

January 2001

Good Practices: Country Coordination & GEF



Global Environment Facility
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, DC
20433 USA

tel: 1 (202) 473-0508
fax: 1 (202) 522-3240/3245
www.gefweb.org

Printed on recycled paper



UNESCO/Dominique Roger

The Global Environment is

*sunlight fresh air drinking water food
agriculture soil building & maintenance
pest control pollination disease resistant
crops grazing land fisheries flood barriers the
filtering of wastes solar power wind energy
geothermal power hydroelectric power cli-
mate regulation protection from the sun's
ultraviolet radiation erosion control water-
sheds shelter firewood building materials
medicines parks recreation tourism
spiritual renewal ethical values
wildlife the diversity of
species*

GEF's First Decade 1991-2001

Following a three-year pilot phase, the Global Environment Facility was formally launched in 1994 to forge cooperation and finance actions addressing four critical threats to the global environment: biodiversity loss, climate change, degradation of international waters, and ozone depletion.

During its first decade, GEF allocated \$3 billion, supplemented by \$8 billion in additional financing, for 700 projects in 150 developing nations and countries with economies in transition. The only new funding source to emerge from the Earth Summit, GEF today counts 162 countries as members.

GEF is the designated financial mechanism for international agreements on biodiversity, climate change, and persistent organic pollutants; GEF also supports the work of global agreements to combat desertification and protect international waters and the ozone layer.

GEF projects are executed by a wide range of public and private partners, and managed by the U.N. Development Programme, the U.N. Environment Programme, the World Bank, the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization, the U.N. Industrial Development Organization, the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the Inter-American Development Bank.

To explore partnership opportunities and for more information:

Hutton Archer
Senior External Relations Coordinator
GEF
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20433 USA
Tel: 202 473-0508/Fax: 202 522-3240
E-mail: harcher@worldbank.org
Internet: www.gefweb.org

Contents

- Summary 1
- China 9
- India 15
- Jordan 24
- Latvia 30
- Mauritius 35
- Mexico 45
- Peru 55
- Poland 60
- Senegal 66
- South Africa 71
- Vietnam 77
- List of Participants 82

Summary

In 1998, GEF's governing Council approved elements of a strategy to assist in the strengthening of country-level coordination with regard to GEF matters. One element of the strategy is the identification, study, and dissemination of good examples. To further this process, a workshop on Good Practices in Country-Level Coordination was held in Washington, D.C., on March 14 and 15, 2000.

The workshop sought to obtain information on experiences in country-level coordination and to facilitate an exchange of views among focal points from countries that have established effective mechanisms for coordinating GEF-related matters. As a result of the workshop, GEF hopes to identify useful themes and lessons to disseminate to other countries as models for their own efforts.

Representatives from China, India, Jordan, Latvia, Mauritius, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Senegal, South Africa, and Vietnam participated in the workshop. These countries were selected on the basis of information generated through the preparation of the Survey of GEF Political and Operational Focal Points, undertaken by Chemonics International in October 1998, and the Study of GEF's Overall Performance published prior to the first GEF Assembly in March 1998. In addition to country focal points, the workshop was attended by representatives of GEF implementing agencies, including field offices, and the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Participants considered three aspects of country-level coordination, involving preparation and implementation of GEF projects, the conventions, and national constituencies. They also considered cross-cutting issues. India, Jordan, South Africa, and Vietnam made presentations on project coordination; China, Latvia, Mauritius, and Senegal on convention coordination; and Mexico, Peru, and Poland on constituency coordination. This summary presents the main points made by the participants in the workshop.

National Coordination of GEF Projects

Successful preparation of projects is only feasible if coordination among governmental and non-governmental agencies, institutes, and the public is fully functional. Full stakeholder participation includes authorities at the regional and local levels as well as the private sector. In most cases, the operational focal point is the center for such coordina-

tion, with a close working relationship with the environment and other specialized and technical ministries. The coordination could be more effective if it is undertaken at both decision making and technical levels, as well as across different sectors. Dissemination of GEF procedures and other policy information, in particular on the principle of incremental costs, is needed to secure full understanding and participation of all stakeholders in the project development process.

National authorities at the highest level should support environmental policies and global issues as a matter of priority. Such attention increases awareness within the country of environmental problems and stresses the need to seek international cooperation in dealing with these issues. At the same time, awareness at the grassroots level and active local participation are needed to address environmental problems. GEF's Small Grants Program helps involve local communities.

Participants identified some key elements in improving coordination for project development purposes.

National GEF Focal Point Coordination Mechanism

Most participating countries have established a GEF focal point coordination mechanism at the national level, using existing agencies or creating a new mechanism to coordinate the preparation/implementation of GEF programs and projects. These focal points play a central role to coordinate GEF-related matters within the system. A number of focal points also seek opportunities provided by their agencies to integrate consideration of sector development policy and programs with GEF policies.

Institutional Continuity for GEF Focal Points

GEF activities need continuity at the national level. It is often difficult to ensure staff stability for national focal points. Lack of continuity could complicate communications between countries and GEF. It is important that GEF focal points ensure institutional continuity by keeping the GEF secretariat informed of any changes in focal point. It is also useful to strengthen the role and function of the focal point, including establishing a database and a documentation center. Participants noted that the personal commitment of the focal points plays a key role in national coordination.

Functions of the GEF Focal Points

Delineating the functions of national focal points is crucial for them in undertaking national coordination. Participants shared their experience as national GEF focal points. The role of the focal point is considered to be that of coordinator and facilitator, tasked with the challenge of marrying issues of national interest with issues of global importance. Another role is to eliminate system bottlenecks to ensure that maximum benefits are achieved. Focal points can also serve as a bridge between the GEF mandate and other national agencies' mandates. Such a role could be played at different levels by both operational and political focal points.

Information Dissemination

There is still a lack of knowledge about GEF among decision makers, technical experts, and the public at the national level. Also, the results of many GEF projects can often be understood only after a long period, as they focus on long-term benefits. To address these challenges, simple and summarized information on GEF activities needs to be dis-

seminated. This dissemination could be very effective in generating interest within those organizations that are not yet benefiting from the opportunities GEF offers.

It is useful for the implementing agencies to help disseminate GEF publications, including providing assistance for translation into local languages. Information about project development is particularly needed at the local level.

Generally speaking, the routine distribution of GEF information is very useful, especially on GEF-financed projects. However, the need to generate and disseminate “lessons learned” is of equal significance, since this will provide a means of facilitating an international learning process. GEF could consider more appropriate documentation of lessons learned.

High-Level Commitment

Although countries use different approaches to increase awareness of GEF-related activities, there is general agreement that high-level commitment is essential for success. For example, Jordan’s focal point has extended awareness activities to parliamentarian groups. In Peru, the coordination committee for GEF activities is at a very high level—i.e., above the governmental ministries. China, India, Mauritius, Mexico, and South Africa often use opportunities to draw the attention of high-level personnel to GEF-related matters.

Coordination at Many Levels

GEF projects generally involve different stakeholders, and this makes it necessary to coordinate at different levels. For instance, Jordan undertakes coordination at both decision maker and technical levels. Decision makers represented in the council for environment protection handle coordination at the decision maker level, while technical tasks are coordinated among technical staff in different institutions. India uses screening committees and outside experts to handle this coordination. South Africa has committees at the administrative, political, and technical levels, and the operational focal point coordinates them.

Linkages to NGOs

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are important partners in GEF activities. They serve both as a bridge between government and grassroots individuals and as technical experts. Vietnam’s focal point is closely following project activities undertaken by NGOs. This individual appreciates the cooperation with NGOs, including international NGOs. Cooperation creates an opportunity for local people to use international NGO expertise, which in turn can build and strengthen local capacity. By working with the GEF focal point, NGOs could assist Vietnam in addressing their national priorities more accurately. To ensure that this information was received and reviewed by all stakeholders, Peru’s focal point sponsored a workshop aimed at training participants in the process of preparing documentation for medium-sized projects. For the preparation of this workshop, the focal point requested technical assistance from the Fundación Ecológica Universal, an NGO from Argentina, in addition to the World Bank. The Jordanian focal point is taking part in the Small Grants Program committee as a way to link NGO’s activities directly to national GEF programs.

Grassroots Support

The role of civil society is of crucial importance in GEF program implementation in India. Civil society articulates the needs of local communities and through proximity to

grassroot realities is well qualified to bring to the fore the concerns of underprivileged groups. This capacity of civil society could complement government efforts to mobilize the participation of local communities, especially women in these communities, in GEF projects.

Country “Drivenness”

Country drivenness is essential in ensuring the sustainability of GEF projects. India believes that initial project ideas should come from national governments or NGOs. Mexico stresses the importance of national strategies—which derive from national initiatives rather than from the implementing agencies—and therefore reflect national priorities. Peru raised the issue of regional projects.

Consultation between implementing agencies and national participants is an important part of the country-driven process. A re-endorsement from national focal points is needed if there is a major change in the project. It is important to link GEF projects to national and regional priorities. For example, South Africa is linking GEF financing to its national priority, i.e., poverty alleviation of the people involved in projects. Jordan has GEF water and biodiversity projects on the border with Israel; the focal point thus deals with the neighboring country concerning shared habitats and waters, supporting the peace process in the Middle East.

Mainstreaming/Streamlining

To ensure national ownership and sustainability of GEF projects, the projects should be mainstreamed and thus be an integrated part of the development process. Often countries take better advantage of GEF options if they consider GEF projects as part of their development process. For example, South Africa does not see projects in isolation, but prepares an overall strategy in which the relationship between the environment and other policies is taken into account. This strategy puts the objectives first, then develops plans for the appropriate agencies.

India has been working with the implementing agencies to mainstream GEF components into the regular portfolio of those agencies. Other opportunities exist to mainstream GEF principles into the conceptual work of regional development banks like the Asian Development Bank as well as larger donors like the Japanese aid agency and the German development bank KfW—transforming GEF into a true marketplace of ideas, innovation, and implementation.

Subregional Coordination

Involvement of subregions is essential to affecting the environment in larger countries. Some of India’s 26 states are larger than many countries, and leading institutions are spread across these states. Well-entrenched democratic institutions exist at the grassroots level. The states play an important role in generating and implementing GEF projects. Thus the focus is on involving state governments in GEF projects. China has more than 30 provinces and autonomous regions. The country uses existing mechanisms to coordinate a national expert team from different provinces to initiate GEF project ideas, review concepts, and screen proposals. In this manner, GEF project activities have been spread over many provinces. Good examples of subregional coordination are also found in South Africa and Vietnam.

Regional Projects

Regional projects were deemed very important during the workshop. Mauritius considers them one way small countries can deal with GEF's complexity. Regional projects facilitate networking and develop capacity in participating countries. South Africa believes that regional projects enable countries from the Southern African Development and Environment Council to better address their common environmental challenges. GEF projects for the Southern African countries provide a framework for closer cooperation and larger impacts on behalf of this common environment.

Dealing With GEF Complexity

The complexity of GEF's procedures is a result of compromises reached by intergovernmental negotiations. In practice, countries have different ways of dealing with this complexity. For example, China and Mexico take advantage of their agencies, which are also charged to coordinate activities of the multilateral financing organizations and regional development banks. The extensive experience of the focal point with macro- and microeconomic issues, finance, and development trends has proved to be invaluable in GEF project identification and design.

Peru believes that the key to dealing with complexity is transparency of procedures. GEF's transparent procedures could help countries develop a trust in GEF and its implementing agencies. Therefore, countries can rely on the agencies to represent them in dealing with GEF procedures. This is similar to the situation where people trust and use banks but may not necessarily understand their internal operational procedures very well.

As mentioned above, India has established a screening system. Work has been divided between the operational and political focal points. At the same time, a checklist for GEF-related procedures is circulated to all ministries, departments, and other agencies that might be involved in project preparation. Based on this, a "global environment cell" has been put in place within the operational focal point to expedite the processing and development of GEF projects and facilitate coordination among key actors. This cell is empowered to call upon national and international technical experts, research institutions, and civil society in each of the focal areas, and to provide guidance to project proponents in their formulation, development, and implementation of GEF projects. This mechanism has helped a great deal in moving pipeline projects forward.

Mauritius leaves the responsibility of preparing projects to project proposers for they know better the issues involved and the manner in which they could be best tackled. This is particularly true in the case of complex projects that require a range of technical and scientific skills, which is difficult for a single organization to assemble without incurring high costs.

National Coordination of the Conventions

Effective coordination between GEF focal points and convention focal points in most countries does not always exist. Although in some countries the focal points are situated in the same ministry, it is not a given that regular contacts are maintained to exchange information and coordinate policies. In countries where a coordinating committee has been established in which all governmental stakeholders participate, the coordination between GEF and convention focal points is more effective and an exchange of information between the focal points can take place in partnership with other governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

Coordination between GEF and convention focal points is also useful to inform the technical experts involved in project development of information related to the conventions. At the same time, information about GEF policies and programs can be made available to convention focal points to assist them in reviewing GEF performance under the conventions.

Coordination at the national level can improve over time if a national sustainable development plan lays out the priorities against which an integrated environmental policy plan can be developed. Such a plan would improve the consistency of policies directed at GEF as well as at the conventions.

Coordination between GEF and convention focal points can be strengthened if contact between the GEF Council member and other constituency members takes place on a regular basis.

Specific issues for national coordination concerning conventions are discussed below.

Coordination Between GEF and Convention Focal Points

Countries have different practices to link the GEF focal point with convention focal points. Latvia has one person in the Ministry of Environment to serve as the focal point for both GEF and the conventions. Vietnam created the GEF-Vietnam Committee as the national focal point to coordinate activities related to the preparation and implementation of GEF projects. GEF-Vietnam has the authority to coordinate activities of environmental protection related to GEF, including coordination with convention focal points. Senegal has created one national committee for each convention. The GEF focal point is part of these committees; therefore, coordination between GEF and convention focal points is not a problem.

Poland has a comprehensive mechanism for the UNFCCC. A convention secretariat was established to assist the Ministry of Environment, with an UNFCCC steering panel advising the Environment minister on convention-related issues. The ministry has created a center to inventory greenhouse gas emissions. A Committee on Regional Policy and Sustainable Development of the Council of Ministers is used for coordination at a higher level. There is also an Executive Bureau for the UNFCCC located in the National Fund for Environmental Protection. The bureau's tasks include daily cooperation with the secretariat and coordination of national communications. The bureau has a Joint Implementation secretariat to disseminate information on the possibility of joint implementation projects in Poland. The GEF political and operational focal points are actively involved in the coordination process.

Coordination between GEF and convention focal points is sometimes aimed at reaching a consensus at the national level. Most countries have a hierarchy among different focal points in case consensus seems impossible; Mexico stresses informal consultation with convention focal points to create a level of comfort for both GEF and convention focal points. All participants believe that regular information from GEF is highly useful for the GEF focal point in coordinating with convention focal points.

National and International Priorities

One important issue regarding coordination between GEF and the conventions is agreement on national priorities at the country level. This agreement should enable the Conference of the Parties to reflect national priorities in convention guidance. In several participating countries, foreign ministries are responsible for convention matters while environmental or financial ministries handle GEF-related issues. Different ministries may have

different perspectives on national priorities. It is useful to keep national policy consistent at different international fora, participants agreed. China's GEF focal point believes that paying more attention to coordination with the convention focal points and regular sharing of GEF information with convention counterparts would facilitate national priority consensus building. India uses its screening process for national priority determination. Peru is using its integrated mechanism for GEF, the conventions, social development, and Commission on Sustainable Development matters to coordinate national priorities.

Synergy Among Conventions

Many countries have long wished to take better advantage of the synergy between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UNFCCC to develop a comprehensive approach to environmental and developmental challenges. (Mexico and China, among others, use this synergy to design GEF projects.) This approach is a necessary tool to provide incentives for natural resource conservation and control of pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, yielding multiple domestic and global benefits. The approach also enables countries to deal with cross-cutting issues, such as capacity building, technology transfer, and financing for sustainable development. GEF Operational Program 12, Integrated Ecosystem Management, will further facilitate opportunities to benefit from synergy among the different conventions.

In this context, Mauritius stressed the importance of timely advice from technical experts.

National Coordination of GEF Council Matters

Constituency issues received special attention during the workshop, given the number of problems existing in different constituencies. Peru presented its experience coordinating the constituency that also encompasses Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

Peru's success in its coordination efforts has four aspects. The first is a predetermined mechanism, which includes a memorandum of understanding, procedures for meetings, and regular communication. This system reduces and eliminates uncertainties often encountered in informal and intergovernmental coordination. The second is a default system, i.e., in case of non-observation by focal point, the relevant country's embassy will be alerted and used as a default mechanism. The third is a carefully designed rotation system of the Council member and alternate seats among constituency members. The fourth is a meeting before each Council meeting to ensure that the constituency's representation is fully informed and effective.

Participants stressed the necessity for constituency members to meet prior to GEF Council meetings. One of the purposes is to reflect regional concerns in Council meetings. Participants also believed that views reflected at convention and Council meetings should be the same. Constituency meetings should help make this happen. Several participants spoke of difficulties encountered in communicating with focal points of other constituency member countries to set up a constituency coordination framework. Some participants requested assistance from the GEF secretariat in this regard.

Recommendations for Improving National Coordination

In addition to specific instances of good practice by individual countries, participants identified the following characteristics of good practice for country-level coordination:

- Coordination on GEF matters is more effective when it is anchored in an overall national strategy for handling sustainable development issues at the governmental level. Many countries have coordination mechanisms for the conventions that are closely aligned with their GEF coordination processes. Some countries use synergy of the conventions as an opportunity and tool to maximize the environmental and economic benefits of GEF programs.
- The countries have established modes of operation for coordination, including project review/submission, that tend to be standardized, relatively transparent, and fairly inclusive. This practice is based mainly on a clear understanding of the importance of GEF and their focal points. Key functions for the GEF focal point include coordinating national GEF program/project planning and program/project preparation/implementation; facilitating participation of other national stakeholders; coordinating with convention focal points; communicating government views to the GEF secretariat; liaising with the Council member/alternate of its constituency for Council matters; and disseminating GEF information at the national level and convention forum.
- Based on their practices, truly country-driven coordination is apparent. There is a strong national commitment to coordination on GEF matters—coordination not just for the sake of coordination, but toward a reasonably well-defined purpose. The countries took these steps without waiting for GEF focal point assistance because they clearly recognized the advantages of organizing themselves. Some participants consider national coordination to be an outstanding opportunity to ensure country ownership of GEF projects, facilitate project sustainability, and strengthen the capacity of different national institutions in the GEF focal areas.
- The effectiveness of coordination efforts demonstrates that awareness raising and information sharing by focal points are as important as bureaucratic procedures and committees. This is particularly important in gaining high-level and cross-sectoral commitment. Many countries' experience is that regular communication with GEF will significantly facilitate national coordination.
- Many countries have established processes that enable the coordination structure to draw on national expertise—often outside the government—for advice and technical support.
- Good coordination among the same constituency countries requires an agreed-upon mechanism. Rotation among constituency members for Council member/alternate seats is vital to nurture and sustain the mechanism once it is set up. Peru's experience shows that it is possible to manage constituency coordination without creating bureaucracy. Constituency member countries will benefit from a regular exchange of information.
- GEF and its implementing agencies are taking new measures to further facilitate direct communications with countries. The recently initiated measures include country dialogue workshops, a capacity development initiative, focal point and constituency support, and further improvement of GEF electronic communications with countries. Participants requested that the GEF secretariat use the outcomes of this workshop to further facilitate direct communication with countries and thus strengthen national coordination for GEF-related matters.

China

National GEF Focal Point

China's GEF political and operational focal point is located in the Ministry of Finance (MOF). The director-general of the ministry's International Department usually takes the position of political focal point, while a department director who is in charge of environment policy and programs takes the operational role.

As part of the government, MOF oversees issues related to fiscal revenues and expenditures, fiscal policies, and management of state-owned equity. Its main responsibilities include:

- Formulating and implementing strategies, policies, and medium- to long-term development and reform programs in the area of public finance and taxation
- Participating in macroeconomic policymaking
- Providing policy advice on macroeconomic regulation with fiscal instruments
- Formulating and implementing policies regarding income distribution between the central and local governments and the state and enterprises.

The ministry also initiates and implements policies, rules, and regulations of the central government's domestic and foreign borrowing, and prepares plans for government bond issues. It administers external negotiations/consultations on loans with the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and bilateral agencies; it also represents China in international financial organizations.

