistence; and protect the ecosystems on which people and wildlife depend.

THE INTEGRATED SOLUTION

The GEF-9 Wildlife IP aims to conserve wildlife and wildlife landscapes by tackling the root causes of loss and by promoting human-wildlife coexistence. The IP vision is to move beyond isolated, site-based conservation toward coordinated action across borders, sectors, and levels of government. Building on 10 years of the Global Wildlife Program, the GEF-9 Wildlife IP brings together national governments, local communities, the private sector, and international partners around a shared strategy. Its integrated approach adds value through policy, financing, and technical support so gains in one area reinforce progress in others.

The program's core priorities include maintaining connected, well-managed wildlife landscapes; curbing illegal and unsustainable wildlife taking, trade and use; preventing and mitigating human-wildlife conflict; and diversifying wildlife-friendly economic opportunities. Together, these priorities address the interconnected pressures driving wildlife decline while generating benefits for biodiversity, climate, and human wellbeing.

PATHWAYS FOR TRANSFORMATION

The program will drive transformation through several key levers: transboundary approaches and multi-country collaborations; institutionalization of capacity; increasing policy coherence by mainstreaming wildlife at the national, sub-national, local, and landscape scale. Adequate and sustained financing will close persistent funding gaps using blended finance, insurance products, and outcome-based payments to attract public and private investment.

Behavior change and social science approaches will help shift the consumer demand and practices fueling illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade while also reducing human-wildlife conflict. Technology and innovation, from satellite monitoring to artificial intelligence analytics, will strengthen enforcement and conservation planning. A whole-of-society approach is essential through engaging Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, youth, rangers, governments, and the private sector as partners in decision making.

Knowledge sharing and South-South learning, coordinated through a global platform, will help countries adopt proven approaches and scale what works.

DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

The GEF-9 Wildlife IP will be delivered through a global coordination project paired with country-level investments, building on the governance structure of previous Global Wildlife Program phases. The global platform will provide technical support, foster knowledge exchange, and coordinate regional and transboundary action, while country projects are tailored to national and local drivers of wildlife loss. Four priority intervention areas guide investment:

1. Maintain and restore ecologically connected wildlife landscapes;
2. Address illegal and unsustainable wildlife taking, trade and use;
3. Prevent and mitigate human wildlife conflict; and
4. Diversify wildlife-friendly economic opportunities.

The program focuses particular attention on challenges national projects alone cannot resolve, including international trafficking, transboundary conservation, and consumer demand reduction. Countries will be considered for support based on the significance of threatened wildlife populations, their role in supply chains, and their commitment to engaging and contributing actively to a global program, transboundary cooperation, and policy reform.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

The Integrated Program is expected to increase the integrity and connectivity of wildlife landscapes, maintain and restore key wildlife populations, and improve human-wildlife coexistence. These gains will deliver global environmental benefits across the biodiversity, climate, and land degradation focal areas, including expanded and improved management protected areas and landscapes, restored habitat, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Socioeconomic benefits include new livelihoods through nature-based tourism and wildlife-friendly enterprises, reduced human-wildlife conflict, and stronger community-based governance. Participating countries will build strengthened institutions, improved rule of law, and enhanced law enforcement capacity.

The program will contribute directly to Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Targets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 9, while supporting broader goals on human health, food security, and sustainable development for communities connected to wildlife and wild landscapes.

Pollution-free Supply Chains

ISSUES TARGETED

Global supply chains in textiles, electronics, critical minerals, agriculture and agro-processing, construction, and shipping are major contributors to pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion. Hazardous chemicals introduced during production - including persistent organic pollutants (POPs), mercury, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and other harmful substances - can disperse across regions through air, water, products, waste, and trade. The impacts extend beyond the places where materials are produced or used, affecting ecosystems, workers, communities, and consumers.

Fragmented interventions cannot address risks that span sourcing, production, trade, consumption, and end-of-life management. An integrated approach is needed to connect chemicals management with circularity, climate action, biodiversity protection, responsible sourcing, and social inclusion across entire value chains.

