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I. Highlights of June Council Meeting

The next meeting of the GEF Council is scheduled to be held June 3–8, 2005 in Washington, DC. An NGO consultation, which will be held on June 2, 2005, will precede the meeting.

The Provisional Council Meeting Agenda is available below. *For more information on the upcoming council meeting, including the council papers, please, visit the GEF Website, www.thegef.org (click on "council documents").*

The following are snapshots of two of the agenda items for the meeting, along with the provisional agenda.

GEF Council Continues Discussion on Resource Allocation Framework

Following the endorsement of the Policy Recommendations of the Third Replenishment in October 2002, the GEF Council has been working on developing a Resource Allocation Framework (RAF). The council has discussed the RAF at meetings in 2003 and 2004, and at two consultations that were held in September 2004 and March 2005. At the November 2004 meeting, three motions were tabled by members with a view to facilitating a final decision on the RAF at the meeting in June 2005.

There are two outstanding structural issues: (i) the content of the performance indicator, especially as it relates to governance at the national level (and the related issue of public disclosure); and (ii) the percentage of GEF resources that should be allocated to individual countries (and, therefore, how much should be left for allocation within a group or groups).

A paper, GEF/C.25/8, *GEF Resource Allocation Framework*, has been prepared for council review with a view to advancing discussion on these issues. In addition, the GEF Secretariat has prepared six technical notes to support further discussions on the RAF. These notes can be found at

http://www.thegef.org/Operational_Policies/RAF_Historical_Documents_Archive.html.

GEF Project to Further Strengthen Focal Points and Constituency Coordination Proposed

In 1999, the GEF Council approved the funding of a program to support members and focal points. At the

meeting in May 2003, the GEF Council agreed to continue the program pending an evaluation of the program. An evaluation completed in May 2004 recommended that the GEF support program be continued but reshaped to enable increased and consistent guidance, information, and advice to focal points and Council Members through direct contact with the GEF Secretariat.

GEF/C.25/9, *Elements for Strengthening National Focal Points and Enhancing Constituency Coordination in GEF Recipient Countries* proposes a four-year program of assistance to further strengthen national focal points and Council Members. The administration of the program would be streamlined and financial resources made available to focal points and Council Members on the basis of an agreed work plan.

New guidelines of eligible expenditures will provide increased flexibility, while emphasizing the need to enhance coordination and mainstream global environmental aims in the policies and programs of the recipient countries. Accountability for expenditures will be exercised through annual reporting by the focal points and Council Members in accordance with a standard reporting format. Funding will also be provided to allow Council Members to convene two constituency meetings per year, which can be attended by both the political and operational focal points.

The GEF Secretariat will be responsible for management and strategic oversight of the program, and UNEP will assist in administering the disbursement of funds to focal points and Council Members.

If the proposal is approved by the council, the Implementing Agencies and the GEF Secretariat will collaborate in the preparation of a project proposal to operationalize the program.

Provisional Agenda

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Election of a Chairperson
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Statement by the Chair of Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
5. Monitoring and Evaluation
6. Statements by Executive Secretaries of the Conventions and the representative of UN Commission on Sustainable Development
7. Relations with Conventions and Other Institutions
8. Report on Climate Change Funds
9. Land Degradation
10. Work Program

11. Corporate Budget FY06
12. Process for selecting CEO and Chairman of the GEF
13. Resource Allocation Framework
14. Fee System
15. Strengthening Focal Points and Council Members
16. Procedures for Approval of Work Programs
17. Cost Effectiveness of GEF Projects
18. Review of Action Plan to Respond to Recommendations for Improving GEF's Performance
19. Confirmation of Constituencies
20. Other Business
21. Joint Summary of the Chairs

II. Focal Point News

Cameroon Hosts Constituency Meeting

GEF Focal points from Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo met in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from March 31–April 1, 2005. The constituency meeting presented an opportunity for focal points from participating countries to interact and discuss constituency matters, including the identification of a schedule for rotation among member countries of the constituency.

III. Country Dialogue News

Panama and Djibouti Host National Dialogues

In April 2005, Panama and Djibouti hosted national dialogues on the GEF. In Panama, the Autoridad Nacional del Ambiente, with support from the UNDP, organized the dialogue. More than 80 stakeholders attended the event, representing national and local governments, civil society, including indigenous groups, the private sector, the donor community and the media. The dialogue focused on identifying national priority areas that emerged from Panama's enabling activities and their link to the GEF's strategic priorities.