MOF is the government counterpart of the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and bilateral donor agencies. Its cross-sectoral responsibility includes domestic fiscal policy and resource allocation, as well as international financial cooperation, in the area of environmental protection.

MOF is also responsible for replenishing contributions to GEF and other agencies. Its executive director to the World Bank is a GEF Council member who participates in Council meetings and exercises his role as a member of the Council. Highly effective two-way communication ensures that the focal point can monitor progress regarding GEF, the implementing agencies, and other related issues.

The primary role of the national focal point is to coordinate all GEF activities in the country—particularly to organize programs and projects; facilitate initiation of project concepts in accordance with the national development plan and sector priorities; issue endorsements; provide outreach to the GEF secretariat and implementing agencies, Council member and alternate; pursue convention-related activities; etc.

As part of daily coordinating activities, the focal point focuses on communication with line ministries, local government, and some environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The ministry offers certain institutional advantages for the focal point, ballancing GEF and implementing agency programs: it has the most updated information about the national development plan and priority programs; and about GEF policy changes, new operational programs (OPs), and other related issues.

On the other hand, because this is not a full-time position, the person serving as focal point must handle other assignments. At the moment, he is in charge of various World Bank and Asian Development Bank agriculture, water resources management, poverty reduction, and social development programs and projects. Even though the workload is heavy, it provides him an opportunity to integrate the considerations of these sector development policies and programs with those of the implementing agencies and GEF. Consequently, he is better able to coordinate GEF activities both within and outside the country.

Within the ministry there is a position especially tasked with helping the operational focal point deal on a daily basis with different agencies concerning GEF operational issues, enabling the focal point to manage policy issues and coordinating activities. Given the cross-sectoral nature of GEF operations in China, coordination is one of the most important parts of the job. The focal point must pay attention to the various mandates of the different line ministries and try to compromise regarding any conflicts that arise. At times, the focal point must also coordinate working relations with the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Other Agencies Involved With GEF

The State Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is in charge of environmental protection on behalf of the government. It is responsible for making policy and monitoring environmental conditions around the country. This agency is involved in almost all international environmental cooperation efforts; notably, it is the lead agency in the coordination group for implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Within SEPA, the Foreign Economic Cooperation Office handles communications with international organizations and bilateral donors. As part of SEPA, this office may provide assistance to the line ministries and local governments in preparing environmental projects. A GEF division has been established in this office to provide policy and technical support to the GEF focal point. The office has studied the progress of GEF policy and OPs.

The State Economic and Trade Commission (SETC) is in charge of facilitating technical innovation and commercialization efforts for the corporate community, particularly state-owned enterprises. It formulates policies and regulations to provide guidance to local governments and enterprises. It specifically develops energy conservation technologies and commercializes renewable energy. SETC is organizing several GEF projects, including an energy conservation project and a renewable energy project.

The State Development and Planning Commission (SDPC) is responsible for formulating a national economic and social development strategy, comprising a long- and mid-term development plan and program. In this capacity, SDPC is in charge of an energy

development plan and program. It also has the authority to approve national development programs and projects. SDPC is now preparing a Partnership Renewable Energy Program, coordinated by MOF and assisted by the World Bank. The agency also functions as the secretariat of the National Climate Change Convention.

Other related line ministries include the Ministry of Water Resources, State Forestry Administration, and Ministry of Technology. Those ministries play a role in GEF in accordance with their mandates. Some NGOs in the country, such as Global Village and Beijing Environment and Economic Institutes, are also active participants in GEF initiatives. These NGOs are instrumental in promoting environmental awareness and facilitating international environmental coordination with foreign institutions.

National Coordination of GEF Projects

To process GEF projects, the focal point reviews the proposal, and the sponsoring agency clarifies the rationale for using GEF funds, if necessary; it should also send a formal letter of request to MOF. The focal point then sends the proposals to SEPA for its review. Once SEPA approves the proposal, the focal point sends an endorsement letter to the implementing agency and relays this to the GEF secretariat along with the proposal.

A national technical resource group was established to assist the focal point in screening projects from a technical perspective. This resource group covers various areas of expertise and is particularly strong in the climate change area, where the experts have had much exposure to the most updated information in the international community in this regard. Normally, these specialists can provide some useful input to the formulation of GEF projects.

National coordination/review of GEF projects has evolved through three stages. In the first stage, at the startup of GEF, the focal point knew little about this new instrument, so the implementing agencies helped recipients make proposals and the focal point assessed these proposals to ensure that they were in line with national development programs. In other words, the role of the implementing agencies was more active than now. By the second stage, the focal point had more knowledge of GEF, policies and procedures were in place, and the focal point was becoming more involved in the promotion of programs and projects. For a variety of reasons, however, these programs and projects were somewhat restricted. At the third stage, the focal point now takes a proactive role with regard to preparing program and project concepts.

Disseminate GEF-related Information

GEF information is disseminated through several mechanisms.

- GEF workshops. We initiated several GEF workshops with large audiences from the line ministries and NGOs in attendance. We invited experts from the World Bank, UNDP, and the GEF secretariat to make presentations at these workshops, in order to disseminate knowledge of GEF policy and procedures and provide updates on the latest GEF developments. The workshops also afforded an opportunity to hear about project concepts as well as new ideas to build up and strengthen the GEF pipeline. This sort of workshop greatly enhanced communication among domestic stakeholders as well as among implementing agencies and the GEF secretariat. The most important outcome was that the various stakeholders obtained a deeper understanding of GEF and of the Chinese situation. This established a basis for future GEF involvement in the country.

- Regular meetings with line ministries. Usually, we use the mechanism of regular meetings attended by the key GEF players in the country to mobilize GEF projects and build up the pipeline. These meetings also provide insight into understanding domestic priorities regarding the environment and economic development.
- GEF document translation. We have arranged for the translation of several GEF documents from English into Chinese in order to give more people access to GEF knowledge.

The Challenges of Coordination at the National Level

We are facing many challenges in our national coordination activities. Because every participant in GEF activities is acting on a part-time basis, there are many obstacles to further mainstreaming GEF into their normal business. Everyone acknowledges the importance of GEF, but the time available to devote to its business is far from sufficient. Further efforts should be made to promote GEF as normal business just as some operations of implementing agencies.

Weak institutional capacity is one of the greatest barriers to strengthening GEF operations. This includes the fact that individuals within line ministries and local governments are not familiar with GEF policies and procedures. The workshop we launched to disseminate the GEF “ABCs” was apparently insufficient, and further capacity building in this regard is needed. We are planning to apply to GEF to strengthen this capacity so that GEF programs can be further improved.

Support agencies and resource groups are relatively knowledgeable about GEF. The critical issue regarding mobilizing these individuals is how to get financing, particularly during the initial stage of program and project conceptualization. Because of the limited resources that have been allocated to daily operations, it is relatively difficult for the GEF focal point to mobilize these entities in an efficient manner. In this connection, we have already requested various resources to finance GEF-related activities.

An innovative and efficient programmatic approach is vital to achieving cost-effective GEF operations. We recognize that a fragmented and piecemeal approach cannot achieve systematic effects, which are crucial in achieving GEF project objectives. Therefore, it is necessary to shift more focus on the programmatic approach, as the co-chair at the last GEF Council meeting pointed out. This will also enable achievement of multiple objectives rather than of a single objective in terms of global environmental benefits. In addition, greater resources can be attracted and concentrated in protecting the global environment in an orderly manner or a variety of resources can be mobilized for maximum efficiency to realize the objectives established by the specific programs.

The challenge here is how to formulate the program and get recognition from GEF that the program is qualified to be financed. This, in turn, can increase the confidence of the recipient and international communities to participate in our common endeavor to overcome the barriers to global environmental protection.

The national GEF focal point is central to this program formulation, because this task requires great coordination of both domestic and international activities. The quality of this coordination determines, to some extent, the success or failure of program formulation. The other issue for the focal point is how to establish a program that can be accepted by the implementing agencies and GEF.

Communication With the GEF

Generally speaking, the focal point has very good communications with GEF. Our Council member and alternate are the executive director and alternate in the World Bank, and they relay all information in a very timely manner. In addition, we have frequent contact with the implementing agencies and the GEF secretariat.

National Coordination of the Conventions

National coordination with regard to the conventions is somewhat complicated and usually difficult. Unlike international financial organizations, international conventions try to satisfy every participant. Given their nature, national coordination is not an easy job.

Main Actors

- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). SEPA is the main agency in the coordination and leadership of issues regarding CBD implementation and related matters. The CBD secretariat is located within SEPA. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the key agency involved in convention implementation. Other related line ministries include MOF, the Ministry of Agriculture, State Forestry Administration, Ministry of Technology, and Academy of Science.
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. There is a Climate Change Convention National Group within the secretariat in SDPC. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs leads the group and coordinates all policy decisions under the convention. Group members include MOF, the Ministry of Technology, SEPA, SETC, State Meteorology Administration, State Electricity Administration, Ministry of Agriculture, and State Forestry Administration.
- Convention to Combat Desertification. The State Forestry Administration is the lead agency; other participants include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, SEPA, and Ministry of Agriculture.

Process of Coordination

The general practice here is to coordinate a position before convention or working group meetings; the lead agency organizes these coordinating meetings. MOF is involved in meetings at which it promotes GEF and explains to the lead agencies and line ministries relevant updated information about GEF.

Experiences and Challenges

In cases of good coordination with a convention lead agency, agency representatives help promote GEF at their convention or working group meetings. On many occasions, MOF representatives explained GEF's effective involvement and convinced other agencies that GEF can help countries develop while protecting the global environment.

The main challenge has been that the various agencies have different perspectives and different levels of knowledge about GEF. As these agencies continue to have more program involvement with GEF, it will have a more positive impact on the country development process, enhance country-driven concepts, and further combine the national development program with global environment protection in a sustainable manner.

National Coordination of GEF Council Matters

The World Bank Chinese executive director also assumes the role of GEF Council member. This official attends Council meetings on behalf of the government and takes care of Council-related issues including reviewing the work program, policy and operational programs, and other policy issues. Usually, before Council meetings, when the documents from the secretariat are available, MOF and SEPA organize a group of people to analyze the documents; they then provide any comments to the Council member. MOF and SEPA also send representatives to participate in Council meetings so as to stay current with progress on GEF policies.

After GEF Council meetings, the Council member sends a message to MOF regarding the meeting's content and scope. MOF and SEPA relay the message to the line ministries and request them to take action if necessary.

Recommendations for Improving National Coordination

- Combine national development program and global environment benefits. All participants recognize that a program or project that strikes a good balance between national development objectives and global environmental benefits will ensure realization of both domestic and global benefits in a sustainable way. The challenge is how to integrate these two elements into programs. Even though this combination is actually the basic requirement of GEF, we still have much to improve in this regard and it is well to explore best practice.
- Strengthen communication. To further improve the national coordination process, communication among the focal points, secretariat, and implementing agencies should be strengthened. Especially when there are GEF policy and procedure changes, focal points should be informed in a timely manner. For example, during the nurturing period of new operational programs, there could be more productive comments from academia in the recipient countries. The same is true for other policy discussions. Implementing agencies have some room for improving communication with the focal points, and the GEF secretariat could take a proactive approach to communicating with focal points to ensure a work program of the highest quality.
- Enhance the programming process. Current wisdom is to approach projects from a systematic perspective. This is a new approach and requires guidance from GEF and its affiliates. In this connection, “country-drivenness” must first be established. Once country capacity is in place, GEF should encourage the country to initiate programs, assisted by the implementing agencies, that are genuinely “owned” by the countries; this will ensure their sustainability.
- Assist in capacity building. Capacity building in the recipient countries is an ongoing task. Of course, this work has to be performed by all stakeholders.
- Delineate the role of focal points. It is important to further delineate the role of focal points from GEF's perspective so that they can better coordinate all stakeholders in the country and help both GEF and the country resolve emerging GEF issues.

India

National GEF Focal Point

The Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) in the Ministry of Finance is the political focal point for matters relating to GEF. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for administering the finances of India's central government. It is concerned with all economic and financial matters affecting the country as a whole, including mobilization of resources for development. It regulates the expenditures of the central government, including transfer of resources to the states.

The DEA is the nodal department in the government of India for external assistance received from multilateral/bilateral agencies. It is the government counterpart to agencies such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and bilateral development cooperation agencies. It formulates policies relating to overseas development assistance and external borrowings and is the nodal point for almost all financial mechanisms. It is involved in externally aided projects right from the stage of project identification to the final stage of utilizing assistance—this includes negotiating aid packages leading to the signing of agreements. The DEA is also responsible for making replenishments to various trust funds, including the GEF trust fund. For GEF activities, the DEA, as political focal point, decides on all policy issues in consultation with the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF).

The MOEF has been designated the operational focal point for GEF projects. The MOEF is the point agency in the central government for formulating environmental policies and is responsible for planning, promotion, and coordination of programs in the environmental sector. All projects in this sector, including those generated at the state level proposed to external donors, are technically evaluated in the MOEF. It also functions as the nodal agency for participation in international agreements relating to the environment. The MOEF has a staff of professionally qualified personnel.

The other actors involved in GEF project preparation and implementation are project entities that could include state governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), financial institutions, line ministries in the central government, implementing agencies, and the GEF secretariat.

Role of States

India is a country of vast land mass and a huge population with a well-informed, talented, and skilled human resource base. The country has 26 states, some of which are larger than many countries: the largest Indian state, Madhya Pradesh, has an area of 443,446 square kilometers. Premier institutions are spread across these states. Well-entrenched democratic institutions exist at the grassroots level. The states play an important role in generating and implementing projects; thus the focus is on involving state governments in GEF projects.

Role of Civil Society

Civil society is of crucial importance in program implementation. It articulates the needs of local communities and, through proximity to grassroots-level realities, is well qualified to bring to the fore the concerns and susceptibilities of underprivileged groups. Civil society could complement government efforts in mobilizing the participation of local communities—especially the participation of women in GEF projects. India has very competent NGOs in the environmental sector. This is one reason why the GEF Small Grants Program is very effective and is doing very well.

For a better understanding of the role of the respective agencies, we need to focus on procedures, issues that pose a challenge to the generation of good proposals, and project implementation.

National Coordination of GEF Projects

Project Approval Process

When a project concept is received in the MOEF, it is examined for its relevance to national priorities. Other line ministries concerned with the subject matter are also consulted. Next, the likely implementing agency is decided on the basis of the size and kind of proposal, and the capacity and expertise of the implementing agency. The proposal is then modified to address all considerations in consultation with the project entities and other actors involved. Subsequently, the proposal is recommended and sent to the DEA for consideration, since DEA is the agency responsible for endorsing proposals to the GEF secretariat.

Project Preparation Best Practices

It is evident from the above that almost all stakeholders are actively involved in project preparation and development. Further improvements in the system could perhaps be considered for developing strategies for participation of stakeholders/beneficiaries. However, we would need to ensure that the views projected by groups representing beneficiaries truly reflect beneficiary concerns and are not the views of representatives of groups with vested interests.

Other practices followed to ensure preparation of good projects are:

- Checklist regarding GEF-related procedures. A checklist for GEF-related procedures is circulated to all ministries/departments and other agencies that might be involved in project preparation.
- Creation of a GEF cell. The government of India, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/India, has put a system in place that could serve as a model for replication elsewhere. Under the subprogram on capacity build-

ing, a Global Environment Cell has been established within the MOEF to expedite the processing and development of GEF projects and facilitate coordination among key actors. This cell comprises officials and experts drawn from each of the subject matter divisions, namely: climate change, biodiversity, international waters, and forestry. This cell is empowered to call upon the advice of national and international technical experts, research institutions, and civil society in each of the focal areas, as and when required, and can provide guidance to the project proponents in the formulation, development, and implementation of GEF projects. Although only in operation for the last six months, this mechanism has helped a great deal in moving pipeline projects forward. Further, this cell is also focusing on capacity building of nodal ministries, cooperating institutions, and civil society besides disseminating information to key stakeholders, including local communities.

- Gender mainstreaming in GEF projects. “Engendering” GEF means incorporating appropriate gender sensitivity measures in its policies, programs, and actions. The government of India and UNDP/India have prepared a strategy paper for gender mainstreaming in GEF projects. The strategy envisages reaching out to the local communities, especially women, and building capacity to enable and empower women to participate in all decisions and actions beginning at the development stage and through to the implementation phase of the GEF project cycle.

Streamlining Procedures

It is believed that the GEF cycle procedures are complex, tedious, and time-consuming. Therefore, any delay in the Project Development Facility (PDF) phase would inevitably extend the time frame by which the full project would come up for approval by the GEF Council.

Suggestions made by the Indian government to the GEF secretariat for further streamlining the GEF project cycle are:

- Delegate authority for approval of PDF-A proposals to a national selection committee and of PDF-B proposals to the implementing agencies
- Establish regional scientific and technical advisory panels (STAPs) to streamline the technical review of projects.

The GEF secretariat may be open to the idea of further streamlining and simplifying procedures in order to reduce the time required for project preparation and approval. Perhaps this could be done in select countries as a test case in stages.

Incremental Costs

Calculation of incremental costs is consultant-driven and consequently fails to take into account the broader considerations of national policies, program strategies, and institutional capacities. Further simplification of incremental cost calculation procedures will lead to greater participation of beneficiary groups, thereby making a project more sustainable. Thus, aspects of transparency and their applicability require further attention. There is also a need to involve more experts from national governments in the process of calculating incremental costs as local considerations and compulsions are often difficult for an outside consultant to discern.

In most cases, incremental costs work out to approximately 25 percent of the total cost. The remaining cost must be borne either by the host countries themselves or through co-financing by lending institutions such as the World Bank or bilateral donors. Although the responsibility of identifying co-financing lies with national governments, a definite mechanism for ensuring the direct involvement of the lending or donor agencies needs to be worked out by GEF.

Estimating the incremental costs of climate change-related investment projects is perhaps far easier than for biodiversity or land degradation projects, since it is possible to calculate incremental costs in terms of an alternative technology cost. However, for biodiversity projects, it is difficult to draw a clear line demarcating global benefits from national or local benefits. Of growing concern is the question of whether GEF can truly be effective in addressing just the direct factors in the degradation of the world's environment. India has been arguing that, in such cases, the entire cost of the project should be treated as incremental rather than make an artificial distinction.

The Implementing Agencies

At present, just three agencies—the UNDP, the World Bank, and UNEP—are eligible to implement GEF projects. Others, including research organizations/institutions and NGOs, are able to serve only as executors of project components.

The GEF project portfolio in India is varied and diverse. The selection of implementing agency greatly depends on the size and kind of project, taking into account the expertise of the implementing agency. All the implementing agencies have played a useful role, depending on their expertise. UNDP, for example, has been useful in providing expertise for developing projects. However, to increase the portfolio of GEF projects, more active involvement by larger donors such as the World Bank and agencies such as OECF, ADB, and KfW is envisaged. As indicated earlier, although the responsibility of identifying co-financing lies with national governments, the GEF secretariat could play a useful role in coordinating information relating to the pipeline of projects identified by other, larger donors.

It is encouraging to note that, apart from an overall strategy already prepared by UNDP for strengthening the GEF pipeline for India, the World Bank is also considering formulating country-specific strategies for large developing countries including India. The general thrust of these country-specific strategies is to minimize environmental damage by aligning the Bank's commitments to India's national priorities by harnessing the role of the market and the private sector to promote sustainable environmental management and investment. The Bank would also emphasize cost-effectiveness with both short- and long-term benefits. However, the Bank's involvement in the environmental sector in India needs to be strengthened.

The government of India, the World Bank, UNDP, and GEF have been working toward mainstreaming GEF components into the regular portfolio of the implementing agencies. A World Bank project that includes a GEF component is the Eco Development project. Some specific instances of mainstreaming GEF into UNDP programs are the Coal Bed Methane project, where US\$1.2 million has been provided under UNDP/India's Environment Program for community participation; the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve project, where \$1 million has been provided from UNDP/India's Community-Based Pro-Poor Initiatives Program; and the GEF Small Grants Program, where \$700,000 has been provided by UNDP/India's Environment Program for community participation. Full GEF projects with linkages to UNDP/India's subprograms have been developed in the fields of medici-

nal plants, wetlands, wildlife protected areas, and turtle conservation.

To increase the GEF portfolio, efforts need to be strengthened not only to mainstream “GEFable” components at the conceptual stage in the programs of implementing agencies but also in the programs of other regional development banks such as ADB and larger donors such as OECF and KfW. The Combined Cycle Solar Power Project assisted by KfW has a GEF component. Thus expanding the implementing agencies’ monopoly could transform GEF into a true marketplace of ideas, innovation, and implementation.