THE INTEGRATED SOLUTION

The Pollution-free Supply Chains Integrated Program aims to transform priority supply chains so they become simultaneously pollution-free, zero waste, and nature positive. Building on the GEF-8 Eliminating Hazardous Chemicals from Supply Chains program, it broadens the focus from eliminating harmful chemicals to reshaping production and trade at scale. Participating countries may focus on textiles, electronics, critical minerals, agriculture and agro-processing, construction, or shipping; plastics are addressed through a separate GEF-9 Integrated Program.

The program combines three interlocking outcomes: systematic phase-out or reduction of POPs, mercury, PFAS, and other hazardous chemicals; circular-economy models, resource efficiency, and energy-efficient manufacturing aligned with net-zero pathways; and deforestation-free sourcing, regenerative agriculture, and ecosystem restoration within and around supply chains. This integrated model connects convention obligations with action in the economic systems where materials are produced, processed, and traded.

PATHWAYS FOR TRANSFORMATION

Transformation will be driven through five mutually reinforcing components.

First, the program will strengthen policy and governance through task forces, extended producer responsibility measures, and traceability standards.

Second, it will mobilize blended finance using instruments such as clean-production bonds, sustainability-linked loans, guarantees, and first-loss capital.

Third, it will foster private sector partnerships and industrial upgrades through sector platforms and supplier development, including support for small and medium enterprises and women-led businesses.

Fourth, it will promote cross-sector interventions that generate nature-positive outcomes, including ecosystem restoration and biodiversity safeguards in industrial corridors.

Fifth, it will strengthen transparent monitoring and knowledge exchange through digital traceability, public sustainability scorecards, third-party verification, and independent assessment. Across all components, the program emphasizes private sector engagement, policy coherence, whole-of-society participation, and collaboration among governments, industry, financial institutions, communities, and technical partners.

DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

The program will combine country-driven child projects with global coordination. Participating countries will select priority supply chains and develop national action plans grounded in baselines of pollution hotspots, emissions, and ecosystems at risk. Country investments may include policy alignment and enforcement, cleaner production and safer chemistry, circular infrastructure, industrial upgrading, capacity building for local financial institutions, formalization of informal waste workers, ecosystem restoration, and digital traceability and verification.

A multi-stakeholder steering committee will guide and approve child projects, supported by a global coordination platform that provides technical assistance, knowledge exchange, partnerships, and program-level coherence. The program has a $68 million indicative envelope across four focal areas, including $39 million from chemicals and waste, enabling coordinated investments that connect national priorities with shared global outcomes.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

The program is expected to reduce or phase out hazardous chemicals and waste, improve resource and energy efficiency, and protect biodiversity and ecosystems connected to priority supply chains. Environmental benefits include reduced releases of POPs, mercury, PFAS, and other hazardous substances; lower greenhouse gas emissions; materials and waste avoided through circular approaches; and improved land and ecosystem condition.

Participating countries will gain stronger policies, safer production systems, improved traceability, access to finance, and more resilient and competitive enterprises. Workers and communities should benefit from safer working conditions, inclusive economic opportunities, and reduced exposure to pollution, with particular attention to small enterprises, women-led businesses, and informal waste workers.

Contributions will be verified through GEF core indicators and relevant convention deliverables, supporting GEF-9 targets for materials avoided, mercury reduction, POPs reduction, greenhouse gas mitigation, and biodiversity and land outcomes.

Sustainable Cities

ISSUES TARGETED

Rapid urbanization is increasing pressure on nature, land, water, climate, and resource flows. With 68 percent of people expected to live in cities by 2050 and urban land area projected to triple, unplanned expansion is locking cities into high-emission, resource-intensive, and vulnerable growth patterns, especially affecting informal settlements and vulnerable communities.

