Remarks on GEF 2020

Naoko Ishii, PhD
CEO and Chairperson
Global Environment Facility

Global Environment Facility 43rd Council Meeting
November 13-15, 2012
Thank you, Co-chair.

As I emphasized in my opening speech, the global environment is in crisis. The GEF is also at a critical juncture. It is against this background that I consider vital for the GEF to articulate a long term vision and strategy for 2020 and beyond. As its CEO, it is my responsibility to lead this process. It will be seeking to answer a range of questions critical to the future of the GEF. It will place before you and the GEF partnership issues of whether broader and bolder changes in the way we manage the global environment are indeed possible and within our means. The 2020 strategy will seek to identify what roles the GEF can play in catalyzing transformational change.

After my first 100 days in office, I am more convinced than ever that the GEF’s core mission is to be a champion of the global commons. This is an actionable space that is vital for the health of the planet, but one that does not always receive a lot of attention in international politics. In this context, we need to figure out ways through which the GEF can perform an ever stronger function as the champion of the global commons. We also need to understand how the GEF can best support innovation for global environmental benefits and become increasingly effective as a catalyst.
against the backdrop of an evolving architecture of environmental finance. Only by addressing these key questions will the GEF continue to be a partner of choice in providing financing for the generation of global environment benefits.

I summarized this message in my “Vision Statement” which I shared with you shortly after I took office. It is, however, by no means intended to predetermine the outcomes of the GEF 2020 strategy exercise.

I would like to dedicate this session to an open exchange of views among the entire council about what we jointly consider to be the main strategic challenges and opportunities for the GEF in the future. We will also be able to discuss how to ensure that the process throughout will benefits sufficiently from inputs from key stakeholders, including the Council.

To kick off the discussion, I am pleased to welcome the Deputy Minister of the Environment of Brazil, Dr. Francisco Gaetani.

Dr. Gaetani has gracefully agreed to share with us his views of the past, present and future of the GEF in light of our experience in his country and globally. As you all know, Brazil is a country where the links between the focal areas of the GEF manifest themselves in a major way. The country is
home to the largest expanse of rainforest in the world. It harbors arguably the most biodiversity anywhere on the planet. At the same time, deforestation is responsible for most of Brazil’s carbon footprint. Historically, Brazil is the second largest beneficiary of GEF grants. GEF has funded a suite of projects in Brazil that illustrate the role of the GEF as an innovator, a catalyst and a promoter of the scaling up of successful experiences. And, of course, Brazil was the cradle of the Rio Conventions, for which the GEF serves as a financial mechanism, and more recently of Rio+20.

Let me also mention that I find it particularly interesting that Dr. Gaetani – like me – does not come from an environmental background but from a career in public finance and planning. It is my expectation that we will hear from him questions related to the major barriers to mainstreaming a sustainable environment agenda, and what blocks the country from achieving sustainable impacts of the GEF projects.

Finally let me also recognize that we are fortunate to have in the room this morning His Excellency Mr. Aram Harutyunyan, Minister of Nature Protection of Armenia, and also Ms. Rachel Kyte, the World Bank Vice
President for Sustainable Development. They will both provide us with some remarks after Mr. Gaetani.

With this, I am pleased to hand over the floor to Dr. Gaetani.