Information Dissemination

A number of seminars and discussions have been held in consultation with professional agencies to disseminate information to different stakeholders. UNDP has recently been designated as the agency for disseminating information in India. In the near future, UNDP, in collaboration with the MOEF and DEA, proposes to conduct workshops in four different regions of the country and one workshop at the national level. The aim is to promote awareness regarding GEF project cycle procedures, incremental costs, logical framework analysis, and the GEF operations strategy.

Distribution of timely and relevant information on GEF-financed projects has been useful. However, the need to generate and disseminate lessons learned is of equal importance, since they provide a means of facilitating an international learning process. GEF could perhaps consider proper documentation of lessons learned.

The dissemination of good practices for incremental cost analysis by GEF in order to share direct feedback from countries and responsible agencies is encouraging. It would also be useful if the implementing agencies as well as the recipient countries were to be given a sample of the “simpler” and “full” methods of analysis.

Project Monitoring

Periodic reports are sent by project entities. Implementing agencies also send periodic reports on each project every quarter to the GEF secretariat.

To ensure due diligence, a steering committee is established in the relevant line ministry for every project chaired at the highest level. Other members of the committee include representatives of the GEF focal points; the implementing agencies and other stakeholders are also involved. The steering committee looks into the work program and annual budget, and monitors project progress. The program is also periodically monitored by the focal points.

GEF projects are monitored by national focal points through interministerial meetings and reports. When and as issues are flagged, they are handled through a consultative process.

National Coordination of the Conventions

With an aim toward achieving the goal of environmental protection, India has signed international agreements including the Convention on Biological Diversity, 1994; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), 1994; the Montreal Protocol of the Vienna Convention on Ozone Layer Depleting Substances, 1992; the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, 1971; and the Convention to Combat Desertification, 1994. Most of these conventions address cross-sectoral issues. Since the MOEF is also the operational point for GEF, focusing synergistic links between the conventions and GEF becomes easier. Moreover, since many issues are also cross-sectoral,

the MOEF consults a number of ministries and departments including the Ministry of External Affairs, DEA, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources, and Ministry of Coal before finalizing its position at the Conference of the Parties or working group meetings. Besides the government, professional agencies, experts, NGOs, and other institutions are also consulted. Thus, all stakeholders are involved to form a holistic view.

The UNFCCC sets out specific commitments for the developed countries to reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs) to their 1990 level by the year 2000. The obligations of the developing countries are general, and there is no commitment on their part to reduce GHG emissions.

Following the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, the Convention to Combat Desertification to address land degradation problems was adopted in June 1994. However, since land degradation problems are very severe in several developing countries and are expected to be a major issue in terms of land productivity and human living conditions, they must receive the priority and attention they deserve. GEF assistance is possible for land degradation projects insofar as they are linked to the GEF focal areas. To date, there are no operational programs in this focal area. GEF must give due attention and include land degradation as a separate focal area for financial assistance. The MOEF, as the national coordinating body for the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, is in the process of circulating GEF guidelines and information for seeking GEF assistance to the major research and development institutions involved in land-related programs.

National Coordination of GEF Council Matters

India's executive director to the World Bank, a post that falls under the administrative charge of the DEA, is the GEF Council member for the constituency that includes Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and India. The alternate Council member is from Bangladesh. Representatives of the DEA and MOEF normally assist the Council member at GEF Council meetings.

At the national level, the DEA coordinates the position to be taken at Council meetings in consultation with the MOEF. The MOEF in turn consults with the other actors and stakeholders involved. Most of the issues raised earlier, such as the streamlining of procedures, increased involvement of regional experts on the STAP roster, etc., are important topics that have raised by India at GEF Council meetings.

At the regional level, more coordination is required so as to take into consideration the concerns of the constituency. Besides sharing information and increasing interaction among members of the constituency, it is suggested that formal independent meetings for various constituencies could perhaps be organized by GEF a day prior to Council meetings.

Checklist for GEF Project Cycle Stages

GEF projects are country-driven. From the time a project concept is first considered through approval of the project document, a GEF-assisted project goes through several stages of reviews and endorsements by the subject-matter ministries/divisions. Clear guidelines for review at each of these stages are therefore essential. Detailed parameters for reviews are discussed below.

Stage 1:

Review and Recommendation of Project Concept (Application for PDF A, B, and C)

A good project idea is an essential prerequisite for a quality project. Certain basic questions pertaining to the project must therefore be answered carefully at this stage.

- Does the overall project fit into the operational program parameters set by the GEF for project funding? Is it eligible for GEF funding?
- Is the project idea in accordance with the policies of the government of India and with our national priorities, strategies, and action plans?
- Is a similar project under implementation or in the pipeline that overlaps the present project or from which linkages can be drawn for further synergy? For example, do any linkages exist with:
 - Country/sector programs, national strategies/action plans
 - Country program framework of implementing agencies, i.e., the World Bank, UNDP, or UNEP
 - Any ongoing GEF project in other focal areas
 - Other programs and action plans at region/subregional levels.
- Does the project address problems that have been considered? Has the identified approach been thoroughly dissected? In case a completely different approach as compared to the earlier position has been adopted, is it feasible, and will the project be able to provide the correct solution in the most cost-effective way?
- Has a decision been made regarding which organization should be the implementing agency—the World Bank, UNDP, or UNEP—and why?
- With particular reference to biodiversity projects, does the project take a holistic ecosystem-based conservation approach? (A component-by-component preservation approach at the within-species or species and ecosystem levels is not GEF's goal.)
- How have the project proponents made arrangements for GEF project preparation and execution through multilateral development banks, specialized agencies and programs of the United Nations, other international organizations, bilateral development agencies, national institutions, NGOs, private sector entities, and academic institutions? Their relative advantages and strengths in efficient and cost-effective project execution must be carefully considered.
- The resource institute for the project should be identified with care, and the possibility of engaging more than one institute in case of innovative approaches considered. This latter option would strengthen effectiveness at the country level, leading to an efficient division of labor that maximizes synergy.
- Are there any major loopholes in the proposed project with particular reference to the principles of universality, democracy, transparency, cost-effectiveness, or accountability?
- Will the project be sustainable in the long term? How?
- A major drawback in implementation so far has been the lack of control over the decision to recruit consultants. GEF is a consultant-driven organization.

- Does the proposal envisage hiring international consultants for the project? Should national capacity be promoted in case the requisite expertise exists within the country? The budgetary ramifications of these issues should be understood carefully.

Stage 2:

Preparation and Recommendation of Project Brief for Work Program

- Has the participation of all stakeholders been ensured?
- Does the ministry/division fully agree with the methodology?
- The project brief contains only preliminary estimates of the incremental costs. It has been observed that the amount quoted as a baseline in seeking GEF assistance is often unsubstantiated and differs wildly from realistic positions. It is essential to have an accurate baseline figure so that correct assessment of the incremental costs can be arrived at. The following would give a realistic indication:
 - Application of methodology
 - Reasonableness of estimates and assumptions for baselines and projects
 - Experience from comparable cases
 - Determination as to whether any other investments have been made that might add to total incremental costs.
- Details of project co-financing are of the utmost importance. Where feasible, GEF would normally complement other sources of finance. These could be World Bank loans, International Development Association credits, UNDP technical assistance grants, bilateral finance, and private sector collaboration. The brief should include the names of bilateral organizations, ministries of the Indian government, etc., that would work in collaboration with and contribute toward the implementation costs. Such financial commitments should be projected in the annual budget at the appropriate stages.
- Are any details required for more effective functioning of the implementing agency?
- GEF projects must ensure broad participation of the affected parties. It is important that the project have the ability to sensitize and create awareness among stakeholders and the community regarding project effects; for example, in rural sectors, discussions with the grassroots organization Gram Panchayat is essential. Has the project proposal recorded the consultations that have been undertaken with major groups and local communities during the preparation of the project?
- The Terms of Reference for the consultant should be worked out carefully. Has a thorough review of the consultant's contributions to the project been provided? Is the contribution sufficient, or will further work need to be done?

Stage 3:

Preparation of Final Draft Project Document

Once the project brief is approved, the proponent, in consultation with the line ministry, refines the proposal into a full project document. This last stage requires working out the implementation arrangements and detailed budgetary calculations.

- The final project document must be reviewed to ensure that the project is still consistent with the original proposal. If it has changed course, is the project still in line with country priorities and GEF policies and procedures?
- Have the comments made by the GEF Council during its consideration of the project brief and the subsequent technical comments submitted by council members been fully taken into account in the final project document?

Jordan

National GEF Focal Point

Jordan is one of the countries that received GEF support to implement its national environmental priorities and national obligations for issues related to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Convention to Combat Desertification. This support was important to Jordan at the national, regional, and international levels in matters related to the conventions.

The GEF portfolio is considered to be helpful in the following ways. It has:

- “Mainstreamed” the environment into the development process
- Developed and enhanced coordination and cooperation among different stakeholders including the public sector, private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and research and academic institutions dealing with the environmental field
- Increased knowledge about the international conventions and the country’s obligations incurred by signing these conventions
- Been an outstanding mechanism for building staff capacity in various institutions in GEF focus areas.

The main actors are the Ministry of Planning (MOP), the General Corporation for Environment Protection (GCEP), project initiators such as the Greater Amman Municipality, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, the public, and the GEF Small Grants Program.

MOP is the national GEF political and operational focal point. It is primarily responsible for the preparation of the Five-Year Economic and Social Development Plan. The plan for the years 1999-2003 mainstreamed the environment with the development process and included a chapter on environmental protection. Another major MOP responsibility is setting national priorities in coordination and cooperation with the different stakeholders. MOP is also the national focal point for international organizations and is responsible for raising funds for the country’s different priority programs. All externally funded projects should be endorsed by MOP, including the projects to be funded by GEF.

Because MOP stands at the top of the hierarchy for coordination within the country, it has a leading role in coordinating the GEF portfolio.

GCEP is responsible for environmental protection in the country and is the focal point for the conventions. It is a relatively new institution and receives support from MOP to carry out its mandate. A high level of coordination between the different institutions in Jordan is required. Coordination among the various stakeholders is handled at two levels:

- The decisionmaker level. Decision makers are represented in the Council for Environment Protection, which is hosted by GCEP, and handle coordination at the decisionmaker level.
- The technical level. At this level, daily tasks are coordinated between the technical staff of different institutions.

Sectoral institutions such as the Ministry of Water and Irrigation are well-established institutions compared to GCEP, but they have overlap and/or duplication in their mandate. This overlap affects the level of coordination in environmental projects, including GEF projects, and stresses the need for better coordination among the various stakeholders.

National Coordination of GEF-Related Matters

National Coordination of GEF Projects

The two main institutions responsible for environmental protection are MOP and GCEP. Both assist other institutions in preparing GEF projects. At present, most of the responsibility for coordination and cooperation with the various stakeholders falls on MOP. MOP does not implement GEF projects, while GCEP does so.

All proposed GEF projects to be implemented by an institution other than GCEP should first be endorsed by GCEP; MOP provides final endorsement. GEF-funded projects implemented by GCEP should be endorsed by MOP.

Coordination among stakeholders takes different forms depending on the nature of the project and the mandate of the stakeholders. For example, coordination occurs through frequent meetings, especially during a project's planning phase; telephone calls; e-mail; and official correspondence. Another form of coordination takes place during GEF project evaluation.

Coordination steps related to GEF projects are as follows:

1. MOP receives the project proposal and, in consultation with GCEP, identifies the relevant stakeholders.
2. The projects are submitted to the stakeholders for approval and to elicit any financial commitment on their part.
3. If the stakeholders have any concerns regarding identification of the party that will carry out the project, MOP meets individually with each stakeholder to clarify matters, understand their point of view, and determine their major concerns about the project. A decision is made as to which stakeholder will implement the project prior to any further negotiations.
4. MOP sets up a meeting of all stakeholders to ensure transparency, to reach a consensus on the project, and to guarantee smooth implementation of the GEF project in the future.

5. If there are any unresolved conflicts among the stakeholders, these issues are discussed at the ministerial level.
6. MOP and the other stakeholders make a site visit to the proposed project area.
7. Experts are invited to comment on matters related to the project.

Coordination is most important at the project identification, planning, and design stages, since the roles of the different stakeholders are well-defined by the project implementation phase.

GEF-Related Information Dissemination

GEF information is distributed to the stakeholders by official mail. It is also discussed at various meetings and workshops, especially at Small Grants Program workshops. Due to a lack of funds and staff availability, MOP has thus far not held any workshops to present the GEF portfolio in the country or to inform stakeholders about opportunities for GEF funding.

Challenges of Coordination at the National Level

The coordination process is confronted with several challenges, the most outstanding of which are:

- A lack of experience regarding environmental policy and planning
- Difficulties confronting efforts to mainstream the environment into the development process
- A lack of experience in implementing environmental projects
- A lack of understanding and knowledge about the conventions and their obligations among different levels of staff
- Limited knowledge about GEF and its role in helping the country comply with the conventions' obligations
- Duplication and overlap of stakeholder mandates
- Negligible involvement of the private sector in GEF projects
- A lack of coordination between the GEF national focal point and the GEF implementing agency focal point—the latter previously had direct contact with national stakeholders without prior consultation and/or coordination with the former, a poor method of coordination between national stakeholders and international organizations.

To overcome these challenges, a series of workshops and meetings should be held, involving various stakeholders at different levels of representation. The main focus areas of the workshops and meetings are summarized below:

- To link the national economy with the environmental performance of the development sectors
- To emphasize the need to review the mandates of the different institutions, including GCEP, to avoid duplication and overlap, minimize conflicts, and enhance collaboration

- To explain how the country can comply with convention commitments and how this will affect the national economy and the state of the environment
- To inform stakeholders about GEF and its role in:
 - Upgrading the quality of the environment in Jordan
 - Educating stakeholders about the conventions
 - Raising the level of public awareness on GEF focus areas
 - Changing attitudes toward the environment
 - Building stakeholder capacity in different technical and managerial areas
 - Increasing the level of public participation in GEF projects and its impact on their livelihoods
 - Introducing the concept of ecotourism
- To stress national ownership of and leadership in GEF projects.

Level of Communication With GEF

Most GEF-related issues are communicated with the GEF secretariat through the GEF implementing agencies. Only on limited occasions does MOP contact the GEF secretariat, mainly in connection with GEF Council meetings.

National Coordination of the Conventions

GCEP is the national focal point for the conventions. More specifically, through GEF enabling activities programs, two units—a biodiversity unit and a climate change unit—were established within GCEP responsible for matters related to the conventions. MOP is responsible for financing programs and projects related to these conventions using outside grants and loans. Thus, these two parties are the main national actors in coordination of the conventions. Other stakeholders are involved according to the nature of the particular convention-related project.

National committees have been established to coordinate issues related to the conventions. Nonetheless, the level of coordination is limited between GCEP and the other stakeholders, including MOP, in matters related to the conventions. The level of coordination increases notably in the case of GEF-funded projects. The communication mechanisms used to reinforce coordination among the various stakeholders, the convention focal points, and the GEF focal points are workshops, seminars, committee meetings, telephone calls, and correspondence.

GEF-funded projects have had great impacts in terms of enhancing stakeholder knowledge regarding the conventions as well as strengthening the level of coordination among the stakeholders. However, several challenges exist in integrating the positions and policies developed for purposes of the conventions with activities undertaken with GEF financing:

- Decision makers and technical experts lack knowledge of GEF matters and conventions.
- It takes time for GEF project outputs to be realized, particularly by decision makers, and to be considered an essential means of integrating the environment with the development process.
- Inadequate public participation in GEF project planning, design, and implementation poses a serious challenge to GEF project success.

- The GEF national focal point is overwhelmed with concurrent demands of work and programs; this limits opportunities for better coordination.
- The lack of skilled staff and incentives hinders the work.

We have experienced some successes in integrating the conventions and GEF processes at the national level. The enabling activities programs in biodiversity and climate change did increase appreciation for nature and the environment among the various stakeholders. Moreover, the GEF Small Grants Program has ensured that the conventions and GEF have become better known among local communities. The introduction of ecotourism has enhanced appreciation for Jordanian biodiversity. GEF processes helped in preparing the environmental protection chapter of the Five-Year Economic and Social Development Plan, 1999-2003. It also stresses the importance of studying the link between the international conventions signed by the government and the country's established administration and current legislative structure.

National Coordination of GEF Council Matters

The MOP handles national-level coordination of GEF Council matters. This coordination was at a higher level when the GEF focal point attended the GEF Council meetings. Similarly, coordination was enhanced when a project for Jordan was included in the Council's workplan or issues relevant to Middle Eastern region were under discussion. These factors notwithstanding, coordination regarding GEF Council matters can still be considered as limited, due to several factors, including the following:

- MOP does not have sufficient staff available to deal with all GEF matters.
- A large quantity of GEF Council documents is sent for review and comment.
- Review and comments on these documents require persons knowledgeable in GEF and GEF Council matters in addition to having expert knowledge in technical content. Additionally, this review demands considerable time.
- GEF Council matters require the support of decision makers who do not have sufficient knowledge of GEF matters and who change job positions periodically.

MOP coordination of GEF Council processes among stakeholders is conducted either through telephone calls, correspondence, or—occasionally—meetings. Participation by other stakeholders in GEF Council matters is very limited, except when they have a project to be discussed in the GEF Council work program.

The situation described above pertains to coordination at the national level. At the level of the Jordan constituency, a somewhat higher degree of communication with Council members and other constituency countries prevailed when the Jordan GEF focal point attended the Council meetings; however, little or no response by the Council member and his alternate was received. The Yemeni GEF focal point achieved a good level of responsiveness among the constituency, but this situation was not long-lived. More recently, no response or communication has existed at all among Jordan's constituency members.

Recommendations for Improving National Coordination

National-level coordination is a key factor in implementing successful GEF projects. Better coordination mainly requires the following:

- The GEF national focal point should dedicate more time to GEF projects.
- A series of workshops should be held to increase knowledge about the conventions and GEF, especially at the decisionmaker level.
- Stakeholder involvement in GEF projects should be improved, especially during the project's planning phase.
- A procedure should be established (by internal agreement) to rotate the Council member chair within all countries of the constituency.
- Frequent meetings to increase the level of coordination among the countries of the constituency should be held in Washington prior to the Council meeting; these should be hosted by the Council member's constancy embassy.
- Continuous capacity-building programs should be implemented.
- Sufficient time should be allowed in which to change attitudes.
- There should be collaborative efforts among stakeholders.
- GEF should provide more flexibility.

To conclude, the lesson learned from GEF projects is to work locally and think globally.

Latvia

Introduction

The Republic of Latvia has followed a consistent path of transition from command economy to market economy since regaining its independence in 1991. This process initially resulted in a recession during 1991-92, stabilization of gross domestic product by 1996, and a slight increase during 1996-99. Overall, the development of Latvia's national economy has been successful.

Program-oriented policy implementation is underway in all branches of the national economy. This process is carried out through technical assistance and co-financing from supporting countries, international organizations, and funds. Latvia chose such a program-oriented approach to implement its environmental policy in the most effective way.

The government of Latvia consists of the Cabinet of Ministers and 12 ministries. The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (MEPRD) is the youngest of these, established in the summer of 1993 when a new state administrative structure was developed. A major MEPRD priority is responsibility for environmental protection. The ministry's scope of activities is not, however, limited to those spelled out in its title. MEPRD has been delegated responsibility for a number of other institutions and functions such as construction, housing and municipal services, local government issues, geology, and tourism. Responsibility for the functioning of the Latvian Hydrometeorological Agency was also transferred to MEPRD.

The ministry is comprised of six departments and three sections. The Environmental Protection Department handles activities regarding GEF project proposals. This department creates and implements norms and standards to ensure compliance with environmental protection requirements and to improve the state and quality of the environment, deals with issues of pollution prevention from various sources in different sectors of the national economy, and ensures the preservation of biodiversity in Latvia. The department's major tasks are developing and formulating environmental policy, such as the National Environmental Protection Policy Plan for Latvia and the Environmental Protection Action Program; planning and monitoring policy implementation; and elaborating the legal framework for and promotion of the European Union integration process in the environmental sector. The department also participates in the elaboration and formulation of international environmental protection policies, as well as representing the interests of Latvia at the international level.