These pressures are interconnected. Cities generate around 70 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions while facing rising heat, flooding, and drought. Urban expansion drives habitat loss, ecosystem degradation, fragmentation, and declining ecosystem services. Pollution from waste, chemicals, inefficient material use, and land and water contamination further increases environmental and health risks. Cities face several barriers to action, including limited finance, weak enabling policies, institutional capacity gaps, underdeveloped project pipelines, and inadequate financing mechanisms. Tackling these pressures and barriers together is essential to sustain and transform urban systems.

THE INTEGRATED SOLUTION

The GEF-9 Sustainable Cities Integrated Program aims to promote nature-positive urban development. The program will work with local, regional, and national governments and other urban actors to adopt integrated approaches to urban planning, policies, and investments. It combines upstream policy, governance, finance, data, and capacity support with strategic investments and partnerships, addressing the nexus of climate, nature, and pollution across urban and surrounding territories. The integrated approach enables stronger multi-level governance for urban sustainability, cross-sectoral solutions, and territorial planning and development for enhanced synergies.

Thematic priorities for the program include:

1. **Land-use planning and management**, including metropolitan planning, urban-rural-nature linkages, mobility, and ecosystem services.
2. **Sustainable infrastructure**, including transport, energy, buildings, water, waste, and housing.
3. **Nature and biodiversity**, including nature-based solutions, restoration, ecological connectivity, and catchment-scale action.
4. **Circular economy** solutions for materials, construction, water, plastics, food, waste, and urban industries.

The program emphasizes rapidly urbanizing regions and intermediary cities, where early action can help avoid unsustainable development pathways.

PATHWAYS FOR TRANSFORMATION

Five mutually reinforcing levers will enable action on urban priorities to support transformation at scale:

- **Policy and governance**: Strengthen coherent urban policies, multilevel coordination, planning, regulations, budgeting, and institutional capacity.
- **Finance**: Improve access to public, private, and blended finance and strengthen pipelines for investable urban solutions.
- **Partnerships**: Foster whole-of-government and whole-of-society collaboration among public institutions, communities, the private sector, civil society, and development partners.
- **Innovation**: Advance new technologies, financial instruments, business models, and implementation approaches with potential for replication.
- **Knowledge and learning**: Connect countries and cities to global expertise, peer exchange, practical tools, and adaptive learning.

DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

The program combines city-level investments with the Global Platform for Sustainable Cities (GPSC) that serves as its coordination, knowledge, and partnership hub. The GPSC connects participating cities, countries, and implementation partners, city networks, and global initiatives to align efforts, foster collaboration, and amplify impact. It supports country projects through strategic guidance, coordination, technical assistance, tools, training, and peer-to-peer learning, while helping cities strengthen project design, mobilize finance, and scale innovation. Cities contribute their knowledge, experience, and leadership back to the platform, creating a continuous cycle of learning and dissemination.

The program provides GEF resources through catalytic grant or non-grant instruments for technical assistance towards strengthening policies, plans, and institutions and designing innovative financing solutions, demonstrating scalable investments, and enhancing knowledge, capacity, and leadership. Participating countries and cities will identify priority challenges and integrated solutions, demonstrate leadership, engage partners, and align investments with national development priorities and environmental commitments.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

The program will deliver integrated environmental, social, and economic benefits while strengthening the ability of countries and cities to manage urban growth sustainably.

Urban system outcomes: The program will strengthen integrated planning, governance, institutions, data systems, and investment readiness for sustainable, resilient, and nature-positive urban development.
Global environmental benefits: The program will help improve ecosystem health and biodiversity while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It will promote more efficient resource use, reduce chemicals and hazardous waste, and increase resilience to heat, flooding, drought, and other climate risks.
Socioeconomic benefits: The program improve access to nature, sustainable infrastructure, and urban services, while creating jobs, economic opportunities, and greater inclusion for women, youth, and vulnerable communities.
Benefits for cities and countries: Countries and cities will be able to develop stronger project pipelines and mobilize more finance for city-level priorities. Through technical support, peer learning, and collaboration with a network of more than 100 cities and partners, they can accelerate implementation, showcase leadership, scale successful approaches, and advance national and global sustainability goals.