

55th GEF Council Meeting
December 18-20, 2018, Washington D.C.

Opening Remarks

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Good morning everyone.

We are entering a new chapter for the GEF.

This is our first gathering since the GEF Assembly in Da Nang where we concluded GEF7 negotiations.

I once more want to thank all parties for the very fruitful conclusion of GEF7 strategy, centered on safeguarding the Earth's vital global environmental commons.

I am very proud of what we have achieved together and look forward to implementing it, and at the same time I am deeply committed to further modernizing the GEF to enable us to do our work more effectively and meet the increased demands on us.

I would like to focus these remarks on three things that really stand out for me as I reflect on what has happened since we were all together in Da Nang.

The first is the urgency of the situation we are in.

During the past few months, more and more evidence has been put forward that we are not winning the war on global environmental degradation. In some aspects, we are even going backward.

The world is seeing that GHG emission went up in 2017 after three years of stagnation – meaning “decoupling” of GHG's from growth is not realized. Deforestation which once seemed stopped increased again in 2017.

Scientists through several reports warned us that the climate change and global environmental degradation has been ongoing with much faster speed and scale.

Johan Rockström and his colleagues have alerted us that we are leaving Holocene and that we risk moving into “hothouse earth” which is characterized with temperature rise and sea level rise unless we find a way to change the course.

The recent IPCC report on 1.5 degrees told us that we need unprecedented transformation with scale and speed in all aspects of our society if we are to continue to prosper.

WWF’s “Living Planet” report concluded that global biodiversity has declined by 60% since 1970 and pointed to food production and human settlements as the major causes.

How do we respond to those increasing challenges?

This leads me to my second point, which is the need for urgent action.

This autumn we had three COPs—for CBD, Minamata and Climate. All three have been focused on accelerating action.

I just came back (and some of you were there too) from the Katowice Climate COP. While we are relieved that the difficult negotiation on the “rulebook” was finally concluded and parties do agree on the way of implementation of the Paris Agreement, we should be well aware that we need to significantly raise our ambitions if we are to achieve a 2 degree world, if not 1.5. My personal take away from the Climate COP is that the political attention to adaptation is increasing, and that in particular that there seem to be more engagement from the private sector around adaptation.

Earlier in November, we had the CBD COP in Sharm El Sheikh, where governments agreed to accelerate action on biodiversity to 2020, and to develop the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to be decided at the next COP in 2020 in Beijing. The post-2020 framework may include a “new deal for nature” aimed to safeguard nature and biodiversity in the 21st century. The GEF is committed to work with the CBD to build a broad coalition of private and private sector partners towards a successful COP 15 outcome.

Finally, also in November, we had the second Minamata COP, where a number of decisions were taken to help the now 101 Parties to the Convention move forward with key provisions of the Convention.

I would like to note that there was focus on urgent action in many other gatherings. For example, in September, the Global Climate Action Summit took place in California where the power of Non-State actors and emerging multi-stakeholder coalition were very well recognized.

However, we must still admit that we are yet to reach the tipping point of bending the curve.

This lead me to my third point, namely what is the GEF’s role in this battle?

My view is that GEF7 is a powerful instrument for us, the GEF, to take our part in fighting the war against climate change and global environmental degradation.

Science tells us that we need transformational change of key systems. GEF7 programming strategies are designed exactly to help catalyze transformational changes to food and land use systems, sustainable cities, and push energy transition, while protecting key biomes.

In doing so we emphasize the importance of involving key actors not only national governments, but cities, private sector, CSOs and communities. We are keen in creating or strengthening coalition to address thematic issues, be it commodity deforestation, sustainable city design, or marine plastic.

For the last few months we have been extremely busy in responding to huge demands by countries for national dialogues to identify how best they use GEF resources for the next four years. I am very pleased to see our national dialogues empower OFPs to involve other ministries and actors to strategize their GEF-7 portfolio.

GEF7 has its very ambitious goal. For us to achieve it, we need to firm up our implementation policies and procedures. There is lots of room for tightening up our project preparation and execution so that we can deliver the results soonest.

It is a good time to take a frank and honest look at our way of doing business, among countries, agencies and the secretariat. During this meeting we present several papers to further improve GEF's efficiency, accountability, transparency and safeguards. We will also, as usual be hearing from STAP who will be introducing several new members, from the IEO who will update us on their latest work, and from our friends in the convention secretariat.

The challenge we are facing is unprecedented. And we have the responsibility to play our part. I am proud to say that with the GEF7 policy and programming we are ready.

We need to do this together.

Thank you.