Djibouti's National Dialogue, which was held from April, 16–18, was hosted by the Ministère de l'Habitat, de l'Urbanisme, de L'Environnement et de l'Aménagement du Territoire with support provided by UNDP. More than 60 stakeholders representing national and local government, civil society, the

private sector, the donor community and the media, participated. The main focus of the dialogue was to raise awareness of the role GEF can play in linking global environmental issues to Djibouti's national priorities as outlined through their climate change and energy, biodiversity, and land degradation strategies, their Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, and their Capacity 21 efforts. The latter efforts emphasize Djibouti's two-year program entitled "Strengthening Environmental Capacities and the Process of Participation through the PANE (National Environmental Action Plan). The program seeks to establish the Directorate of Environment, which will be responsible for capacity building at the national level.

Djibouti's detailed national dialogue report, prepared by the GEF operational focal point, is available on the Initiative's website at www.undp.org/gef/dialogue. Panama's National Dialogue report will soon be available.

Stephen Gold, Global Manager, GEF National Dialogue Initiative, contributed to this article.

IV. Focal Area News

Climate Change

Donors Mobilize \$34 Million for Special Climate Change Fund

The Climate Convention established two new funds to be managed by the GEF: the Least Developed Country (LDC) Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF).

The SCCF is aimed at meeting special needs of developing countries under the climate regime and gives top priority to adaptation. Under the SCCF, the GEF will support projects that address the adverse effects of climate change and increase resilience of vulnerable countries. In particular, the SCCF identifies activities in priority areas, such as water resources management, land management, agriculture, health, infrastructure development, fragile ecosystems (including mountain ecosystems) and integrated coastal zone management. To improve disease control prevention, the SCCF calls for activities to improve monitoring of diseases and vectors affected by climate change and related forecasting and early warning systems. The SCCF will also support Capacity Building for preventive measures as well as for the planning, preparedness and management of disasters relating to climate change, including contingency planning for droughts and floods in areas prone to extreme weather events. The SCCF Fund will also help strengthen and establish national and

regional centers and information networks for rapid response to extreme weather events.

On the basis of climate convention guidance, the GEF Secretariat prepared a programming paper in collaboration with its Implementing Agencies and the Convention Secretariat. The programming paper provided a basis for discussion to mobilize resources from donor countries. The GEF has so far mobilized \$34 million for the SCCF. These first results were presented in Buenos Aires during the tenth Conference of the Parties of the Climate Convention.

References: 1. GEF Council Paper GEF/C.24/12 2. GEF Council Paper GEF/C.25/4/Rev.1

For more information, please, contact Dick Hosier, rhosier@thegef.org and Boni Biagini, bbiagini@thegef.org.

Biodiversity

GEF Biodiversity Task Force Develops New Tracking Tools

The Biodiversity Task Force was established to facilitate interagency collaboration on strategic and policy issues within the Biodiversity Focal Area. The task force is comprised of the GEF Secretariat's biodiversity team and representatives from the Implementing Agencies and Executing Agencies.

The task force has developed tracking tools to measure progress towards achieving portfolio-level biodiversity targets that were established as part of the GEF-3 business plan for the Biodiversity Focal Area. In addition to being used to report on the achievement of GEF-3 portfolio-level targets, the tracking tools will help inform ongoing program-level monitoring of the focal area. Tracking tools have been developed for the two main strategic priorities in biodiversity: (i) catalyzing the sustainability of protected area systems, and (ii) mainstreaming biodiversity in production landscapes and sectors, which encompasses more than 80 percent of GEF investment in biodiversity.

For more information please contact Mark Zimsky, mzimsky@thegef.org, or see the GEF website at: http://thegef.org/Operational_Policies/Eligibility_Criteria/templates.htm. See Annex G: Prepare Project Executive Summary, page 11.

Land Degradation

Highlights of the Meeting on the Convention to Combat Desertification

The third session of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification's Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC-3) was convened in Bonn, Germany, from May 2–11, 2005. Delegates reviewed the implementation of the Convention in Africa, considered issues relating to the Convention's implementation at the global level, shared experiences, and made concrete recommendations for the future work of the Convention.

The key thematic topics for review at CRIC-3 were:

- (a) Participatory processes involving civil society, nongovernmental organizations and community-based organizations;
- (b) Legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements;
- (c) Resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusions of partnership agreements;
- (d) Linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies;
- (e) Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought;
- (f) Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment.

The report from the meeting highlighted the slow pace of implementing the Convention and the insufficient financial resources available to address the problem of land degradation. It called upon the donor community to substantially increase the funding envelope for this focal area. The report will be considered at the seventh Conference of the Parties, which will take place in Nairobi, Kenya, in October 2005.

Persistent Organic Pollutants

Four New Chemicals Proposed for Phase-Out at Stockholm Convention

The first meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 1) of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) was held from 2-6 May

2005 in Punta del Este, Uruguay. The main objective of the meeting was to ensure that global efforts to reduce and eliminate a list of highly hazardous chemicals move forward.