National Coordination of GEF Projects

Latvia became a GEF member on June 27, 1994. The country's lack of information and experience did not permit the startup of efficient international and project-related activities in the first years following independence. Until 1996, GEF-supported projects in Latvia were primarily initiated by consultants of the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). This enabled us to gain an awareness of the need for various types of projects and of opportunities to obtain financing from various sources. As we have shifted to a market economy and moved toward integration into the European Union, we are increasingly able to apply a best practices approach as we tackle various issues. Consequently, in the past few years, the main initiators of GEF projects have been MEPRD employees, given their close contacts with numerous international organizations and institutions.

The principal actors involved in GEF project implementation are selected on the basis of project type and size. In general, these participants are international institutions—e.g., the UNDP local office, International Finance Corporation, etc.—or specifically created project implementation units operating under the supervision of a steering committee comprised of representatives of relevant ministries and city councils.

Documentation for project proposals developed by GEF consultants, UN institutions, UNDP, UNEP, or the World Bank is forwarded directly to the GEF operational or political focal point for approval. The focal point, together with coordinators of conventions and interministerial committees for convention implementation, determine the adequacy of the concept papers and project proposals vis-à-vis GEF provisions and eligibility for GEF funds, and make a preliminary decision on endorsement. This process is time-consuming, as it involves examining and verifying all relevant international and national legislation, as well as national development programs, long- and short-term strategic plans, policy plans, development action programs, and reports prepared by ministries or other institutions.

Project proposals usually pertain to functions within the competence of other ministries and institutions. If cooperation with other ministries, institutions, and organizations is necessary, the proposals are submitted for approval to the Energy Department and/or the Department of Industrial Policy of the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Energy Department of the Latvian Development Agency, local governments, and/or nongovernmental organizations. Project managers within the UNDP country office are kept informed regarding project proposals.

A formal decision of endorsement is made by the highest level of policymakers within MEPRD, as the primary GEF project decisionmaker, in cooperation with the relevant ministries. Other stakeholders are involved in implementation of GEF projects.

GEF-related information is primarily disseminated to those persons involved in preparing project proposals and, if necessary, to those persons assisting in project endorsement. Sometimes local consultants and stakeholders participating in the implementation process have specific questions regarding GEF-related information. The Guidebook UNDP-GEF, which was disseminated last year, is a very useful information source in this regard. Unfortunately, because it is not translated into local languages, its application is limited.

National Coordination of the Conventions

MEPRD is responsible for coordination of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Latvia. The main actors involved in the coordination of these global conventions are MEPRD employees, designated national focal points, and members of the Interministerial Commission on Biological Diversity and the Committee on Climate Change. The development and enforcement of a legal framework for environmental protection involves state and, in many cases, international processes. The UNDP country office assists in implementing GEF projects in this area.

In 1997, a steering committee to develop and elaborate a Climate Change Mitigation Policy Plan and the Second National Communication was established by decree of the Cabinet of Ministers. This steering committee worked under the guidance of the state minister of Environment Protection. Besides officials of MEPRD, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Transport, and the Ministry of Agriculture, the committee included experts from the State Forest Service, Environmental Data Center, State Hydrometeorological Agency, State Committee of Statistics, and Riga City municipality. Other stakeholders participate primarily as executors of GEF projects and projects related to Activities Implemented Jointly.

Convention on Biological Diversity

Latvia became a party to the CBD in 1995. MEPRD prepared Latvia's first national report and Biodiversity National Program. This project is funded by GEF. Latvia's first national report was submitted to the fourth Conference of the Parties of the CBD in 1998. The Biodiversity National Program for the Republic of Latvia was submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers in January 2000. The Interministerial Commission on Biological Diversity was established in 1998 to implement CBD obligations.

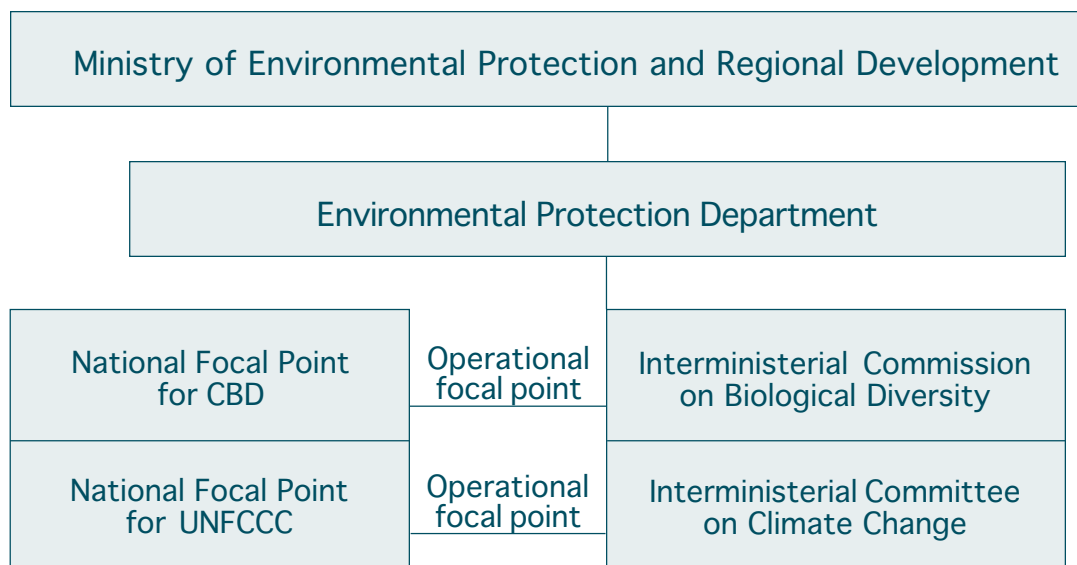
Latvia is an active member of the CBD and of the Ramsar Convention. Latvian scientists are ready to begin elaboration of a strategy and action plan for peatland protection as soon as GEF financial support is received for the Peatland Protection and Management in Central Europe: Development of a Strategy and GEF Block B project.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The UNFCCC was ratified by the Saeima (Parliament) of the Republic of Latvia in 1995. The Kyoto Protocol was signed in 1998.

Latvia has fulfilled the obligations of the UNFCCC. Greenhouse gas emissions by 2000 will not exceed the 1990 emission level, and will in fact be reduced by more than 40 percent. The First National Communication of the Republic of Latvia under the UNFCCC was developed in 1995. The Second National Communication and Climate Change Mitigation Policy Plan for Latvia were accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers on June 16, 1998. The national communications and policy plan were prepared under MEPRD leadership.

The Committee on Climate Change was established in 1996. This interministerial steering committee facilitates activities regarding the fulfillment of national obligations under the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol.



Convention to Combat Desertification

Latvia is not a party to the Convention to Combat Desertification for two main reasons:

- Latvia is not a country with areas prone to drought and desertification; therefore, this problem is not priority
- Latvia has limited capacities for convention implementation.

Successes

Successful experiences are connected with GEF funding of enabling activities of the CBD. Implementation of the project Support to Development of Latvia’s National Biodiversity Strategy, Action Plan and Country Report to the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity has made good progress. As noted above, Latvia’s first national report was submitted to the fourth Conference of the Parties of the CBD in 1998, and the Biodiversity National Program for the Republic of Latvia was submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers in January 2000.

Challenges

Latvia’s main difficulties with GEF coordination involve a lack of finances and responsible institutions. There are very limited financial, human, and institutional capacities to deal with GEF projects in Latvia. GEF focal points are ministry employees. Their main responsibilities thus do not involve GEF projects. Rather, GEF activities are additional and honorary tasks for these persons.

The political focal point was an employee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; however, this person has not worked in the ministry since 1999 and no other GEF political focal point has been authorized to fulfill his obligations. Thus, since 1999, only the operational focal point has been charged with formal GEF responsibilities. However, the GEF operational focal point is simultaneously responsible for activities related to both the UNFCCC as its

focal point and the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution as its coordinator.

Communication with GEF is limited to documentation received from the GEF secretariat and the three implementing agencies. Communication with the UNDP office in Latvia is close and regular.

Challenges exist with regard to integrating positions and policies developed in connection with enabling activities undertaken with GEF financing. There was an interest in receiving support for enabling activities of the UNFCCC to prepare the Third National Communication. Latvia did not request a UNDP grant for such enabling activities previously. But now there is a concern that Latvia is in noncompliance with the requirements of the Kyoto Protocol because it cannot cover the inventory of emissions of new gases under this protocol. The new gases are mentioned in Annex A of the Kyoto Protocol; these are hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride. The funding required does not exceed US\$100,000. Unfortunately, Latvia cannot follow the Guidelines for Expedited Climate Change Enabling Activities, Phase II, since it is an Annex I party, and the GEF guidelines are only for non-Annex I Parties. UNDP has therefore rejected Latvia's request for assistance.

A second concern involving fulfillment of obligations under the UNFCCC is connected with studies on the expected impacts of climate change and vulnerability assessment, adaptation measures, and research. Latvia is interested in obtaining funds for these studies.

Recommendations for Improving National Coordination

Latvia's crucial problem regarding national GEF coordination involves obtaining financing in order to establish an office and employ civil servants and consultants. The present shortage of financial resources does not allow the government of Latvia to allocate funding for the national coordination process. Therefore, the main participants in national coordination continue to perform their GEF activities in tandem with full-time jobs. Anticipated improvements of the national coordination process are connected with the establishment of an Environmental Protection Agency in 2002.

The well-organized country office focal point training provided by UNDP has been very helpful in creating better understanding. It would be useful to continue such training to learn in more detail estimation and reporting of incremental costs for different types of projects.

Public awareness could be partially improved by translating and disseminating the Guidebook UNDP-GEF, Operational Strategy of the Global Environment Facility, and GEF Operational Programs into local languages as well as by organizing workshops.

In summary, Latvia's main GEF coordination needs involve:

- Strengthening coordination at different levels: regional, within constituency, country
- Providing support to the country focal points, specifically, financial resources and hardware for permanent staff
- Raising public awareness regarding activities undertaken by GEF and its implementing agencies
- Translating and disseminating guidelines on funding criteria, eligibility requirements, and project elaboration
- Capacity building and training
- Conducting regular meetings and workshops.

Mauritius

Mauritius was one of the eight developing countries selected to present proposals for drawing upon the first tranche of the facility in 1990. The first Mauritian proposal to benefit from GEF funding was the Sugar Biotechnology project, which received a grant of US\$3.3 million under an agreement signed in July 1992. This project aimed at promoting efficient use of biomass fuel, in particular bagasse, a byproduct of the sugar industry and a major source of renewable energy, by:

- Developing and adapting technologies for the transport and handling of bagasse
- Initiating a program of trials and experiments leading to possible future use of cane tops, leaves, and trash as a fuel for power generation
- Helping the government establish and implement an institutional and organizational framework for a Bagasse Energy Development Program, including the strengthening of the Mauritius Sugar Authority as the program's secretariat.

The project received ready support from GEF because of its demonstrated capacity to:

- Improve Mauritius's energy self-sufficiency
- Reduce the country's heavy dependence on imported energy, namely fuel oil, which accounted for nearly a fifth of Mauritius's total import bill in the early 1980s and which rendered the economy extremely vulnerable to sudden changes in oil prices
- More significantly, make a meaningful contribution to international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and global warming, one of GEF's four focal areas.

The subsequent years witnessed GEF's involvement in two major initiatives in Mauritius in the area of biodiversity, namely, the Restoration of Highly Degraded and Threatened Native Forests project and a Biodiversity Restoration project focused on Ile aux Aigrettes, Rodrigues, and Round Island. GEF also funded a Regional Oil Spill Contingency Planning project based in Mauritius as well as certain activities linked to Mauritius's commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)—Preparation of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan—and the United Nations Framework Convention

on Climate Change (UNFCCC)—Preparation of the National Initial Communication. Additionally, Mauritius endorsed projects proposed for GEF support by regional organizations in Africa.

Mauritius was among the group of countries selected to participate in the pilot phase of the Small Grants Program initiated by GEF in mid-1992. This program was launched in Mauritius toward the end of the pilot phase in April 1995, which constrained the country's ability to fully exploit the program. The experience gained from the pilot phase, however, proved extremely useful: it enabled Mauritius to manage and better target the subsequent first operational phase, resulting in successful implementation of some 18 projects with a total value of over US\$300,000 and the expansion of the program to the outlying islands of Rodrigues and Agalega.

A second Country Program Strategy has been elaborated and is currently being implemented. This strategy, which has been developed with the objectives and underlying thrust of the second operational phase in mind, lays special emphasis on mainstreaming projects in line with national strategies to realize global benefits. A related aim is to achieve much greater visibility for the Small Grants Program, both in the country and in the region, to help mobilize additional resources for environmental projects and secure stronger stakeholders' commitment for the program.

Institutional Framework for Environmental Management

The institutional arrangement for environmental management that Mauritius has put in place is designed to address environmental problems in a coordinated and holistic manner; in particular, it aims to ensure that economic development is realized with minimum impact on the quality of the environment. Under this arrangement, overall responsibility for the environment—including policy formulation, the elaboration of environmental strategies and environmental action plans, and the coordination of their implementation as well as regulation and enforcement—rests with the Ministry of Environment and Urban and Rural Development (MEURD). The MEURD is supported in these tasks by its Department of Environment, which deals with matters such as national standards, environmental assessment, enforcement and compliance, policy and planning, and public information/education. The ministry has recently drawn up a second environmental action plan, with particular focus on creating conditions for the protection and improvement of the natural and physical environment.

An Environmental Coordination Committee (ECC), established in compliance with the Environment Protection Act of 1991 (which provides for compulsory consultation with different ministries on policy matters pertaining to environmental protection and management), serves as a consultative forum. The ECC's chief objectives and functions are to:

- Ensure timely and effective consultation on environmental protection
- Promote full and open sharing of information among ministries and parastatal bodies on all matters relating to environmental protection
- Advise the minister of Environment and the National Environment Commission (NEC—see below), where requested, on environmental quality guidelines, national standards, code and practices, regulations, and other control measures with an eye to avoiding duplication and to ensure proper enforcement to protect the environment

- Maximize cooperation and coordination, and minimize conflict and duplication, among ministries and parastatal bodies in matters concerning environmental protection.

The ECC is composed of the MEURD permanent secretary as chairman, the representatives of enforcing agencies, environmental liaison officers in enforcing agencies, the director and deputy director of the Department of Environment, and other officers as designated by the committee. The ECC may also, for the purpose of discharging its functions, establish such subcommittees as may be necessary.

In addition to the ECC, an Environmental Advisory Council has been established as provided by the Environment Protection Act. The council, which is composed mainly of representatives of nongovernmental and community-based organizations concerned with the environment, advises the minister of environment on environmental issues. The NEC completes the institutional arrangements. Essentially established to determine national objectives and formulate policies, the NEC is chaired by the prime minister, with the minister of environment as vice chairman and the director of environment as secretary. The NEC serves as a forum for discussion of environmental issues at the highest political level, enabling participants to chart out the broad contours of environmental policies and action plans. The NEC's chief strength lies in its ability to resolve cross-sectoral issues.

National GEF Focal Point

The coordination of GEF activities at the national level is ensured by the GEF focal point, who is also the director of the Ministry of Economic Development, Productivity, and Regional Development (MEDPRD). The MEDPRD occupies a central position in government machinery as a national economic planning body and as a think tank on economic and social issues. It carries out regular reviews of the performance of the economy, identifies the macroeconomic and sectoral reforms required to steer the economy on the path of sustained growth, and draws up medium-term economic development plans to achieve government's socioeconomic objectives.

The collection, compilation, analysis, and dissemination of official statistics relating to all aspects of economic activities in the country as well as regional cooperation, within the framework of a strategy to achieve greater economic integration among the economies of the region, form an integral part of the MEDPRD's mandate. More recently, productivity has been added to the ministry's portfolio to ensure that the issue of competitiveness in an increasingly globalizing world receives the attention it deserves.

The MEDPRD is also the national coordinating body for external aid—both technical and financial. All offers of aid to Mauritius are channeled through the ministry, which often acts as the first point of contact, including the national focal point for aid agencies operating or funding development activities in the country.

Viewed from the ministry's mandate and portfolio of responsibilities, the MEDPRD director has multiple functions. These range from tendering advice to the government, through the minister, on economic policies; to overseeing the collection, analysis, and dissemination of official statistics; and more importantly, to coordinating overseas aid to ensure that it is put to optimum use and that its development impact is maximized to the extent possible.

The role of GEF focal point is equally wide ranging, first because of the GEF focal areas—since they cut across a number of sectors—and second, given the interrelationship between economic development and the environment. Broadly, in the Mauritian context,

the key functions of the focal point, which are often carried out in consultation with the local United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office, an implementing agency for GEF, are to:

- Identify organizations, in both the public and private sectors, operating in the area of, or concerned with, the environment, that could benefit from support under the GEF program
- Organize special workshops, seminars, and briefing meetings to explain the objectives of the program, its areas of focus, and selection criteria for and the guidelines to be followed in the preparation of project submissions
- Disseminate guidelines for project development, funding criteria, and eligibility requirements to organizations and institutions interested in seeking support from GEF
- Undertake a critical assessment of the technical resources available in individual organizations to draft projects responding to GEF eligibility criteria and elaborate and implement training programs to strengthen their project development capability
- Help potential applicants determine the need for technical assistance to aid in the elaboration of projects, including location and requirement of the expertise required
- Review the proposals before they are submitted to GEF with a view to ensuring that they:
 - reflect government priority in the area of the environment,
 - will result in quantifiable global benefits, and
 - respond to GEF selection—including funding—criteria for projects
- Obtain the necessary clearance from the government to submit projects officially for GEF support
- Seek any clarification from project proposers required by GEF or its implementing agencies, and pass this information on
- Monitor, on a regular basis, physical and financial progress in the implementation of projects funded by GEF
- Convene, where necessary, meetings of those directly and indirectly involved in the execution of GEF-funded projects to review position, identify constraints, and determine the best course of action to speed implementation
- In case of problems necessitating intervention from a higher level, bring the matter to the attention of those concerned for their speedy resolution
- Ensure that funds made available by GEF are used for the purpose intended, and
- Maintain liaison between GEF and its implementing agencies on the one hand and the beneficiaries of GEF aid on the other.

National Coordination of GEF Projects

Mauritius's approach to coordination concerning the preparation of GEF projects is derived from its experience with the elaboration of development projects under different aid programs. This has taught policymakers in government that, while coordination at the national level, possibly through a central body, of project preparation may be ideal to avoid

duplication and to ensure that project submissions reflect national priorities, it is desirable that actual preparation be undertaken by those proposing the projects; for they know the issues involved and the manner in which they could be best be tackled. This is particularly true of complex projects that require a range of technical and scientific skills, which are difficult to assemble in a single organization without incurring high costs.

The approach followed is for the MEDPRD, as national planning body and the entity responsible for preparing annual public sector investment programs (PSIP), to coordinate the preparation of all development projects, including GEF ones, with actual elaboration left to the organizations concerned. The MEDPRD is kept informed of project status with regard to their preparation, implementation, and funding as part of an annual exercise to update the PSIP. The MEDPRD is also apprised of the need for technical assistance and funding requirements. These are then reflected in the PSIP.

Actual project preparation rests primarily with the institutions and organizations proposing the projects, with other bodies—including the MEDPRD—providing inputs where necessary. The approach often adopted by these organizations for project development is to set up a multidisciplinary team drawn from relevant institutions. The aim is clear: to seek consensus on project objectives and scope and enlist stakeholder support for eventual implementation.

An example of this approach is the Sugar Biotechnology project funded by GEF in 1992. This project emanated from the work of the Committee on Energy and its Technical Committee. These entities were established to assess the energy potential of bagasse and work out an appropriate project to improve the efficiency of bagasse use in sugar processing to generate surplus bagasse for electricity production, which could then be supplied to the national grid. In addition to the World Bank, which provided guidance to the Technical Committee, the main actors contributing to the project's preparation included nearly all those stakeholders with an interest in the matter, namely:

- Ministry of Agriculture, Food Technology, and Natural Resources (MAFTNR)
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Energy and Water Resources
- Ministry of Environment and Land Use
- Ministry of Economic Planning and Development
- Joint Economic Council
- Mauritius Sugar Authority
- Bank of Mauritius
- Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute
- Central Electricity Board
- Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture
- Mauritius Sugar Syndicate
- Mauritius Sugar Producers' Association
- Sugar Estates
- University of Mauritius.

