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Opening Remarks

Of

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Global Environment Facility**

**At the
45th Meeting of the GEF Council**

**45th GEF Meeting
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Washington DC**

Dear friends; It is my real pleasure to welcome you all to the 45th meeting of the GEF Council.

I think you will agree with me that this is a very busy time for all of us, with a lot of important events for the GEF and for yourselves. Since our last meeting in June, among the highlights from my perspective, I would like to mention the following five in chronological order:

First, I was thrilled to be able to attend the UNCCD COP in Namibia to discuss with Parties how the GEF can best support the implementation of the Convention's priorities. One message that resonated with me at this COP was the natural vocation of this convention to become the meeting ground for environmental synergies to emerge among multiple environmental domains so as to achieve sustainable land and water management, and sustainable livelihoods. The UNCCD COP also welcomed Monique Barbut, as the new Executive Secretary. I am very pleased to welcome Monique back to the GEF family!

Second, also in September, the CBD and the GEF Secretariat facilitated the meeting of the Global Biodiversity Liaison Group. The six biodiversity-related convention got together to make progress on how their decisions could be better harmonized and financially supported. This is something that has been a priority for the GEF council for a long time.

Third, the Diplomatic Conference for the Minamata Convention was held in October. The adoption of the Minamata convention marks the beginning of a new chapter for the GEF as the financial mechanism for the new Convention. I

am thrilled that more than 90 countries have already signed the Minamata Convention and I look forward to the GEF doing all we can to support parties on the path to ratification and subsequent implementation.

Fourth, the 25th meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer met in Bangkok. I am pleased to note that the GEF contributed to several key decisions for MLF replenishment.

Fifth, later this month there is the UNFCCC COP19 in Warsaw. We look forward to once again engage the Climate COP. The GEF will contribute several reports and we will launch a new Climate Change documentary. We will also use the opportunity to engage with a number of private sector participants, to explore GEF can best help mobilize private sector financing for climate-related investments.

A lot more ongoing!

I believe all these events indicate the continued strong demand for GEF as an important player in the global environment now and in the future.

In this regard, as you know, there are two strategic exercises ongoing—the GEF2020 strategy and GEF6 replenishment processes. With respect to GEF2020, now that a draft Strategy document is ready to become the focus of contributions by all stakeholders, I am really happy to start seeing the tremendous inflow of comments coming from all corners, which I'm sure will make this important document become owned by the entire GEF family. I look forward to our discussion during this Council meeting.

As for GEF6, we concluded the 2nd meeting in New Delhi in September. I was invigorated by the strong support that Replenishment Participants continue to express for the GEF. I think we made a lot of progress during the meeting with sharpening our strategies and identifying ways forward for reaching agreement in the coming meetings.

Now let me take a couple of minutes to reflect on a few things on our agenda for this meeting.

There are many items that in one way or the other are related to the functioning of the GEF partnership. Some focuses in particular on the Agencies:

First, at this meeting it is my great pleasure to welcome two new Project Agencies to the GEF, namely Conservation International and WWF-US. These two organizations are the first to complete our Pilot Accreditation Process. I know that that it has at times been a challenging process, but I want to emphasize how excited I am about having CI and WWF-US among us. These new partners will help us further diversify the GEF's tool-box, and present countries with a broader array of options that can best support them to improve the global environment. I will shortly ask them to say a few words. We have organized an informal "get-to-know-them" session over lunch on Thursday.

Second, we will be discussing the status of implementation of project cycle streamlining measures, something that I consider a priority. The entire GEF partnership has a common interest in making sure that GEF Projects are prepared and implemented as rapidly and efficiently as possible, while satisfying GEF requirements in terms of eligibility, quality at entry and safeguards. I am

pleased to see that we are making progress in terms of implementing the streamlining measures that the Council has approved. But I also realize that this is an area we need to continuously focus on, and where GEF can only make progress if we all work together.

Third, I am pleased that we have completed the review of agencies' compliance with GEF's environmental and social safeguard policies including gender mainstreaming. I would like to take the opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all agencies for their collaboration in this effort, and their commitment to continue working on this agenda.

The agenda also includes items focusing on other members of our partnership. We will hear from Braulio, Monique and Jim from the Biodiversity, Desertification and Stockholm Convention Secretariats. And Rob will share with us a set of new findings by the Evaluation Office. Finally Rosina will give her first report to the Council as the new chair of the STAP.

In my view, these various agenda items jointly convey one important message: As GEF grows—with new agencies and new convention obligations—we need to constantly look out for way to improve and strengthen our partnership for higher impacts. I look forward to continue working with all of you in this regard.

Thank you