

**53<sup>rd</sup> GEF Council Meeting**

**Preston Auditorium, World Bank, Washington DC**

**November 28, 2017**

**Opening remarks by**

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**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Welcome to the 53<sup>rd</sup> council meeting. I noticed quite a number of new council members at this council and want to extend a particular welcome to those new faces.

The world is moving forward with the Paris agreement as well as the SDGs which has given us the foundation for our work. There is progress in implementation of commitments but we continue to receive sobering news.

This Spring, the Mauna Loa Observatory recorded its first-ever carbon dioxide reading in excess of 410 parts per million, the highest in millions of years. And, while we were at Bonn for the Climate COP we learned from scientists that after a 3-year plateau, total CO<sub>2</sub> global carbon emissions from fossil fuels and industrial sources are set to rise by 2 percent in 2017.

We also hear that deforestation is going up again. Analyses of satellite images of tropical Asia, Africa and the Americas, suggests that tropical forests contribute more carbon dioxide to the atmosphere than they remove. Much of that carbon contribution is due to deforestation, the conversion of forests to urban spaces such as farms or roads. But more than two-thirds comes from a less visible source: a decline in the number and diversity of trees in remaining forests.

But the world has been responding to those challenges, and the GEF is a part of those movements. Since we met last time at the council, we had COP meetings for CCD, where the importance of the power of land as an integrator and solution provider was highlighted. We announced GEF's support for LDN Fund.

We had the historic COP1 for newly ratified Minamata COP in September. But the negotiations could not reach an agreement on the MOU between the COP and the GEF Council. We will touch upon this issue during the meeting.

Climate COP23 in Bonn was busy place for everyone; the issue of resilience and adaptation has captured lots of political attention, rightly so, partly due to the tropical hurricane and extreme weather events which devastated SIDS and LDCs. We announced CRAFT, the resilience targeted equity growth fund, the first of its kind. We received new sets of pledges for LDCF; thanks to the donors!

At Bonn, I also witnessed increasing attention to the power of soil, forest and ecosystems as a solution to environmental challenges; partly we see forests becoming a source of carbon rather than sink, while we need to absorb more carbon urgently. I also see the role of non-state actors, business, finance, cities, CSOs and communities, and their coalition is delivering promising commitments and results.

I stopped over in Bhutan on my way to Bonn to participate in the launch of Bhutan for Life, at the request of the Prime Minister. The reason I mention this event is two-fold. First, it showcases that with leadership and determination even a small landlocked mountainous country with leadership and devotion can launch a visionary program supported by not only public institutions but also private foundations. They changed a narrative from victim of climate change towards a stewardship of nature (forest and ecosystems) as a foundation for a sustainable future and successfully sell it to donors.

The second reason for showcasing Bhutan for Life is its excellent collaboration for GEF-GCF. GCF is the main public donor to the program but GEF made an earlier contribution to its environmental trust fund and a 2 million USD contribution from LDCF fund this time. This collaboration is possible due to the visionary government, and support by agencies such as WWF and UNDP. By the way, this was also highlighted at a joint event at COP23 in Bonn between GCF and GEF that showed our collaboration and excellent partnership to help countries achieve their goals.

When I reflect on what has taken place, it's evident that non-state actors, the private sector, multi-stakeholder coalition and NGI have been responding to the challenge and opportunities before us. More coalitions have been born and actions towards solutions are taking place.

This also tells us that the GEF needs to accelerate our own work, to focus on what we are good at (am thinking of driver focused approach and integration), and to be selective and strategic in partnerships.

At this council, I would like to draw your attention to five areas with respect to the progress made as well as challenges for GEF6 and how to build on GEF7.

First, implementation of integrated approach, not only IAP, but also MFA.

We also learned a lot by implementing integrated approaches, how to manage complexity, with agencies and partners.

Our ongoing programs have a good focus on forests, land, soil and oceans, which should serve as solution to climate issues and beyond. But we can maximize their contribution more going forward.

Second, our work with the private sector. NGI presents good results; 100 million leveraged 1.7 billion. The focus is shifting from climate change (such as renewable) to natural resource management (such as small scale fisheries or reforestation).

Much less noticed, but good examples, are the work with the private sector as partners to transform markets (such as greening commodity supply chain or cleaning the toxic chemical value chain).

Third, policy work, such as gender and stakeholder engagement where we present new policies to this council for discussion. While we also note much more progress is needed for our KM work and are ready to strengthen efficiency of our operations. Strengthening results measurement is noted as a key priority for GEF7.

Fourth, institutional frameworks such as transparency, our relationship with CSOs and health of the GEF partnership. We are thankful to the committees for doing hard work on ethics and the relationship with CSOs both of which will be discussed at this council.

Last but not the least, we will present at this council the last major work program, with over half billion dollars benefiting 100 countries including 38 LDCs and 28 SIDS. But formulating the work program for

GEF6 has been challenging due to the unexpected shortfall driven by currency exchange rate movements. This caused much difficulties for countries, agencies and the Secretariat. We managed this jointly based on agreed principles and I hope we managed to minimize damaging the trust among the GEF network. I thank all parties for their hard work.

Throughout this year, and for GEF6 period, one thing I recognized is that the trust among the GEF partnership is strengthened. To change from competition to collaboration and to maximize the potential of GEF is not an easy task. But, throughout the GEF6 period, through implementation of complex programs and engaging with policy work such as gender, efficiency, results and KM, I sensed that the coordination and collaboration among agencies and conventions is strengthened – this is the best way to serve countries. And I also want to highly commend the role played by IEO and STAP which provides us with evidence based assessments and scientific foundations to go forward. They are indispensable partners for the GEF family.

At this council meeting, we can put closure to some of the policy work such as gender and stakeholder engagement. We will agree on a roadmap to some other policy work such as safeguards and fiduciary standards. Also an updated vision for the CSOs will be discussed.

Meanwhile, there is important GEF7 replenishment negotiations ongoing where we will take up policy and programming directions reflecting discussions at the council.

Let us have good deliberation for the coming days, and let's get on with business!

Thank you