Because of the nature of the project, the stakeholders were drawn from both the public and private sectors, and had either a direct or an indirect interest in the sugar area. This gave the project a national dimension and an international cachet, making it possible to attract GEF funding. This process, which resulted in the development of a first GEF-financed project, is being replicated with other projects.

The coordination mechanism outlined above may appear simple at first sight. The reality, however, is quite different. The key challenge is to obtain accurate information and data from various organizations in sufficient time to update the annual PSIP—a sine qua non to make a coordinated approach to project development at the national level. This is not easy—the country’s small size notwithstanding—because of a lack of project development skills at the individual organization level.

Meetings are arranged as necessary by the MEDPRD with relevant agencies to help them with their problems. These meetings are often conducted by economists working at the ministry with sectoral responsibility. These personnel, who are well-trained in project preparation and familiar with sectoral issues, are in an excellent position to guide individual organizations. These bilateral consultations have played a critical role in resolving what may sometimes appear to be intractable issues, including facilitating coordination at the national level.

Once a project is ready, it is submitted to the MEDPRD for endorsement and eventual transmission to GEF. MEDPRD endorsement is not automatic. The agency may request a reexamination in case of doubt about the economic, financial, or technical feasibility of a project, including its eligibility for GEF funding or relevance to national priorities. It is only when the MEDPRD is fully satisfied as to a project’s viability that government approval is obtained to submit it to GEF as an official request. This is done through the office of the UNDP in Mauritius, one of the three implementing agencies for GEF programs. Most communication with GEF with respect to projects is handled through UNDP, which has proved very effective.

Actual implementation is the responsibility of the agencies proposing the projects. They are expected to establish special units, or steering committees, to oversee project execution. For example, in the case of the project on Restoration of Highly Degraded and Threatened Native Forests, a technical advisory committee, chaired by the project coordinator (the NPCCS director) and consisting of representatives of the following organizations, was set up:

- MEDPRD
- MEURD
- Ministry of Youth and Sports
- Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute
- UNDP
- Mauritius Wildlife Foundation.

The project’s execution was contracted out to the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation, a nongovernmental organization active in the area of biodiversity conservation in Mauritius.

At the national level, the implementation of public sector projects, irrespective of their sources of funding, is monitored by the Ministerial Committee on Capital Projects (MCCP). Chaired by the minister of MEDPRD, the MCCP’s primary task is to review progress, identify constraints, and agree on measures to speed up implementation. The MCCP has been very effective in getting projects on track because of its ability to make quick decisions.

National Coordination of the Conventions

Mauritius is a party to the CBD, UNFCCC, and Convention to Combat Desertification. These conventions were signed, on behalf of the government, by the Ministry of Environment and Quality of Life, since renamed the Ministry of Environment and Urban and Rural Development. Actual implementation of the various provisions of the conventions, however, rests with technical ministries, with the Ministry of Environment ensuring overall coordination to guarantee that the commitments undertaken by the government under the conventions are respected.

Thus, implementation of the terrestrial component of the CBD is the responsibility of the National Parks and Conservation Service (NPCS) of the MAFTNR, while the Ministry of Fisheries and Cooperatives is the executing agency for the aquatic component. The NPCS is also the focal point for the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, and, in this capacity, sends a representative to attend annual meetings convened to identify specific issues to be addressed by parties to the convention. Meetings of the CBD Conference of Parties are attended by a MEURD representative.

Preparation of the National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan is coordinated by the NPCS director. To this end, a special planning team consisting of stakeholders from various sectors of Mauritian society has been assembled to provide inputs and achieve consensus on the main thrust underlying the action plan. The team, which is chaired by the NPCS director, is composed of representatives from the following public and private sector organizations:

- MEDPRD
- Agricultural Research and Extension Unit, MAFTNR
- Agricultural Services, MAFTNR
- Forestry Services, MAFTNR
- MEURD
- Ministry of Rodrigues
- Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute
- Mauritius Wildlife Foundation
- Albion Fisheries Research Center
- National Coordinator, Regional Environment Project.

A more or less similar approach is followed for the UNFCCC, where the role of the focal point for the convention is jointly discharged by the director of Meteorological Services and the permanent secretary of MEURD, with actual implementation undertaken by the National Climate Committee (NCC). The membership of the NCC, which is co-chaired by a high official from the prime minister's office and the director of Meteorological Services, is drawn from the public and private sectors, including the University of Mauritius and nongovernmental organizations (Mauritius Council of Social Services, Mauritius Wildlife Foundation, etc.), thereby giving it a national character. The NCC has set up five working groups as follows to look into specific issues:

- Agriculture and Water Resources

- Coastal Zone and Tourism
- Energy, Industry, and Transport
- Economic Development, Health, and Infrastructure
- Inventory of Greenhouse Gases.

The NCC has already prepared, as part of Mauritius's commitments under the UNFCCC, an Initial National Communication, with funding from GEF. This was submitted to the UNFCCC secretariat in December 1998. In addition, the following have been prepared:

- Report on the Economics of Greenhouse Gases
- Report on the Vulnerability of Sugarcane to Climate Change, and
- National Action Plan on the Effects of Climate Change on Various Sectors of the Economy.

The main actors involved in preparation of the action plan were:

- MAFTNR
- MEDPRD
- Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Corporate Affairs, and Financial Services
- Ministry of Public Utilities
- MEURD
- Ministry of Tourism and Leisure
- Ministry of Local Government
- Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute
- Meteorological Services
- University of Mauritius
- National Transport Authority
- Central Statistical Office.

Note that the processes in place for national coordination concerning the conventions are not very much different from those applied for project preparation and, to some degree, project implementation. Overall coordination, which involves, among others, building consensus among different stakeholders on national objectives and goals, including closer monitoring to ensure that the implementation of convention provisions occurs in conformity with the time frame laid down in the conventions, should necessarily be undertaken by a central agency, especially a government ministry with an overall view of the various issues covered by the conventions. Actual implementation should, however, be the task of technical agencies which are more familiar than others with the issues involved.

This clear dichotomy in responsibility for coordination and implementation is at the heart of Mauritian success with regard to GEF projects and the conventions. It has greatly helped integrate policies and positions developed for conventions with activities undertaken with GEF financing, for the evident reason that the technical agencies implement-

ing the conventions are, in most cases, also in charge of executing GEF-financed projects in the country. The result is a perfect harmony of policies and positions adopted on the conventions and GEF activities in Mauritius.

National Coordination of GEF Council Matters

Primary responsibility for handling all matters relating to the GEF Council in Mauritius lies with the GEF focal point. All issues requiring decisions by the GEF Council from the government of Mauritius are first sent to this focal point, whose duty it is to convey the country's stand on matters referred to him by the Council, including any resolutions tabled at the council meeting.

While the focal point is free in principle to pronounce on any issue addressed to him for decision, he prefers to consult with other partners in order to coordinate the country's stand, especially on technical matters. This practice of consultation with relevant stakeholders on major issues is well anchored with regard to the GEF Council. It ensures an informed decision on critical questions and consensus among the various actors who may view the problem from different perspectives. The main actors consulted are:

- MAFTNR
- MEURD
- Meteorological Services
- Relevant nongovernmental and community-based organizations.

The GEF focal point attempts to consult with all relevant actors in preparation for each council meeting in order to coordinate a Mauritian stand, but this is not always possible due to time constraints. Consulting with the Mauritian council member and with other countries in the GEF constituency is a formidable challenge due to problems in communication and, more importantly, the absence of a formal mechanism to bring all members of the constituency to the table to exchange views on problems affecting them and formulate a common stand. Lack of funding to undertake travel for consultation is an equally major deterrent. As a result, it has not been possible for Mauritius to consult its GEF Council member and other partners in the constituency.

Recommendations for Improving National Coordination

Several lessons have been learned from the national coordination of GEF activities in Mauritius.

1. The coordination of project preparation within the framework of the annual PSIP, although satisfactory up until now, may have to be further strengthened to monitor progress in project development at the individual institution level. A possible option may be for the MEPDRD to follow up regularly with various organizations working on projects for GEF and assist them where necessary. This will help identify problems at an early stage and speed up project preparation. In addition, project development capacity may have to be built up in different organizations in order to guarantee a regular flow of projects for GEF support.

2. As the government agency responsible for coordination concerning the conventions, the MEURD will need to be more assertive in terms of demanding and obtaining regular reports from implementing agencies concerning progress in meeting Mauritian commitments under the conventions. Periodic reports will be a critical tool for monitoring progress in the implementation of various convention provisions. There may also be a need for regular meetings between the MEURD and the agencies responsible for implementing the CBD to brief the latter on the outcome of the meetings of the CBD Conference of Parties and to ensure that the decisions taken by the conference are translated into action. Regular consultations between the MEURD and MEDPRD are also called for, mainly to ensure that the latter, as GEF focal point, is kept fully posted about developments with regard to the conventions, including the requirements for technical assistance from GEF to meet Mauritian commitments, which only MEDPRD is mandated to apply.

A formal mechanism is required to facilitate consultation by partners in a constituency with their GEF Council member. This could take the form of an annual consultative meeting of constituency members to discuss issues of common concern. Ideally, such a meeting would take place prior to the Council meeting and be financed from a special budget set aside for the purpose by GEF. This will greatly help the GEF Council obtain regular feedback from focal points and tailor its activities to the needs of its members.

Mexico

National Coordination of GEF Projects

GEF Focal Points

In Mexico, the Ministry of Finance and Public Debt (SHCP) is the political focal point for GEF, since Mexico's contributions to GEF are handled with the same administrative procedures as those to multi- and bilateral financial organizations. Mexico also provides the GEF Council member for the constituency that includes Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama (alternate), and Venezuela.

SHCP has asked the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources, and Fisheries (SEMARNAP) to operate as the GEF technical focal point in order to provide appropriate support to projects in GEF's four thematic areas. Since SEMARNAP participates in regional and international forums on biodiversity and climate change, increased representation of the constituency's concerns and positions can be expected.

Other Stakeholders

CONABIO. The National Commission for Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO) is the Mexican agency responsible for implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and therefore is the executing agency for Chapter 6 Biodiversity enabling activities. Outputs of these enabling activities include the publication of a country study and National Biodiversity Strategy, as well as the identification of elements for a biodiversity action plan. CONABIO also serves as the Mexican national focal point for a CBD clearinghouse.

Beyond its CBD-related activities, CONABIO also participates in the National Coordination Committee (NCC—see below), representing the academic sector. Additional collaboration between CONABIO and GEF is accomplished through the participation of its national coordinator, Dr. José Sarukhán, on the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel.

National Coordination Committee. Over the past few years, interest in GEF has risen greatly, particularly in the nongovernmental sector following the development of the medium-sized project facility. In the government sector, several entities in addition to

those involved with the environment have become engaged in GEF climate change project development and execution, principally those responsible for agriculture, energy, and urban transport. Consequently, to help the GEF political focal point manage the resulting demand for information and evaluation services, a National Coordination Committee for GEF proposals has been formed.

The NCC is chaired by SCHP, through the director for International Finance Organizations, and political focal point with GEF. SEMARNAP, through its International Affairs Office (the GEF technical focal point), provides the NCC co-chair and secretary. Representatives from the Foreign Relations; Social Development; Agriculture, Livestock, and Rural Development (SAGAR); and Energy Ministries also participate in the NCC. As noted above, CONABIO represents the academic sector; while the nongovernmental organization (NGO) community is represented by Pronatura, a national conservationist group that serves as the GEF NGO focal point for the Mesoamerican region. Finally, the three GEF implementing agencies participate through their local offices.

Although there is no specific session calendar, the NCC meets approximately once every three months, or more often depending on the number of new initiatives to be presented or issues to be discussed. Committee statutes have been drawn up and adopted that establish the meeting format, committee activities, procedures for project evaluation, committee structure and members, etc. Materials are distributed prior to each committee meeting with defined agendas and accompanying literature, when necessary. Minutes are prepared and distributed for comment and approval by committee members. Presentations on the National Biodiversity Strategy, Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings, and GEF Council meetings have been delivered to the NCC, allowing for increased knowledge sharing and intersectoral coordination on common themes.

GEF Coordination Unit. SEMARNAP and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have created a technical assistance program designed to help the Mexican government identify, promote, and prepare GEF initiatives. This GEF Coordination Unit is comprised of two full-time personnel—a project coordinator and an administrator—and has funds earmarked for long- and short-term project consultants, workshops, and operational costs. Although this project is part of overall UNDP-SEMARNAP coordination and capacity-building efforts, the GEF Coordination Unit provides support to all three implementing agencies as well as to all sectors of government and civil society. The GEF Coordination Unit can also serve as an appropriate institutional forum for possible linkages between GEF interventions and activities under preparation or execution with Capacity 21, regular implementing agency programs, and the international donor community.

SEMARNAP provides financial resources for the operation of the GEF Coordination Unit, and the local UNDP office supplies technical and logistical support. Support from UNDP headquarters includes expert missions, review and evaluation of proposals, and overall orientation. Direct contacts are maintained between the GEF Coordination Unit in Mexico and the GEF/SEED office at UNDP headquarters on project development issues as well as strategic issues related to the GEF secretariat, GEF Council, and the GEF operational strategy in the Mexican national context.

National Coordination of GEF Projects

Project Coordination Process

The GEF project national coordination process begins once the implementing agencies and/or the GEF Coordination Unit have evaluated a proposed concept and elaborated

a first document, with the assistance of the promoting agency or group. Once the proposal is presented to the NCC, it is subjected to a process of technical evaluation by at least four reviewers. These reviewers are selected on the basis of project goals (technical, region of interest, ecosystem type, GEF thematic area), and may be from specialized government offices, members of academia, or part of the NGO community; they are not necessarily members of the NCC.

The evaluation process has been designed to minimize subjectivity by the reviewers, with criteria applied to ensure that proposals will not negatively affect national programs and policy guidelines. While complementarity with government initiatives is considered a positive factor, the government role with respect to medium-sized projects is limited to ensure consistency between social initiatives and national policy.

The benefits of this procedure include stronger linkages between technical agencies within government, co-responsibility, and identification of areas (both technical and geographical) of common interest between government and other sectors. Additionally, this open process of project presentation and evaluation allows for increased interagency coordination, with the NCC serving as an additional forum for the implementing agencies to exchange information and share institutional priorities.

While the NCC was initially conceived as a sanctioning body for medium-sized project proposals, in practice the GEF political focal point has also relied on the NCC to review and evaluate full projects in areas such as rural energy generation and urban transport. In this respect, requests for PDF-B donations have been increasingly included in the NCC work program.

Stakeholder Consultations. As mentioned above, a key group of stakeholders are engaged ex profeso for the medium-sized proposal review process. At a national level, permanent consultations are held with a wide audience of conservationist NGOs on national policy issues. Several forums exist in Mexico for policy review and endorsement, in which representatives from the different levels of government, academia, the social sector, parliamentarians, and the private sector are encouraged to provide comments and recommendations on policy initiatives. These forums include the National Consultative Council on Sustainable Development with its four regional councils, the National Council on Protected Areas, the National Forestry Council, various watershed councils, and regional soil conservation and restoration councils, fisheries councils, etc.

Compliance With Implementing Agency Requirements on Stakeholder Participation. In addition to the national consultation processes detailed above, GEF projects must comply with the various requirements stipulated by the relevant implementing agency for stakeholder participation. These requirements include the preparation of indigenous peoples development plans, socioeconomic analyses, and stakeholder analyses; creation of project-specific consultative bodies; and implementation of stakeholder workshops. Compliance is generally met on a case-by-case basis, in spite of the fact that many of these processes are already required under national legislation for normal government programs.

With respect to specific GEF initiatives, the restructured project for Conservation in 10 Selected Protected Areas in Mexico was subjected to a national consultative process in 1997; participants in this ranged from indigenous campesinos to corporate executives. Recently, two GEF proposals have been presented to the National Council on Protected Areas and the National Consultative Council on Forestry for evaluation. In both cases, the review process was carried out to promote increased transparency and social participation.

Other National Coordination Efforts. The Foreign Relations Ministry coordinates with the UN agencies, as well as with most international development agencies, through its Institute of Technical Cooperation (ITC). Periodic meetings on agency work programs

are held in the ministry to review the progress of the technical assistance programs being implemented in the country. In most cases, the responsible government agencies are requested to provide the Foreign Relations Ministry with information on sector priorities and necessities; these are then communicated to the UN and official development assistance agencies.

Audits of technical assistance programs with the diverse agencies are mandatory; with regard to GEF, these include audits of preparatory activities with the UN implementing agencies, enabling activities, and full-scale projects. The audits are normally carried out by the compliance areas of government agencies, and the findings are made available to the ITC as well as to the relevant implementing agency.

Representatives of the ITC participate in the NCC. By request of the GEF focal points, the ITC periodically informs the donor community on GEF initiatives in order to promote links between these initiatives and the country's overall donor coordination.

Dissemination of GEF-related Information

The GEF Coordination Unit has a modest budget for the dissemination of GEF-related information; this includes resources for project workshops, preparation and translation (when necessary) of documents, and presentations. Through the project Web site on the local UNDP server, the GEF Coordination Unit has an additional venue for project-related information, albeit at an administrative level. A more informative and useful Web site for the Coordination Unit is currently under preparation, which will contain information on GEF, the implementing agencies, project preparation, and individual projects.

The GEF Coordination Unit has conducted an outreach effort to engage the private sector through presentations on GEF thematic areas. In 1999, presentations were made to the U.S.-Mexico Chamber of Commerce, the national chapter of the Transformation Industry Association, the Association for Environmentalist Lawyers, and the Environmental Protection Division of the national oil company PEMEX. Special presentations have also been made to private sector agencies in the context of specific projects that could include microenterprise efforts.

Project development workshops, incremental cost workshops, and general GEF dissemination workshops have been carried out; and a series of joint implementing agency-NGO workshops have been scheduled during 2000 to increase local and regional understanding of GEF, GEF thematic areas, and the incremental cost concept. These latter will be carried out in various regions of Mexico as part of an overall outreach effort.

Challenges

The political focal point in the Finance Ministry is also the sector coordinator for the multilateral finance organizations and national development banks. The extensive experience of the focal point with macro- and microeconomic issues, finance, and development trends has proved to be invaluable in GEF project identification and design. Nevertheless, in practice, there has been more daily interaction between the focal point and the World Bank than with the other agencies.

One of the added-value benefits inherent in the NCC is that increased coordination and a higher "comfort level" have been attained between the UN system implementing agencies and the GEF political focal point. In this respect, the NCC has served to balance the interaction between the focal point and the implementing agencies. This is true internally as well, with increased cooperation between the Finance, Environment, and Foreign

Relations Ministries resulting from the relatively frequent meetings of the NCC and the common interests demonstrated in developing and coordinating GEF initiatives.

Although NGO participation has been constant in the NCC, there have been some issues about representation, and, over the long-term, it may be necessary to create a formal rotating mechanism at the national level. Nevertheless, there is a very high degree of communication and shared responsibility between the NGO community and the Mexican government, ranging from shared implementation agreements for GEF and non-GEF projects to NGO evaluation of government policies and programs. Workshops on GEF procedures, incremental costs, and the promotion of medium-sized grants should continue to increase NGO interest in and capacity for GEF-related issues and projects.

Communication With GEF

At the national level, the political and technical focal points work very closely with the implementing agencies on regular program issues as well as with regard to the GEF portfolio. The implementing agencies have instituted an interagency coordination effort in addition to their participation in the NCC in order to share information on institutional priorities and initiatives.

Direct communication is maintained with the GEF secretariat on specific project progress as well as on Council work programs and special issues. After proposals have passed the evaluation process delineated above, the political focal point issues endorsement letters; these provide appropriate guarantees to the focal point on issues such as national priorities, sectoral priorities, and stakeholder participation.

The various actors involved in GEF coordination—principally the focal points—promote periodic high-level meetings between government and GEF secretariat officials on issues related to individual projects and new initiatives, and on overall strategies to be developed between the country and GEF.

On a technical level, Mexico has been included in several independent evaluations carried out at the behest of the GEF secretariat. Lessons learned from these evaluations have been incorporated into national coordination mechanisms and project preparation processes. Two of the most important of these evaluations include the overall study on the GEF experience in Mexico carried out in 1997 and the evaluation of the GEF enabling activities conducted in January 1999. The agenda for these evaluations was prepared by UNDP, with SEMARNAP and the political focal point providing logistic support and background materials.

