

Partnerships for Implementing the 2030 Agenda

ISSUE Planning for and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires all hands-on deck, including governments at different levels, private sector, civil society, global and local thinkers, and others. Partnerships play a critical role in meeting not only the SDGs, but also helping countries achieve the major milestones of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), including the Paris Agreement, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), and others. These agreements include clearer roles, responsibilities, and opportunities for developing countries, and recognize that global sustainability issues are indivisible, needing coordinated responses across themes and geographical boundaries.

Since the Rio Summit, the global community has generated lessons on how partnerships need to evolve to be more effective in promoting change at scale. The traditional model of partnership tended to be based on north-south support and aid, trade access, and sharing proven knowledge and experiences. The limitations of this partnership model became gradually evident, as the focus of world economic development, as well as global environmental concerns, shifted from developed to developing countries. Partnerships that are more inclusive, based on equal footing among the participants, and with capacity to create new knowledge and mobilize action to meet the ambitious goals are needed.

Further, partnerships are increasingly recognized as the key catalyst to articulate and fill the gaps that public sector efforts cannot address and finance on their own. The global gap in sustainable and resilient

infrastructure, which is recognized as a pre-requisite for achieving many SDGs, is estimated to be USD 1 trillion to USD 1.5 trillion annually in developing countries. The need for revitalized and enhanced global, multi-stakeholder partnership was also recognized in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for Financing for Development.

SOLUTIONS

The GEF's responsibilities under the Conventions makes it uniquely placed to harness synergies and partnerships across the different MEAs in line with a more holistic, systems approach. This is also in line with a growing body of recent GEF guidance and decisions coming from Conferences of the Parties (COPs) requesting that GEF foster integration as well as promote synergies among actions and strategies.

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Work through the GEF contributes to the achievement of the SDGs and responds to Convention guidance and decisions related to SDGs.

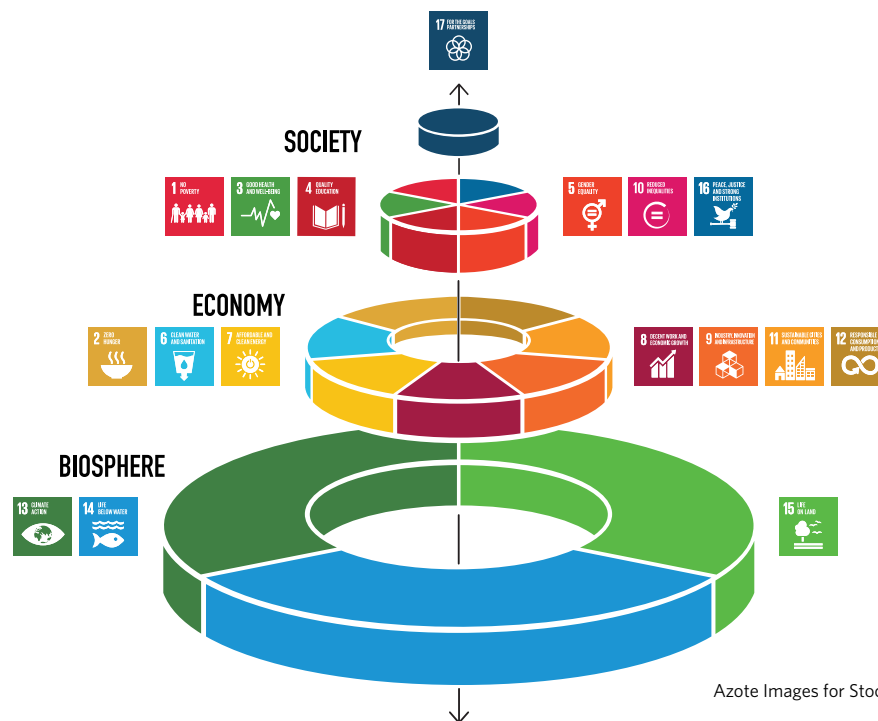
Partnerships are essential for achieving the goals across the Conventions. At the Convention on Biological Diversity COP in 2016, for example, Parties recognized values and opportunities for synergy across Conventions, inherent in the unique institutional design of the GEF, as well as synergies with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in particular SDGs 14 and 15. Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) have also made key decisions that underscore the cross-cutting nature of the land and desertification agenda, including climate change, with GEF's support to the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) agenda.

The formal, multilateral processes are underpinned by partnership initiatives with the private sector, with significant potential for the global sustainability agenda. Businesses ranging from global conglomerates to local enterprises are showing a growing commitment to sustainability. They have clear economic incentives to do so: Environmental issues dominate the global risk landscape as perceived by businesses, while the drive to sustainability at the

same time is opening up significant global business opportunities—in the order of USD 12 trillion annually for the SDGs. Leadership will continue to be needed to create partnerships. Engagement of partners from developing countries as joint solution finders and providers on equal footing is critical in addressing the drivers of degradation, transforming economic systems, and reversing unsustainable global trends.

LOOKING AHEAD

The SDGs represent an integrated, holistic vision for development at the global, national, local, and individual levels. The GEF occupies a unique space in the global partnership for sustainable development and is well placed to support the vision embodied in the SDGs, as highlighted in the GEF-7 strategy. The GEF supports efforts across multiple, interlinked global environment domains that are closely aligned with the SDG, as illustrated below. GEF's overall mission is to ensure that biosphere-related SDGs – which comprise the bottom layer of the “wedding cake” diagram below -- are safeguarded as the earth system's preconditions for development. These SDGs consist of hard-wired planetary boundaries. The top layer of “wedding cake” consists of SDGs deeply related to the ultimate goals



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of humanity. The SDGs in the middle layer—such as cities, energy, agriculture—provide action areas for the GEF to help safeguard the SDGs in the bottom layer as well as contribute to SDGs in the top layer. The GEF is also helping to strengthen the means of implementation and helping to revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Ultimately, countries are responsible for planning and implementing the SDGs and Convention targets and contributions. It is thus important that the GEF support and enhanced partnerships have the potential to help achieve the plans and targets, and continue to raise the level of ambition at the national and global scale in the GEF-7 period and beyond. Particularly, the GEF could further strengthen its partnership with countries to support policy cohesion, enhancing consistency of the national development agenda with global environmental targets, to mobilize domestic resources and stakeholders, and to pioneer innovative action on the ground.

Moreover, the GEF has a tremendous opportunity to expand its engagement with the private sector and other partners in GEF-7. For example, the GEF has helped major traders of soy and beef operating in Brazil and Paraguay (e.g., ADM, Bunge, and Cargill) meet their pledges under the New York Declaration on Forests by facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships. Further, the GEF can help governments strengthen enabling environments by de-risking investments and policies and by providing innovative financing and technical assistance. The Land Degradation Neutrality Fund (LDN Fund), the first global, private sector fund to implement SDG target 15.3, highlights how the GEF, in partnership with the private sector, can help mobilize resources and provide technical assistance to achieve LDN, which lies at the nexus of the SDGs and UNCCD goal. These examples, as well as lessons learned, are expected to inform future partnership opportunities and support needs in GEF-7.

