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**Opening Remarks
CSO Consultation**

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Dear representatives of civil society organizations, Council members, colleagues, and friends, good morning.

It is my great pleasure to greet all of you here at this Council meeting, my first one as newly elected CEO.

When I was honored to be appointed and given an opportunity to say a few words at the last Council meeting in June, I expressed my conviction that the GEF is a unique institution with the ability to make a real difference. One of the assets equipped the GEF with that ability is its network of partnership.

Through my first 100 days, I have met various stakeholders, including the leaders of the CSOs and Indigenous peoples. Hyderabad COP gave me an opportunity to introduce myself to some of you. I also have had opportunities to see the GEF producing good results on the ground helped by its power of partnership network. One of my first project visits took me to Kenya's villages resided by different ethnic groups, Masai and Kikuyu. There was conflict over water. The GEF-supported Small Grant Program brought communities and their youth together. In India on the occasion of

the Hyderabad COP, the GEF-supported EcoDevelopment Project, which has not only protected tigers, but has brought sustained revenue to local communities, received an award by the UNDP and the Government of India. Last month in Japan at the Annual Meetings of the World Bank, I talked to ministers of small islands states and participated in the dialogue on natural disaster risk management. I am thrilled with the increasing recognition of the value of adaptation strategies, as supported in the GEF-financed “Community-based Adaptation Program.” This program has helped the poorly equipped communities in 10 different countries cope with and adapt to the effects of climate change through participation of local NGOs and networks of volunteers. The key to success of adaptation response lies in the involvement of communities, as ecosystems and communities are strengthening each other’s resilience to the shocks.

I was energized at Rio plus 20 Summit by witnessing countless local coalitions of the willing emerged among like-minded governments, municipalities, businesses both large and small, communities, and CSOs both international and local. I was excited to meet the small private sector participating in the GEF-supported Rainforest Alliance, producing good results to local communities.

While my admiration for the GEF has grown during my first hundred days with those experiences, I also clearly come to recognize the challenge of how to strategically position the GEF in this evolving world.

The global environment is in crisis. Some of our indispensable ecosystems have already exceeded their carrying capacity. We have stepped beyond some of safe planetary boundaries. Under this pressure, incremental improvement in managing the global environment will not suffice. Instead, we urgently need transformational change.

The GEF is at a critical juncture. If we are to be proud of the GEF in 10 years from now, we need to squarely face the challenge of how to turn around this worrisome trend in the global environment. In this regard, it is critical for us, the GEF family, to articulate a vision and long term strategy for the GEF. I am calling the effort to develop a long term strategy, GEF2020. It will seek to answer a range of questions that are critical to the GEF's future. It will ask if bolder and broader changes in the way we manage global environment are possible. It will ask what unique role this

institution can play in catalyzing this transformational change. How can the GEF play an ever stronger role as the champion of the global commons? How can the GEF best support innovation for global environmental benefits?

At this Council meeting, we will have some discussions on the GEF2020. I believe this process will benefit from inputs from various quarters of the globe, including CSOs. With this group and on this occasion, I would like to ask what role you could play in catalyzing the transformational change, finding solutions and implementing them.

Let me touch upon a few questions I have in mind with this group. The GEF is supporting a number of Small Grant Programs involving CSOs. Each has demonstrated innovative ways to address environmental challenges, almost as an incubator of new ideas and delivering concrete results on the ground. In the Gambia, a GEF-supported project for the sustainable management of the mangrove ecosystem of Tanbi National Park received the Equator Prize 2012 for its innovative use of alternative oyster harvesting methods and establishment of micro-credit facilities. The question is how we can replicate and scale up those results.

Environmental threats do not respect borders or coastlines. That is why I am particularly interested in projects that deliver benefits beyond national boundaries. I had an honor to present the Future Policy Award to the Tubbataha Reefs National Marine Park and World Heritage Site project in the Philippines during COP11 in Hyderabad. This medium sized project, too, has been recognized for innovation and strong partnership with CSOs. It has put in place innovative policies to stop illegal fishing practices and unsustainable tourism development. I am especially interested in the successful application of innovative approaches across a wide geographic area. This is the kind of impact and reach I would like to see in the programs and projects we support.

The GEF has supported indigenous organizations in Brazil on a full-size project aimed at consolidating Indigenous Lands as protected areas. These lands are critical to the conservation of Brazil's forest ecosystems and an integral part of the National Protected Area Plan. Given the global importance of the Brazilian rainforest, the work we are supporting has the potential to deliver global environmental benefits. We have to do more work on this scale and do it in a more systematic and integrated fashion.

While these are all valuable examples of the significant role that civil society plays in the GEF-supported projects, I am keen in learning more about where the CSOs could play a critical role in finding solutions, achieving sustainable impacts at scale and catalyzing transformational change to the global environmental challenges. I do not see the financial resources are the only constraints. Rather, in my mind, it is a question of what are multipliers of leveraging results. Dissemination of good practices is certainly one way. But we may also want to focus our attention on the systems, including the institutions and policies in place, and on reshaping them to meet today's and future challenges.

At this critical juncture, every one of us needs to understand he or she has a role to play. I am confident the continuous collaboration between the GEF-CSO can play a key part in this endeavor.

At the Council meeting this week, we will also discuss how to strengthen the GEF partnership and how to manage the resources prudently and effectively.

I am sure you provide your ideas to enrich the discussion today and I hope ideas shared at this platform can be taken on board as part of the GEF2020.

I wish you very fruitful discussions and look forward to hearing your results and recommendations.

Thank you very much for your attention.