Similarly, the conclusions of the National Environmental Funds project carried out in 1998 have been incorporated in new project initiatives with GEF through the Mexican Fund for Nature Conservation in coordination with SEMARNAP. Coordination efforts between the federal government and FMCN have been enhanced through shared responsibility for biodiversity conservation actions and identification of common interests.

National Coordination of the Conventions

Convention on Biological Diversity

Focal Point. As mentioned above, CONABIO is the executing agency for the CBD in Mexico and has been responsible for the implementation of biodiversity enabling activities. Overall responsibility for the CBD rests with SEMARNAP, and intersectoral coordination is carried out by the the ministry's International Affairs Office. This office has a

mid-level management unit assigned to coordinate Mexico's participation in the COP. Other responsibilities include the integration of documents addressing issues on SEMARNAP areas of responsibility with CBD policy recommendations and activities regarding fisheries, natural resource use, conservation trends, policy reform, etc.

Other Stakeholders. Other entities are also involved in CBD-related national activities, including the Ministry of Social Development, particularly through its National Institute for Indigenous Affairs; SAGAR, for issues on agro-biodiversity, retention of the agricultural frontier, and agricultural subsidies and policy reform; and the Foreign Relations Ministry in its role as the agency that assists SEMARNAP in the integration of official delegations for the COP and that tracks national commitments.

Regional Efforts. Through the initiative of SEMARNAP and the regional United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) office, an Interagency Technical Committee has been created to support the Environmental Ministers' Forum for Latin America and the Caribbean. This committee is composed of Economic Council for Latin America and the Caribbean, Inter-American Development Bank, UNDP, UNEP, and World Bank representatives, and has identified the following regional priorities: institutional framework and tools for environmental management, integrated watershed management, biological diversity and protected areas, and climate change.

Linkages to GEF. Discussions are currently underway between Mexico and the GEF secretariat to design a pilot Programmatic Framework for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use. This framework would reinforce the activities and strategies that have been identified under the National Biodiversity Strategy and its future action plan. The pipeline that has been identified with the implementing agencies would reinforce various aspects of national strategies for conservation and sustainable use.

The primary full-sized project to date in Mexico has been the pilot phase for Conservation in 10 Selected Protected Areas in Mexico, which was restructured in 1997 to create an endowment fund. As mentioned above, GEF enabling activities have been carried out by CONABIO. Project identification and preparation capacities have been strengthened through these two initiatives, allowing for the identification of the current, ambitious pipeline.

Challenges. The integration of the environmental sector in 1994 placed the regulation, rational use, and enforcement of all renewable natural resources under one institutional mandate. This approach has allowed for a much broader understanding of the cycle of deterioration of the natural resource base as caused by overexploitation, poor regulation, lack of appropriate knowledge, destructive market and policy incentives, and need.

Nevertheless, it has been difficult to engage all of the necessary sectors because of (1) the tendency to favor immediate needs over long-term and restrictive recuperation policies, (2) bureaucratic resistance to make necessary policy reforms, and (3) the difficulties inherent in proposing a new way of doing things after centuries of established production patterns.

Over the long term, limits on natural resource use will need to be compensated by better understanding of sustainable use efforts; new and more equitable schemes for benefit sharing, appropriate valuation of natural resources; and—most of all—through the integration of what are now environmental externalities in the productive infrastructure, and finance sectors in Mexico. Similarly, increased synergy between the CBD and the UNFCCC is needed to provide incentives for natural resource conservation and control of pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

CONABIO has involved an unprecedented number of sectors in the consultative process used to integrate the country study and National Biodiversity Strategy, using a methodology that was recently recognized as a “best practice” by the GEF interim review of

biodiversity enabling activities. The continued (and compensated) engagement of these sectors will be necessary for successful implementation of the action plan.

CBD Bio-Security Protocol

Focal Point. An Interagency Commission on Bio-security and Genetically Modified Organisms was created in 1999 through a presidential decree. The commission, which reports to SAGAR, is composed of representatives from SEMARNAP; the Ministries of Health, Finance, Trade and Industrial Development, and Public Education; and the National Council on Science and Technology. An official charter has been drawn up and adopted that provides for regular and extraordinary meeting schedules, procedures, and additional functions.

Commission responsibilities include overall national policy coordination for bio-security issues such as production, import/export, reproduction, consumption, and general use of genetically modified organisms and derived products. The inaugural tasks of the commission included the integration and preparation of the Mexican delegation to the recent protocol negotiations in Montreal.

Other Stakeholders. In 1999, the Mexican Senate initiated a public consultation process involving government agencies, the Bio-security Commission, the private sector, and NGOs aimed at providing consensus for a proposed bill on the use and control of genetically modified seeds. A draft bill is expected to be prepared for consideration during the 2000 legislative session.

Challenges. The private sector in Mexico that produces or imports/exports genetically modified material needs to be more fully engaged in the implementation of the protocol. The commercial implications of the protocol have not yet been identified with precision; however, the participation of SECOFI in the commission indicates that the sector is prepared to understand and participate in the implementation process. Many studies are still needed to determine the country's vulnerability (economic, biological) to genetically modified commerce.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Focal Point. The National Ecology Institute (INE), a semi-autonomous regulatory agency of SEMARNAP, is the national focal point for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and has carried out the associated GEF enabling activities through UNDP. These activities have included preparation of the National Communication, vulnerability studies, and emissions mapping. Currently INE, with support and input from SEMARNAP, is working on the establishment of a National Office for Climate Change, which would coordinate the country's efforts on additional studies; certify emissions reduction activities, including those related to the Clean Development Mechanisms; and centralize information collection and services.

Other Stakeholders. Mexico has created an Intersecretarial Committee on Climate Change, which includes representatives from SEMARNAP, and the Ministries of Energy, SECOFI, Foreign Relations, Communications and Transport, and Social Development, as well as the National Association of Industry. This committee was responsible for preparing and negotiating the National Climate Change Action Plan, which was published in spring 1999. The committee, which is chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Relations, meets regularly and prepares Mexico's position for the COP, as well as deals with issues related to the Clean Development Mechanisms, national priorities, and benefit sharing. The Energy Ministry's National Commission on Energy Savings and Institute for Electrical Re-

search are working with all three levels of government on demand- and supply-side energy projects designed to increase efficiency and promote alternative energy sources. Additionally, several industry associations exist for solar, wind, and hydroelectric generation organizations.

Linkages to GEF. A pilot project in climate change promoted the establishment of a financial mechanism to help address demand-side energy efficiency issues through the purchase of domestic high-efficiency compact fluorescent lighting units. An additional full-scale project was approved in 1999 for alternative energy production in rural, off-grid communities in Mexico. A project designed for a solar-thermal generation model in Baja California State presented in the December 1999 Council was recommended for further review before approval.

The GEF-financed enabling activities were restricted to the elaboration of the First National Communication on Climate Change. Other activities in the context of climate change, such as the country study and the Emissions Register and Vulnerability Study, were carried out with the financial assistance of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Several proposals have been identified to promote increased energy efficiency, the use of new technologies in urban transport, and the development of alternative energy sources. Particularly in the case of alternative energy, much work is still required with regard to barrier removal, especially in the legal and administrative framework.

Challenges. Significant differences of opinion exist among the various actors involved in climate change discussions in country, with the scientific community willing to accept voluntary commitments, and the government and private sectors opposed to any type of commitments—voluntary or otherwise.

Climate change scenarios need to be further integrated in the country's infrastructure, agricultural, fisheries, and disaster prevention sectors, as they can be used to approximate future cost benefits of investments in these areas. A concept paper on early detection of climate change through monitoring of flora and fauna populations has been prepared for discussion with the implementing agencies as a possible GEF initiative.

Rapid progress must be made in establishing a Mexican Office on Climate Change, which would serve as a focal organization to effectively engage all stakeholders in climate change issues. Several proposals have been made for this office, but these have not taken into account all of the stakeholders, particularly those from the forestry sector. Nearly 80 percent of Mexico's forests are community-owned, so that positive engagement of this sector in climate change benefit sharing could provide a sustainable alternative to irrational forest resource use.

Convention to Combat Desertification

Focal Point. SEMARNAP is the national focal point for the Convention to Combat Desertification through its General Directorate for Soil Conservation and Restoration. This administrative and technical office operates an extension program for soil conservation and productivity techniques, with special emphasis on high-risk areas as defined by a national vulnerability map. A National Soils Council has also been established, with regional councils or committees formed in irrigation districts and watershed councils.

Other Stakeholders. The General Directorate for Soil Conservation and Restoration works closely with the National Water Commission, SAGAR, and Social Development Ministry on issues ranging from watershed management, soil productivity, green fertilizers, demonstrative parcels, and impact mitigation on irrigation infrastructure.

Regional Efforts. In 1999, Mexico signed an agreement with the convention secre-

ariat to create a Regional Coordination Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, based in the UNEP regional office in Mexico City. Current efforts of this office include the negotiation of a pilot project with FIDE in Mexico to reorient current agricultural incentives toward the inclusion of soil retention and restoration techniques as eligibility requirements. In addition, an outreach program has been designed to help campesinos incorporate soil conservation in their tilling and sowing practices.

Convention Implementation. Mexico was the first country to present its National Study on Desertification to the convention secretariat and currently assists other countries in the preparation of their own studies under a policy that recognizes desertification as a global phenomenon. Participants include SEMARNAP; SAGAR; the National Institute of Ecology; the National Institute for Forestry, Livestock, and Agriculture Research; state and municipal government; ejidos; and technical service providers.

Linkages to GEF. A UNEP-administered, regional GEF project is currently under PDF-B preparation in seven countries including Mexico. Problems related to soil erosion, degradation valuation and control, and soil biodiversity are being researched in two tropical regions in the country, which have been chosen because of their convergence with GEF interventions in biodiversity conservation in protected areas. Lessons learned will be incorporated into the Regional Coordination Office's strategic planning and technical outreach programs, and will help identify parameters for increased productivity in sustainable use efforts in the buffer zones of the protected areas.

Challenges. Many of the activities planned under the focal point's work program may not be eligible for GEF financing under current operational programs. Much research is required to fill gaps in knowledge and understanding of the interaction between soil health and anthropogenic activity. Policy reform is urgently required to incorporate adequate soil management as a fundamental part of the system of agricultural incentives and subsidies. Other externalities, such as the country's vulnerability to climate change and projected changes in precipitation and drought cycles, must also be included in agricultural planning.

National Coordination of GEF Council Matters

Main Actors

Preparation for GEF Council meetings includes the evaluation of Council documents and the preparation of opinion papers and recommendations on relevant issues; these latter are channeled through the technical focal point. Ad hoc consultations are also carried out with regional environmental authorities, both through SEMARNAP and the Foreign Relations Ministry; there are no specific procedures guiding these consultations, however.

Since its inception in 1998, the NCC has been responsible for preparing the political focal point for Council Meetings through discussion of council documents and evaluation of specific issues. Outcomes of Council meetings are presented to the NCC in order to keep the principal stakeholders informed of relevant GEF initiatives and policies.

Other Stakeholders

Within SEMARNAP, the GEF Coordination Unit serves as liaison between the political focal point and the implementing agencies to ensure appropriate incorporation of the various viewpoints. Aside from the NCC mechanism, NGOs are consulted on an ad hoc basis with respect to Council documentation. Indigenous and campesino communities are also consulted on a case-by-case basis on issues such as land tenure schemes and cultural heritage.

Council Member and Constituency Consultations

As noted earlier, Mexico is the Council member for the constituency representing Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama (alternate), and Venezuela. As Mexico is the only country within the constituency to have provided resources for the constitution of the instrument and subsequent replenishments, it has retained the Council representation for the constituent seat. In practice, while there has been a perceived lack of sensitivity to the concerns of the other constituent countries with the Mexican representation, there has been scant participation by the alternate in Council meetings.

Before Council meetings, SHCP circulates the Council documents to its counterpart agencies in the other constituent countries. Very little input has been provided by the other countries with regard to these Council documents or on specific issues, with the exception of one other country that has expressed interest in becoming the alternate representative.

Challenges

At present, there is no agreed-upon method to rotate Council representation within the constituency, and Mexico's general position on this issue is that while it remains the only contributing country in the constituency, it should retain the Council representation. Additional efforts should be made to incorporate the concerns and positions of the other constituent countries through direct contact between the Council member and his or her counterparts, increased engagement of the Foreign Relations Ministry in addressing these coordination issues in the context of regional forums, and constituency strengthening workshops.

Peru

National GEF Focal Point

The GEF national focal point in Peru is the National Environmental Council, or Consejo Nacional del Ambiente (CONAM), the Peruvian environmental authority. CONAM is a public institution, created by law in 1994, whose main responsibility is to ensure that the country has an adequate environmental legal framework and that any public or private activity is carried out according to this framework. CONAM is governed by a seven-member board of directors, three of whom are appointed by the central government, one by representatives of local governments, one by representatives of regional governments, and two by the private sector.

Unlike the model many countries have adopted for their national environmental authorities, CONAM is neither a ministry nor a national agency charged with enforcing compliance with environmental legislation. Rather, its role is more that of a facilitator whose aim is to ensure that an environmental orientation permeates throughout the country's social structure. To this end, CONAM has promoted the establishment of environmental authorities within the administrative structure of each of the ministries governing the different sectors of the economy, thus transferring the responsibility for overseeing compliance with environmental regulations to the entities charged with regulating productive activities.

CONAM has established a number of regional environmental commissions throughout the country to help build community participation. The aim of these decentralized entities is to involve as many local stakeholders as possible and help them identify the most important environmental problems in their region, their extent, and their probable causes. This effort has allowed CONAM to identify local institutions that are both interested in and have the requisite technical capabilities to deal with environmental issues. The initiative has decentralized the national environmental authority and transferred responsibility for some local environmental problems to the regional level.

To ensure that these regional environmental commissions are gradually incorporated into the national environmental system, CONAM has organized a number of workshops in each region, again promoting participation by as many stakeholders as possible. One workshop was devoted to disseminating information on GEF—the opportunities it offers

and the procedures to be followed in preparing and submitting projects for funding.

Before CONAM was established, a number of public institutions handled environmental affairs; those related to GEF had been administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which had temporarily served as the GEF political and operational focal point for the country. When all environmental responsibilities were transferred to the newly created environmental authority in 1995, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested that CONAM attend to those matters related to GEF, making it the GEF focal point.

Because the Ministry of Foreign Affairs still plays a very active role in most of the environmental commissions CONAM has set up to discuss environmental matters of national or international relevance, any action or decision CONAM adopts as GEF political focal point is closely coordinated with ministry representatives. Coordination meetings are held with these representatives prior to and following each GEF Council meeting, and a staff member of the Peruvian Embassy in Washington has been designated to oversee all GEF-related matters. Besides keeping the national focal point informed of all relevant developments at GEF's Washington headquarters, this person participates in all Council meetings as an advisor.

National Coordination of GEF Projects

CONAM has established an internal system for the development of GEF projects, promoting ongoing interaction among the following main actors:

- Implementing agencies
- Biodiversity, Climate Change, and Desertification National Commissions
- Academic institutions, primarily universities
- Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

As the GEF national focal point, CONAM has played an important role in facilitating information exchange between institutions interested in developing GEF projects and the GEF implementing agencies. This coordination effort continues throughout the entire project cycle, from project inception through preparation of final documents.

So that all interested parties have ready access to the information required to prepare their projects, CONAM has distributed and made available to most public and private institutions in Peru all the printed material prepared by GEF for this purpose. In addition, CONAM sponsored a 1998 workshop in Lima aimed at training participants in the process of preparing the documentation needed to submit medium-sized projects. CONAM requested and received technical assistance from the World Bank and the Fundación Ecológica Universal, an Argentine environmental NGO, to present this workshop.

To implement GEF projects, CONAM has elected to set up a steering committee for each project. These committees are not only responsible for supervising the execution of all GEF-financed projects, but also for generating consensus, and, wherever possible, incorporating new actors in the management and achievement of project goals and objectives. Committee members are drawn from both the public and private sectors to ensure the broadest possible coverage of information and involvement.

CONAM has used several mechanisms to disseminate information on GEF projects, notably including the following:

- CONAM's web page

- Workshops organized throughout the country to distribute information and train people in project preparation
- Designation of a person responsible for GEF projects within CONAM to distribute information, advise any person or institution interested in submitting a project, and coordinate actions with the implementing agencies.

The main challenges of national-level coordination that CONAM has faced so far have been the following:

- Ensuring that all potential project generators are aware of the opportunities GEF offers in turning their initiatives into projects
- Educating stakeholders in the opportunities GEF projects offer to join forces and capabilities to work as a team
- Incorporating the private sector into the GEF “family.”

These challenges have been partially overcome to date by organizing CONAM-sponsored presentations and workshops at which these issues are openly discussed and analyzed with all stakeholders.

The level of communication with GEF is adequate and has been accomplished mainly through the country’s Council representative, who submits a comprehensive report following each Council session and who meets regularly with the local representatives of the implementing agencies to discuss the latest news on GEF activities.

National Coordination of the Conventions

Peru has established three national commissions to ensure adequate coordination between country activities and those recommended by the various conventions:

- The Biodiversity National Commission
- The Climate Change National Commission
- The Desertification National Commission.

The first two commissions are led by CONAM; the third is led by the National Institute for Natural Resources. All three commissions have a mixed public-private composition, and each is responsible for establishing national priorities in its field of interest.

These national commissions were originally established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1992, but responsibility for their leadership was transferred to CONAM in 1994, with a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sitting on the commissions as a member. The commissions have since been reorganized, and new members incorporated. The incorporation of representatives from local communities, the private sector, academia, and NGOs has helped enrich the process and broaden the view of the national commissions. The commissions are more active now than in the past, meeting regularly under CONAM leadership and guidance.

Efforts were made early on to disseminate all information published by the conventions and GEF to ensure that all members were aware of the country’s commitments pursuant to the conventions. National priorities were established and agreed upon by the commission members; next, technical working teams were formed within each commis-

sion to define the strategy to be followed for each priority. These national priorities are regularly reviewed and updated by the commissions, which report their findings and concerns directly to CONAM.

Some challenges remain in integrating the positions and policies developed for purposes of the conventions with activities undertaken with GEF financing, although these are becoming less critical as stakeholders understand and value the opportunities offered by a financial mechanism that interacts directly and permanently with the conventions. The fact that CONAM, the GEF national focal point, presides over these commissions has paved the way to overcoming some of these challenges and facilitated the integration of individual or group positions with activities that can be financed with GEF funds.

One of the most successful experiences in integrating the conventions and GEF processes at the national level has been the organization of national workshops, sponsored by CONAM, aimed at establishing a priority list of those subjects considered important for the country. These workshops continued and built on the efforts of the national commissions. Once the commissions had identified what they considered to be the country's most important environmental problems, a screening process was carried out to classify them according to their nature and significance. It was decided to organize a series of workshops at which each commission could tackle the challenge of generating a priority list of problems. With the assistance of trained facilitators, the commissions were then asked to identify those that could apply for GEF funding and those for which other sources of finance should be sought.

Besides helping commission members focus on these issues, the exercise was very effective in promoting the idea that GEF could assist the country in solving some of its problems. These workshops were also used as an opportunity to discuss and analyze some GEF-funded projects under way in other countries or regions so participants could become familiar with the GEF project cycle. Public entities that had already worked on GEF-funded projects were invited to make presentations at these workshops and share their experiences with the participants.

National Coordination of GEF Council Matters

The main actors involved in national coordination of GEF Council matters are:

- The Biodiversity, Climate Change, and Desertification National Commissions
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- The GEF implementing agencies
- The private sector
- Academic institutions, mainly universities
- NGOs.

Regular meetings are held within CONAM to inform all stakeholders of the main issues discussed at the GEF Council meetings, and copies of the Joint Summary of the Chairs are made available to all parties involved.

The country Council representative keeps the CONAM board of directors informed of GEF activities. He also meets regularly with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure that Peruvian diplomatic representatives are aware of the issues that are currently being discussed at the national level, especially those related to the conventions.

The Council member normally meets with the heads of each of the national commissions and with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before and after each Council meeting to ensure that he is well aware of the projects that have been submitted for approval and those that are being executed.

Since the current Council member is also a member of the CONAM board of directors, all GEF information flows from and to the institution that coordinates these matters.

Coordination with other countries in our GEF constituency—including Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay—is carried out through a procedure established when the constituency was set up. At that time, it was agreed to rotate the chair among all country members so each representative would occupy the chair for two consecutive Council meetings; the alternate is the representative who is to occupy the chair in the following two meetings. This arrangement ensures a gradual introduction for the alternate representative, who shares responsibility with and helps the Council member convey all information from the member countries to their representative in the Council.

A coordination meeting is normally held in Washington the day before each Council meeting, hosted by the Council member's embassy. The constituency representatives bring to this meeting instructions from their respective governments regarding ideas, concerns, and suggestions that need to be addressed; these are discussed extensively. This process ensures that the Council member and alternate are briefed on the positions the constituency holds on the various matters that are to be discussed in the Council meeting.

Between Council meetings, the Council member and alternate are kept informed by the other country representatives—normally by e-mail—of all relevant issues; thus, by the time the coordination meeting is held, they are simply updated on these matters.

This system has proven to work very well, and we would recommend it to other constituencies that are seeking a way to improve their internal coordination procedures.

Recommendations for Improving National Coordination

Regarding the lessons learned to further improve the national coordination process, we stress the need to identify new stakeholders who might already be working toward the same goals, but, due to limitations in their resources or contacts, have not yet been integrated into the GEF family.

The need to disseminate information on GEF activities in a simple and summarized way could be very effective in generating interest within those organizations that are not yet benefiting from the opportunities that GEF offers.

We feel that universities, for example, offer a unique opportunity to extend the reach of GEF projects, especially if they work together with equivalent institutions in the region.

In most countries, universities are, unlike some NGOs or public entities, well-established, respected, and permanent institutions with a great potential for influencing national policies and public opinion. They are normally well staffed, with good knowledge of the national and regional realities, very creative, and always on the lookout for new ways to participate in long-term national development programs. In addition, universities have the potential to disseminate information, ideas, and technologies in a very efficient manner.

In most developing countries, universities are poorly financed, and, although they might receive some government funds, cannot be considered to be governmental organizations, since they try to strengthen their independence through the exercise of freedom of thought, teaching, and internal organization. Even under some of the most autocratic regimes, universities have managed to survive as one of the few truly democratic and open institutions in most countries: this is a key attribute in dealing with GEF activities.

Poland

National Coordination of GEF Projects

Since 1998, GEF's institutional arrangements in Poland have consisted of a political focal point, an operational focal point, and the National GEF Steering Committee.

Political Focal Point

The political focal point is the director of the Department for UN Economic and Social Affairs in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The role of the political focal point is to:

- Endorse project proposals
- Liaise with the GEF secretariat
- Disseminate information on GEF in Poland
- Represent Poland at GEF Council meetings
- Prepare positions on GEF matters
- Collect information on GEF projects implemented in Poland
- Chair the National GEF Steering Committee.

Operational Focal Point

EcoFund serves as the GEF operational focal point in Poland. This fund finances projects in four areas of environmental protection: reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, reduction of transboundary pollution by sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, reduction of Baltic Sea pollution, and conservation of biodiversity. It is financed by debts forgiven by creditor nations (the United States, France, Switzerland, Sweden, Italy). As the GEF operational focal point, the EcoFund:

- Identifies project proposals
- Assesses projects in terms of GEF eligibility, technology, financial viability, environmental benefits, etc.

- Helps project proponents elaborate on their GEF grant applications.

National GEF Steering Committee

The National GEF Steering Committee's tasks are as follows:

- Recommend possible project endorsements to the political focal point
- Determine priority areas for GEF cooperation
- Evaluate projects proposed for GEF financing
- Periodically assess project implementation
- Comment on project application documents
- Recommend steps to be taken for appropriate implementation of GEF projects to the minister of Foreign Affairs
- Provide advice on GEF Council and GEF General Assembly matters
- Provide advice on matters related to cooperation within the constituency
- Cooperate with GEF representatives visiting Poland
- Disseminate information on GEF.

The members of the steering committee are representatives of:

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs—chair (GEF political focal point)
- The Ministry of Environment
- The Ministry of Economy
- The Ministry of Finance
- The national secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- The national secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity
- The national bureau for the Montreal Protocol of the Vienna Convention on Ozone Layer Depleting Substances (Ozone Layer Protection Unit)
- The Department of Water Management in the Ministry of Environment
- EcoFund (GEF operational focal point)
- The National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management
- A nongovernmental organization (NGO).

EcoFund and the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management

The National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management is an independent financial institution established to promote projects in the field of environmental protection and water management. The fund manages finances derived from:

- Fees for economic use of the natural environment and penalties for violation of pollution emission limits

- Loan payments
- Exploitation fees
- Financial operations and investments.

Key mechanisms for financing environmental tasks are preferential loans that can be partly forgiven, direct subsidies, and supplements to commercial credits.

EcoFund and the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management have large portfolios of project proposals; some portion of those proposals may be eligible for GEF. Representatives of both funds thus participate in the work of the National GEF Steering Committee in order to use their experience in evaluating project proposals and identifying potential new projects for GEF financing.

GEF Small Grants Program

The GEF Small Grants Program (SGP) has been implemented in Poland with great success. An SGP coordinator disseminates information on SGP among many small local organizations and communities, and has thereby attracted many interesting projects. Small grants are also sometimes used in developing larger, even regional, projects. The SGP coordinator acts as a liaison to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) unit responsible for GEF projects and, in this capacity, is often invited to steering committee meetings.

GEF Project Approval

A project proposal is submitted to the GEF political focal point, operational focal point, National GEF Steering Committee, or one of its members. The steering committee considers the project to determine if, in its preliminary opinion, the project fulfills the criteria of GEF and the Polish Environmental Policy. If so, a project proposal is elaborated with the assistance of the operational focal point and, if appropriate, a GEF implementing agency. In this regard, UNDP experts have provided us with much valuable assistance by helping develop applications for several projects. When the project application is ready—or earlier if the idea of project is clear—the steering committee considers it, approves it, and recommends its endorsement to the political focal point. The political focal point sends its endorsement letter on to the implementing agency or GEF secretariat.

In many instances, an implementing agency elaborates on a project proposal and submits it to the focal point for endorsement. In these cases, the political focal point consults with the steering committee before final endorsement.

The steering committee monitors project implementation. Project managers are invited to steering committee meetings to report on progress. When there are difficulties in implementation, the steering committee may recommend that the minister for Foreign Affairs consult with other relevant ministers to remove obstacles or speed up procedures.

It is very difficult to find interesting projects given the long lag time between identification of a project and signing of a grant agreement. This time frame exceeds the EcoFund and National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management project planning cycle. Those institutions require that money be spent within one year from the date of assignment. Thus, projects must be submitted earlier to GEF than to EcoFund or the National Fund—and then the financing of the project might be not closed.

National Coordination of the Conventions

Poland has been a party to the UNFCCC since 1994, to the Convention on Biological Diversity since 1996, to the Montreal Protocol since 1990, and to its London Amendment since 1996. Poland has not yet signed or acceded to the Convention to Combat Desertification, but preliminary work in preparing to ratify the convention has been completed and the ratification procedure will begin very soon.

The Ministry of Environment is responsible for implementation of all of the above-mentioned conventions. In this regard, it cooperates with other ministries as appropriate. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also involved in coordination and implementation, particularly with reference to preparing positions on various issues and preparing for participation in convention meetings.

Institutes and researchers assist the Ministry of Environment in implementing the conventions. Civil servants focus on the elaboration of adequate legal framework for same.

The Ministry of Environment has established secretariats for some conventions. These secretariats also assist the ministry in convention implementation and in fulfilling obligations related to reporting. The Climate Convention Executive Bureau is located in the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management; an Ozone Layer Protection Unit is located in the Industrial Chemistry Research Institute. This latter entity is a good example of intersectoral cooperation: it was established by a decision of the Ministry of Economy but also works for the Ministry of Environment. There is no separate secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity. Rather, the Department of Forestry, Nature and Landscape Conservation within the Ministry of Environment performs this function.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The Minister of Environment established a Steering Panel for the Climate Convention to advise him on convention issues and ensure cooperation with other sectors. Steering panel members are representatives of the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Department of Forestry within the Ministry of Environment, Directorate General of State Forests, and National Fund of Environmental Protection and Water Management. The Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Environment chairs the panel. The panel advises the Minister of Environment on matters related to convention implementation and prepares for convention meetings and joint implementation projects. The Committee on Regional Policy and Sustainable Development of the Council of Ministers performs any higher level coordination required with regard to the UNFCCC.

As noted above, the Ministry of Environment has established a Climate Convention Executive Bureau in the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management. This bureau reports to the Department of Environmental Protection within the Ministry of Environment. The bureau:

- Studies official convention documentation.
- Prepares draft positions on the various issues for the Department of Environmental Protection.
- Proposes a program of work—a plan of necessary studies to be undertaken—for the approval of the Department of Environmental Protection.
- Handles daily coordination with the secretariat, including keeping an updated calendar of convention meetings and deadlines for submissions.

- Participates in negotiations.
- Coordinates the preparation of national level communications.

The Joint Implementation (JI) secretariat is part of the bureau; its role is to disseminate information on possible JI projects in Poland, select project proposals and submit them to potential foreign investors, monitor projects, and prepare country reports on JI for the UNFCCC secretariat. In addition, the Ministry of Environment has established an inventory center for preparing emission inventories required by some conventions; this will also be the core of the inventory system required by the Kyoto Protocol.

Other ministries—e.g., the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Transport—and researchers are involved in the elaboration of positions for convention meetings.

Convention on Biological Diversity

The Ministry has not established a special secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Department of Forestry, Nature and Landscape Conservation in the Ministry of Environment is responsible for implementation of this convention.

Poland has benefited from GEF assistance under some United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) enabling activity projects. Implementation of those projects was supervised by steering committees comprised of various ministries, scientists, and NGOs. A National Biodiversity Strategy was elaborated under a UNEP/GEF project; this was recently approved by the minister of Environment. After consultation with other ministries, the strategy will be submitted to the government for approval. The draft strategy was widely reviewed by scientists (State Nature Conservation Council), nature conservation services, and NGOs.

Other Polish UNEP/GEF enabling activity projects have included one in the area of biodiversity data management and a second on a biosafety framework. The former project was implemented by the Institute of Environmental Protection in which a clearinghouse mechanism is located. The latter project was performed by the Plant Breeding and Acclimatization Institute.

By participating in the National GEF Steering Committee, the representative of the Department of Forestry, Nature and Landscape Conservation is able to inform relevant stakeholders about the possibility of seeking GEF assistance for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The steering committee has preliminarily approved two project concepts for GEF grants proposed by the representative. These ideas, however, require extensive work before they will be “GEFable” project proposals.

National Coordination of GEF Council Matters

The National GEF Steering Committee handles this function. The political focal point presents Council documents and discusses them with committee members. After Council meetings, a verbal report is presented to the committee.

Poland is not a Council member, although, during the last two Council sessions, our representative has replaced a Council member and an alternate who did not attend. Nevertheless, we did not undertake preparations, as we were not to participate in the Council as a member.

There are nine members (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Moldova, FYR Macedonia, Poland, Romania, and Ukraine) in our Council constituency; we have never

all met together. There are considerable coordination problems within our constituency; notably, there are no internal rules governing coordination of a position on Council matters or on the order of rotation for our Council member seat. During the GEF Assembly in Delhi, we agreed that Ukraine would be the member until the end of 1999, but there was no agreement as to which country would be the next member. Ukraine's term has since ended, but we have still reached no decision on this point.

During Poland's Council membership, informal meetings during Council sessions were organized; only a few countries attended those meetings, however. We also tried—unsuccessfully—to organize a coordination meeting of the constituency in Warsaw. For our constituency to play an active role in the work of the GEF Council, a coordination meeting is essential. We believe that this would best be arranged under the auspices of the GEF secretariat.

Senegal

Since March 1999, the Directorate of the Environment and Protected Areas has served as Senegal's GEF operational focal point; the Ministry of the Environment has served as its political focal point. The directorate also houses the entities that serve as focal points for the various conventions, namely:

- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- The Convention on Biological Diversity
- The Convention to Combat Desertification.

This mode of organization simplifies coordination of the activities associated with convention implementation.

National Coordination of GEF Projects

The main actors in country-level coordination of GEF project preparation and execution are:

- The implementing agencies—United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank, and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- The political focal point
- The operational focal point
- The entity responsible for coordinating GEF projects in Senegal
- The Ministry of Finance
- The members of the national committees for the various conventions.

This arrangement has proved effective in the coordination of major countrywide projects. When other projects are submitted, the focal point analyzes them and ascertains whether they comply with Senegal's environmental policy before endorsing them.

Information on GEF is disseminated by the operational focal point at periodic meetings (seminars, workshops) organized by the different national committees within the context of their own particular activities. For instance, the National Committee on Climate Change, the most active committee, has distributed the basic GEF documents to all its members (government departments and agencies, nongovernmental organizations or NGOs, private organizations, civil institutions, manufacturers). This same documentation has been distributed free of charge by UNDP and the World Bank in their capacity as implementing agencies.

The operational focal point made a recent diagnostic assessment of these actions, which led to the following conclusions.

Although Senegal has signed and ratified the various conventions stemming from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, it is not making as much as it could of the opportunities they afford through such mechanisms as the GEF. For instance, it is still not taking full advantage of the possibilities of GEF financing. This situation can be attributed to a lack of knowledge among players in the environmental and natural resource management arena—in particular, grassroots community organizations, NGOs, some government departments and agencies, the public and private sectors, and sources of financing.

In addition, the rare projects submitted to the operational focal point for endorsement, most of which focus on issues of either biodiversity or desertification, generally do not comply with GEF criteria. So far, there have been no national projects in the focal areas of climate change and international waters.

This state of affairs is the result of poor communication and dissemination of information on GEF, which is itself due to the fact that the operational focal point is without resources. No support is available from either government sources or any other institution. Were it not for the fact that the political focal point and the National Committee on Climate Change provided the operational focal point with a computer through the CC-Train project, it would not be able to operate at all and nothing concrete would have been done.

This communication deficit exists in all the other African countries as well. Proof of this was seen at the symposium on Biomass, Energy, and the Environment: Prospects for Africa, held in Abidjan from November 29 to December 3, 1999, under the sponsorship of the World Bank, Energy Institute of the Francophone Countries (IEPF), and others. This event was attended by over 200 energy and environmental experts. When participants were asked to indicate whether they were acquainted with GEF mechanisms, no more than 10 individuals raised their hands. The same question was asked a week later at a training seminar in Montpellier organized by IEPF for some 30 directors and senior officials with responsibilities in the energy and environment fields. The topic was Environmental Challenges and Energy Choices in Developing Countries. On this occasion, fewer than five participants were aware of GEF, and some didn't even know if there was an operational focal point in their country.

We therefore applaud the GEF Council initiative to grant US\$8,500 plus \$8,000 over a three-year period to national coordination entities to be used to strengthen their communications capacity. Although not sufficient, these funds will enable us to achieve the following objective and results.

- Objective: To work through the operational focal point to promote full awareness of GEF mechanisms among the actors in Senegal's energy and environment sectors.
- Results:
 1. Access to the Internet for the operational focal point.

2. Establishment of a GEF Documentation Center, to be associated with the office of the operational focal point.
3. Inauguration of a workable, effective country-level GEF network in Senegal (this process is to begin in late 2000, with activities continuing through 2001 and 2002).

The following tables present further information on these results.

Year 2000: Technical Execution and Financial Plan

Result	Activities	Budget
1. Provide access to Internet for operational focal point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase of modem and connection • User training 	\$250 \$200
2. Establish GEF Documentation Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize • Collect and copy documentation on GEF and conventions • Set up register of GEF projects in Senegal • Arrange two information workshops on GEF and the Documentation Center 	\$5,500
3. Inaugurate GEF network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate regional GEF operational focal points • Organize annual coordination workshop 	\$2,500
TOTAL BUDGET		\$8,450

Years 2001 and 2002: Technical Execution Plan and Financial Projections

Result	Activities	Budget
2. Strengthen Documentation Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update and disseminate documentation on GEF • Update register of GEF projects in Senegal • Summarize proceedings of international conferences • Organize general information workshops 	\$3,000
3. Strengthen GEF network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize national coordination workshop • Organize regional technical workshops on project preparation • Connect regional focal points to Internet 	\$5,000
TOTAL BUDGET		\$8,000

Communications with GEF itself are excellent. We receive the minutes of all meetings regularly, and all projects submitted are forwarded to us for our opinion.

National Coordination of the Conventions

The main actors in national coordination concerning the conventions on biological diversity, climate change, and measures to combat desertification are:

- Those directorates of the Ministry of the Environment and Nature Protection serve as focal points for the various conventions—the Directorate of the Environment for climate change, the Directorate of National Parks for biodiversity, and the Higher Council on the Environment and Natural Resources for anti-desertification measures
- The country offices of the GEF implementing agencies—UNDP (representing itself and UNEP) and the World Bank

- The national committee for each convention, each of which consists of representatives of a wide range of partners—private sector, academia, research institutes, NGOs, consumer protection organizations, farmer associations, etc.—and serves as a forum for consultation among the various partners, for evaluations, and for ratification of policy documents and the like originating in Senegal.

All the above-mentioned partners participate in one way or another in the preparation of major national projects, once the focal point has endorsed them. In the case of medium-scale projects that contribute to implementation of the conventions themselves, the focal point endorses them after verifying that they comply with the government's policies.

The operational focal point has the following roles in implementation of the conventions:

- Convention on Biological Diversity: serves on the Scientific Committee and the National Projects Steering Committee; participates in formulating project terms of reference and monitoring associated contract performance.
- Convention to Combat Desertification: serves as member of the Advisory Committee which conducts the whole process of coordination and monitoring of the National Action Plan.
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: serves as focal point for the convention and as secretary of the national committee.
- Convention on International Waters: serves as focal point for the Regional Seas Programme.
- National Sustainable Development Commission: serves as secretary of the commission, which is responsible for coordinating all conventions associated with the Rio Summit.

An ongoing public debate is considering how to generate synergy among the various conventions and achieve better integration of country-level activities to implement their provisions. One example of successful integration of the conventions-related process on the one hand and GEF on the other is a subregional project sought to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by making buildings more energy-efficient.

National Coordination of GEF Council Matters

There is no coordination in this area.

Recommendations for Improving National Coordination

- GEF needs to put more emphasis on reinforcing the communications capability of the operational focal points. The funds allocated beginning this year (\$8,000-8,500) are a beginning on which to base a real communications policy—indispensable if our countries are to benefit from the opportunities the conventions afford them through GEF. There is good reason to add to these funds in the interests of greater effectiveness.

- The implementing agencies should bolster the efforts of the focal points by supporting their sensitization, training, and information programs and efforts to increase practical awareness and knowledge of GEF instruments.
- GEF, through the implementing agencies, should help create and equip regional networks of GEF focal points to facilitate information dissemination.

The number of subregional workshops to train focal points in the utilization of GEF instruments, and to provide occasions for exchanges of views among them on this subject, should be increased.

South Africa

Introduction

GEF presents South Africa with a valuable funding mechanism through which we can finance projects that have not only a major local but a global impact. The South African GEF focal point views our role as one of a coordinator and facilitator, tasked with the challenge of marrying issues of national interest with issues of global importance.

Furthermore, we see our role as providing the service of unblocking bottlenecks within the system so as to ensure that maximum benefit is achieved. With this in mind, we have ventured into a series of activities aimed at improving our engagement with GEF. These activities include streamlining government procedure, developing South Africa's GEF strategy, bolstering human resources capacity, and hosting (April 4-7, 2000) a GEF Country Dialogue Workshop.

It is important to note that the present workshop, as well as the Country Dialogue Workshop, will vastly contribute to our developing a better understanding of GEF procedures and those of its implementing agencies. This will ultimately improve the manner in which South Africa views and interacts with GEF.

National Coordination of GEF Projects

Main Actors

Following are the primary actors involved in the coordination of GEF projects.

- Government departments
 - Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT)
 - Minister
 - Director-general (GEF focal point)
 - Chief directorates (Biodiversity, Climate Change, etc.)
 - International Liaison and Coordination (ILC)
 - Department of Finance (responsible for signing procedures)
 - Department of Foreign Affairs (GEF political focal point)
 - Department of Water Affairs and Forestry

- Department of Minerals and Energy Affairs
- Provincial government environment departments
- Local authorities (environment departments)
- Statutory bodies (i.e., entities that have been formed as a result of an act)
 - National Botanical Institute
 - South African National Parks
- Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other bodies in the environment field
 - World Wildlife Fund
 - IUCN – World Conservation Union
- Governmental committees and other interest groups
 - MINMEC—committee comprising the minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and the members of the provincial executive council responsible for the environment
 - MINTECH—committee comprising the director-general of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and the provincial heads of environment departments. MINTECH has three working groups:
 - Working Group I: Conservation , Biodiversity, and Heritage
 - Working Group II: Environmental Impact Assessments and Management Planning
 - Working Group III: Integrated Pollution Control and Waste Management
 - Committee for Environmental Coordination (CEC)—comprises the director-generals of national government departments, provincial heads of environment departments, and representatives of organized local government.
 - Portfolio Committee on the Environment
 - GEF implementing agencies
 - World Bank (resident office)
 - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (resident office)
 - United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Process of National Coordination

Any of the main players can propose a project for GEF assistance. The following stakeholders may assist in project development:

- DEAT chief directorates
- Provincial departments and local authorities
- Statutory bodies
- NGOs.

Process Followed in Obtaining GEF Focal Point Endorsement

The following summarizes the GEF project approval process.

A project is forwarded to the GEF focal point.

The GEF focal point consults with the following:

- ILC, to ascertain whether the project is in line with South Africa's GEF strategy; and

- Chief directorates, to ascertain whether the project is in line with national strategy.

If ILC and the chief directorates are satisfied, the project is referred for comment to the following:

- CEC and/or MINMEC and/or MINTECH
- Reference groups—e.g., NGOs, environmental interest groups, independent experts, etc.

If ILC and the chief directorates are not satisfied, the project is referred back to the proposer in order to make the necessary changes and resubmit.

- Comments received from the various committees and groups are collated and studied by the GEF focal point. Based on all the inputs and merits of the project, one of the following decisions will be made by the GEF focal point:
 - Endorse the project
 - Request changes and then endorse the project
 - No endorsement is given.

Information Dissemination

GEF information is disseminated through:

- MINMEC
- MINTECH (working groups)
- CEC meetings
- GEF newsletter (to be revived) and DEAT web site (future)
- DEAT interaction with various organizations.

Challenges

Several challenges exist with regard to national coordination of GEF projects, including:

- Lack of knowledge and experience related to GEF processes
- Human resource constraints
- Lack of communication between the project proposer and the GEF focal point
- Lack of a standardized (locally accepted) GEF strategy and procedures.

DEAT has established a special project management unit within which one dedicated GEF program manager has been appointed. Additionally, on April 4-7, 2000, with support from UNDP and the other GEF implementing agencies, we hosted a GEF Country Dialogue Workshop to help contribute to developing a South African strategy and set of procedures for GEF processes.

Level of Communication

From our perspective, we have very good communication with the GEF secretariat as

well as with its implementing agencies (the World Bank, UNDP, and UNEP). We feel, however, that this area could be strengthened, especially with regard to UNEP.

National Coordination of the Conventions

Main Actors

- Government departments
 - DEAT
 - Department of Foreign Affairs
 - Department of Trade and Industry
 - Department of Water Affairs and Forestry
 - Department of Minerals and Energy Affairs
- Provincial government environment departments
- Local authorities (environment departments)
- Statutory bodies
 - National Botanical Institute
 - South African National Parks
- NGOs and other bodies in the environmental field
 - World Wildlife Fund
 - IUCN – World Conservation Union
- Governmental committees and other interest groups
 - MINMEC
 - MINTECH
 - CEC
 - Portfolio Committee on the Environment
 - National Committee for Climate Change (NCCC)

Prior to the adoption of any position, the various stakeholders as listed above are consulted via intergovernmental meetings or by specific committees (CEC, MINMECS, MINTECH).

In matters pertaining to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the NCCC is the coordination body. The NCCC's purpose is to consult with and advise the minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, through the director-general, on matters relating to national responsibilities with respect to climate change, and in particular in relation to the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol. The NCCC's specific functions are as follows:

- To make recommendations to the department and minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism on issues related to climate change, and also to express the concerns of key stakeholders
- To design and participate in a process leading to the formulation of a national climate change policy and a national implementation strategy
- To propose what studies need to be undertaken in support of the national climate change policy process; what their scope, time table, budget, and deadlines should be;

and—within the limits of available funds—advise the department to perform them, and review and disseminate the results

- To communicate developments within the national and international climate change arena to their constituencies
- To delegate its functions and responsibilities to subcommittees, as needed
- To assist with a structured process of capacity building, technology transfer, and development.

The committee should meet four times per year; additional meetings are convened as required. NCCC members are designated representatives from the defined stakeholder groups involved in climate change. Specifically, the committee consists of at least two, and at most five, representatives from each of the following stakeholder groups:

- Government departments
 - DEAT
 - Department of Minerals and Energy
 - Department of Foreign Affairs
 - Department of Trade and Industry
 - Department of Water Affairs and Forestry
 - Department of Housing
 - Department of Transport
 - Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology
- Provincial governments
- NGOs and community-based environmental organizations
- Business and industry
- Labor.

Stakeholder Involvement

As noted above, all relevant stakeholders are involved in the process of national coordination.

Challenges

DEAT is presently unaware of any integrating mechanisms that exist for the three conventions (the UNFCCC, Convention on Biological Diversity, and Convention to Combat Desertification).

Our experience in the UNFCCC negotiating process indicates that GEF has been under increasing pressure to facilitate greater access. In our many interventions during the fifth Conference of the Parties regarding GEF, the following points were emphasized:

- There is a need to further streamline access to funding. To date, access to funding remains slow.
- Clear guidelines as to the type of funding need to be provided.
- The number of projects in Africa must be increased.
- Capacity in national implementing agencies to facilitate project application must be

increased.

Successful Experiences

We have successfully managed the GEF enabling activity project involving climate change, which will culminate in South Africa's initial National Communications for submission to the UNFCCC by December 2000. This is submitted as part of our obligations under the convention.

National Coordination of GEF Council Matters

Main Actors

The main actors involved in the coordination of GEF Council matters are the local GEF focal point (the DEAT director-general) and the GEF regional focal point (Charles Chipato of Zimbabwe).

Coordination Process

No coordination is currently taking place between the local and regional focal points on Council matters. The local GEF focal point is not informed on issues relating to Council matters or regarding the formulation of common positions. We hope to improve this situation in the future.

Stakeholder Involvement

The various stakeholders are involved through our local coordination process. Any issues they may wish to raise pertaining to Council matters will be coordinated through the local focal point. However, due to the lack of communication, stakeholder concerns are not adequately addressed by the regional focal point.

Consultation

The fact that South Africa forms part of South African Development Community presents us with various avenues and opportunities to discuss and consult in a much wider fashion. It also allows us the opportunity to structure our GEF involvement in terms of a regional dimension. Nevertheless, communication between the local and regional focal points could be strengthened, we believe.

Vietnam

GEF-Vietnam Foundation

Vietnam is deeply aware of the crucial importance of environmental protection. The country is, on the one hand, facing serious environmental problems due to long years of warfare and a lack of efficient measures of protection. These circumstances have led to a serious deterioration of forest resources, ecosystems, and biodiversity with regard to the resources of land, water, and air. On the other hand, we have to cope with many social problems such as poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, and malnutrition—all with limited investment funds. Therefore, Vietnam must receive international assistance in order to achieve its environmental targets and efficient solutions for these targets.

Vietnam actively takes part in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and is a signatory to Agenda 21; it therefore participates in many international conventions on environmental protection, particularly the Convention on Biological Diversity (ratified January 16, 1994), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, ratified January 16, 1994), and the Montreal Protocol of the Vienna Convention on Ozone Layer Depleting Substances (ratified January 26, 1994).

We highly appreciate GEF's assistance in creating new resources to help developing countries and those nations that are in the process of moving to participate in the cause of global environmental protection. Vietnam joined GEF on December 5, 1994. As a country eligible for receiving GEF assistance, Vietnam hopes to receive technical assistance and nonrefundable aid to achieve targets for global environment protection.

GEF-Vietnam is an interministerial organization, established as the national GEF focal point by the Prime Minister's Decision No. 07/TTg, January 3, 1997. The GEF-Vietnam Committee includes representatives of the government: the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Investment (MOSTE); the Ministry of Planning and Investment; the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the Vietnam Association for Natural and Environmental Protection. The president of GEF-Vietnam is the MOSTE vice minister.

GEF-Vietnam functions in a concurrent/part-time regime. Its standing office is located at the National Environmental Agency, MOSTE.

National Coordination of GEF Projects

As the GEF national focal point, GEF-Vietnam plays a key role in coordinating activities related to the preparation and implementation of GEF projects. GEF-Vietnam's primary function is to coordinate GEF-related environmental protection activities; its tasks, authorities, and mode of operations supporting this function are as follows:

Tasks

- Help all ministries, sectors, local administrations, and social and civic organizations develop projects on GEF-related environmental protection based on social and economic development considerations, environmental protection in Vietnam, and GEF rules
- Review and integrate projects and recommendations related to GEF from various ministries, sectors, localities, and social and civic organizations to assist the MOSTE minister and submit these to the government and GEF
- Supervise and monitor the implementation and organization of GEF projects in Vietnam and other related activities.

Authorities

- Represent the country of Vietnam in coordinating all activities and dealing with GEF
- Assist the MOSTE minister in reviewing and submitting projects to the government and GEF, and coordinate the management, supervision, and assessment of projects that have been implemented under the GEF framework.

Mode of Operations

GEF-Vietnam holds periodic meetings every six months; in case of emergency, the president convenes an ad hoc meeting. The GEF-Vietnam office prepares a plan of operations which is approved at these meetings. Every year, GEF-Vietnam establishes a schedule of priority projects to submit to the government via the Ministry of Planning and Investment. Projects requesting GEF funding are submitted to GEF-Vietnam, which appraises the projects and selects the most feasible for submission to the GEF-Vietnam president for consultation with committee members. If the committee members unanimously approve a project, the GEF-Vietnam standing office forwards the project documents to the Ministry of Planning and Investment for government approval. GEF-Vietnam will propose international GEF considering if the projects have been approved by the Government. After these projects have been submitted and approved by the government and GEF, GEF-Vietnam announces the approved plan to committee members and project proposers. The proposers report to the GEF office on project implementation and progress every three months. GEF-Vietnam submits the implementation plan and progress reports to the project funding agency.

National Coordination Process

The GEF-Vietnam development strategy is designed to ensure that GEF projects in Vietnam are country-driven, consistent with national priorities, and in compliance with GEF criteria.

Biodiversity. Vietnam is a country of great biodiversity. However, the country's potential ecological diversity will be depleted under development pressure if no adequate solutions are available. Vietnam has developed a national action plan on biodiversity with assistance from GEF. On December 22, 1995, this plan was approved by the government, creating favorable conditions for the preserving biodiversity and seeking foreign aid, particularly from GEF.

The GEF-Vietnam standing office closely coordinates with the Office for the Convention on Biological Diversity (located within the Department of Environment) to establish relevant projects in the area of biodiversity that implement initiatives related to the signatory countries.

Climate Change and Ozone Layer Deterioration Prevention. Vietnam also takes measures to implement commitments of the participants in the UNFCCC. In 1999, GEF and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) assisted Vietnam in establishing the first national report related to the UNFCCC, which put forth alternatives to minimize greenhouse gases in Vietnam. It is expected that GEF, as a mechanism for global environmental protection assistance, will help Vietnam implement solutions in the area of climate change.

GEF-Vietnam also coordinates with the UNFCCC office and the UN Ozone office to help develop projects aimed at achieving targets established under the Kyoto Agreement. Vietnam has policies in place to facilitate convention implementation such as increasing the use of clean energy, reducing and avoiding energy consumption through preservation activities and forestation and forest protection policies, among others.

International Waters. Vietnam has a long coast and extensive seaways of abundant biodiversity. It also has plans for sea-area development and protection. Vietnam has, to this end, submitted a pilot project to GEF regarding sea-area protection. It is expected that, after project completion, an efficient management pattern will be spread across Vietnam seaways.

GEF-Vietnam collaborates with international and national organizations in developing and participating in regional and international projects such as projects to protect flooded areas of the Mekong Delta and to protect the East Sea.

Stakeholder Involvement

GEF-Vietnam encourages all relevant entities to participate in the process of developing and implementing GEF projects, including governmental organizations, research institutes, and the private sector. These entities may seek information related to GEF from GEF-Vietnam to determine whether their proposals are in alignment with national priorities. However, GEF-Vietnam encourages a national self-operating mechanism to intensify national activism as well as links between baseline and incremental activities.

GEF-Vietnam coordinates closely with local representatives of such organizations as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank. Generally, advice regarding project terms and concepts are sought from local UNDP and World Bank representatives to determine the relevant implementing agency for a given project and for assistance during project elaboration. GEF-Vietnam also seeks bilateral and multilateral assistance for GEF-financed projects.

Information Dissemination

Information on GEF is disseminated by GEF to relevant organizations—including governmental bodies, the private sector, and communities—through documents, work-

shops, and the media. GEF-Vietnam is trying to take measures to improve community awareness of the problems related to global environmental protection.

GEF-Vietnam also receives information on GEF sent by the GEF secretariat over the Internet. This material is very useful, providing information on activities carried out by GEF and allowing Vietnam to learn from experiences in other countries regarding how to develop and implement GEF projects.

GEF-Vietnam's Past Activities and Plan of Activities for the Year 2000

GEF-Vietnam plays a vital role in the country, both in terms of meeting requirements for participating in global environmental protection activities and mobilizing funds for environmental protection—this latter is particularly useful, given the fact that the country's financial resources in this area are very limited.

In recent years, GEF-Vietnam has, in strict compliance with its prescribed functions and duties as a national contact point regarding global GEF activities, developed some major works as follows:

- Serves as contact point for GEF. GEF-Vietnam provides ongoing, regular contact with GEF; it also has helped build relationships with the GEF implementing agencies (UNDP, UNEP, and the World Bank) in developing its activities. Further, GEF-Vietnam participates in all GEF-related tasks undertaken by member countries, providing opinions on documents and projects, and participating in other activities initiated by international GEF.
- Disseminates GEF information. GEF-Vietnam provides information on GEF to public agencies, ministries/sectors, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) through the media, document dissemination, and workshops.
- Provides elaboration of GEF projects. GEF-Vietnam helps develop and elaborate GEF projects, particularly large projects sponsored by key line ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Industry, MOSTE, Ministry of Fisheries, and the General Department of Meteorology and Hydrography.
- Examines and reviews potential GEF projects submitted by various organizations and public agencies. Based on national priorities for environmental protection and GEF criteria, GEF-Vietnam appraises projects for submission to the government and GEF for their consideration and approval.
- Coordinates all activities related to GEF at the national level. According to current statistics, Vietnam has received US\$9,576,000 in technical assistance from GEF. Project development has been monitored and facilitated by numerous organizations.

In 2000, GEF-Vietnam will:

- Improve its capacity and increase its GEF membership responsibilities
- Develop a strategy of activities, to include priority projects in the four GEF thematic areas and oriented toward development for GEF-Vietnam
- Strengthen the monitoring and supervision of projects during their implementation

- Conduct elaboration of GEF projects and develop project concepts to ensure their acceptance by GEF
- Verify and appraise GEF projects, continuing the review and appraisal of those projects that have been submitted to GEF-Vietnam
- Establish a schedule of priority projects to be submitted to the government for approval
- Organize GEF workshops/seminars in coordination with GEF.

Recommendations for Improving National Coordination

The most difficult aspect of national-level coordination is setting up a suitable mechanism and conspicuous information mechanism. Currently, activities of the GEF national focal point are generally separate from project activities, particularly projects implemented by NGOs. Participation by the national GEF focal point has not yet been considered an activity in the projects. At the same time, financial restrictions create difficulties. GEF-Vietnam is preparing regulations regarding the control, supervision, and finances for project management and supervision.

Information is still not regularly exchanged between the national focal point and GEF. Some projects have been submitted by the nation without feedback from GEF. In some cases, GEF contacts the implementing agencies and proposing organizations without providing notice to the national focal point; this prevents systematic supervision and monitoring of GEF projects at the national level.

GEF implementing agencies should work more closely with regard to information exchange, identification of projects appropriate to both the GEF strategy and national priorities, and collaboration with the national focal point in project management and supervision.

GEF-Vietnam hopes that, in the near future, the above-mentioned difficulties will gradually be removed. Vietnam highly appreciates the assistance received from GEF in dealing with global environmental protection in Vietnam.

List of Participants

Good Practice Workshop

China

Jinlin Yang
GEF Operational Focal Point

International Department,
Ministry of Finance
Sanlihe
100820, P.R. China

Tel: (86)(10) 68551134
Fax: (86)(10) 68551183

E-mail: jl.yang@mof.gov.cn

India

Rita Acharya
GEF Focal Point

Deputy Secretary (FB)
Room No. 233, North Block
Ministry of Finance
Department of Economic Affairs
New Delhi

Tel: 91 11 3012423
Fax: no fax
E-mail: rita@finance.delhi.nic.in

Jordan

Nadia Juhari
GEF Focal Point

Ministry of Planning
P.O. Box 555
Amman, Jordan

Tel: (962)(6) 4644466
Fax: (962)(6) 4649341

Home tel: (962)(5) 355037
E-mail: najuhari@mop.gov.jo

Latvia

Ingrida Apene
GEF Operational Focal Point

Senior Desk Officer
Environmental Protection Department
Ministry of Environmental Protection
& Regional Development
25 Peldu Str.

Riga LV-1494
Latvia

Tel: 371-7026508
Fax: 371-7-820442

E-mail: ema@varam.gov.lv

Mauritius

Ayub Hussein Nakhuda

Ministry of Economic Development,
Productivity and Regional Development
Emanuel Anquetil Bldg.
9th floor
Port Louis, Mauritius

Tel: (230) 201 1601
Fax: (230) 212 41 24

E-mail: medrc@bow.intnet.mu

Mexico

Jonathan Ryan

Ministry of Environment, Natural
Resources and Fisheries
Mexico City, Mexico

Tel: (525) 628-0600 ext. 2036
Fax: (525) 628-0653

E-mail: jryan@semarnap.gob.mx

Peru

Carlos Soldi
GEF Operational Focal Point

National Commission for the
Environment (CONAM)
Av. San Borja Norte 226
San Borja, Lima
Peru

Tel: (51-1) 241-4077
Fax: (51-1) 242-4077

E-mail: cgsoldi@attglobal.net

David Solano
Tel: (51-1) 225-5370
Fax: (51-1) 225-5369

E-mail: conam@conam.gob.pe

Poland

Ewa Azorge
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Al. Szucha 23, 00580 Warsaw
Poland
Tel: (4822) 5239197
Fax: (4822) 5239115
E-mail: Mewa.anzorge@msz.gov.pl

Senegal

Mamadou Sangare
Department of Environment and
Classified Facilities
Ministry of Environment and Conservation
23 Rue Colmette, BP 6557
Etoile, Dakar
Senegal
Tel: 82 10725/82 26211
Fax: 82 26212
E-mail: denv@metissacana.sn

South Africa

Zaheer Fakir
Deputy Director: International Liaison
and Co-ordination
Department of Environmental Affairs
& Tourism
Fadsure Forum Building
315 Pretorius Street
Pretoria, South Africa
Tel: (27)(12) 310 3828
Fax: (27)(12) 322 3588
E-mail: zaheerfakir@netscape.net

Vietnam

Nguyen Dac Hy
GEF Operational Focal Point
Vietnam National Environment Agency
39 Tran Hung Dao
Hanoi, Vietnam
Tel: (84) (4) 8242511
Fax: (84) (4) 8251518
E-mail: hnhan@svrl-han.unep.net

GEF Secretariat

Kenneth King, Assistant Chief Executive Officer
Patricia Bliss-Guest, Team Leader, Corporate
Affairs
Ton Bon Von Ochsee, Country Relations
Manager
Song Li, Environmental Specialist
Avani Vaish, Capacity Development Manager

GEF Implementing Agencies

UNDP

Rafael Asenjo, Executive Coordinator
Emma Torres, Deputy Executive Coordinator
Tran Nguyen Anh Thu, UNDP, Vietnam
Hou Xin'an, UNDP, China
Stephen Gold

UNEP

Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Coordinator

World Bank

Lars Vidaeus, Executive Coordinator,
Global Coordination Unit
Rohit Khanna, Operations Officer
Thoko Ndoro, South Africa Resident Mission
Christophe Crepin, Africa Regional Coordinator
Teresa Bradley, Latin America and the
Caribbean

Conventions

UNFCCC Secretariat

Martha Perdomo, Manager, Non-Annex I
Subprogramme