The conference made a number of decisions with direct relevance to the GEF. It developed and adopted Guidance to the Financial Mechanism which will be transmitted to the GEF. The conference has also developed and adopted Terms of Reference for the first review of the Financial Mechanism. In addition, it adopted the Memorandum of Understanding between the conference and the GEF Council for further consideration and adoption by the Council.

The conference also established a POPs Review Committee that will be responsible for evaluating chemicals that could be added to the initial list of 12 POPs. The Committee will hold its first meeting in Geneva later this year to review four proposed chemicals. Its recommendations will be forwarded to future annual meetings of the Conference of the Parties for decisions on whether and how new POPs should be added to the Convention.

Furthermore, recognizing the strong synergies existing between the Stockholm Convention and the Basel Convention on Transboundary Movements of Hazardous and Other Wastes, the meeting lent its support to the guidelines for managing POPs wastes as adopted by the Basel Convention last year and encouraged countries to apply them.

The meeting also agreed on how to evaluate the Convention's progress in reducing the levels of POPs in the environment. It established a system for requesting and registering temporary exemptions to the phase-out of certain chemicals. The meeting welcomed and accepted the invitation of Switzerland to locate the Convention's secretariat in Geneva.

V. GEF-NGO NETWORK NEWS

Independent Review of the GEF-NGO Network in Progress

Since its inception, the NGO Network has strengthened its capacity and provided constructive inputs to GEF policies and programs. However, there is still a lack of knowledge, information, and capacity to work with the GEF, particularly among NGOs in developing countries.

The NGO guide to the GEF will help to provide more information on the GEF and thus build the capacity of NGOs to participate in GEF projects. To complement

this initiative, the Central Focal Point of the GEF-NGO Network has asked the GEF Secretariat to assist in conducting a review of the network to provide concrete recommendations on how it can be further enhanced.

The independent review is looking at the operation and management of the GEF-NGO Network, its roles and responsibilities, and how NGOs interact with the network. The review to be completed by the end of July, 2005, will also provide recommendations on how the network can be more effectively and supported and on how participation of NGOs in the network can be enhanced.

VI. News from the GEF Office of Monitoring and Evaluation

GEF Office of Monitoring and Evaluation Studies Effectiveness of Operational Program 12 (OP 12) to Promote Integration and Synergies

One of the key tasks of the GEF Office of Monitoring and Evaluation is to review the progress and results of the GEF portfolio. The Office recently completed a review of GEF's Operational Program 12: Integrated Ecosystem Management. The study assessed the operational program's effectiveness as a GEF mechanism to promote integration and synergies and whether there are alternative integration options among the biodiversity, climate change, and international waters focal areas.

The study found that overall project documents did a good job in addressing process-related issues, such as partnership arrangements, country-drivenness, and stakeholder participation. Projects did not score as well, however, on technical factors that are important to potential success: sound initial diagnosis of problems and assessment of potential solutions; accurate establishment of baselines; appropriate scientific and technical approaches to problem solution; monitoring of change or impact; and mechanisms to learn from experiences and adapt accordingly. Few projects convincingly presented potential synergies among focal areas—an important criterion for the success of OP12 projects. Two important considerations require more attention during project preparation:

1. "Win-wins" versus trade-offs must be assessed carefully in terms of working to achieve (a) development or poverty alleviation objectives while maintaining or increasing global environmental goods and services, and (b)

synergies (a more positive form of win-win) between or among focal areas.

2. In some projects, synergies may be questionable to the point that the risk of "double jeopardy" arises in having to establish baselines and achieve and measure separate but synergistic impacts. That is, it may be that holding projects responsible for multifocal outcomes could be beyond project capabilities and budgets.

The review concluded that OP12 is useful for the GEF, but will require more careful strategic prioritizing, improved quality of entry, and improved methods for monitoring and learning from IEM approaches.

The study and the response by the GEF Secretariat will be presented at the June 2005 council meeting and can be found under the Council Documents section of the GEF website at www.theGEF.org. For more information, please, contact Aaron Zazueta at azazueta@theGEF.org

GEF Evaluates Support for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

In February 2005, the GEF Office of Monitoring and Evaluation began evaluating activities that help countries prepare for entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol. The protocol is under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The evaluation focuses on four key issues:

- 1) The consistency of GEF support to the Cartagena Protocol,
- 2) The relevance and effectiveness of GEF support to capacity building efforts,
- 3) Countries' progress on building the requisite capacities towards the ratification and implementation of the Cartagena Protocol,
- 4) The effectiveness and efficiency of the modalities and approaches of GEF support compared to similar projects.

The evaluation will review activities to develop draft National Biosafety Frameworks (NBFs) in 130 countries and the efforts to implement such frameworks in 12 countries. It will also look at initial plans for the establishment of national mechanisms to participate in the Biosafety Clearing House under the CBD in 50 countries.

About 30 countries have recently completed their NBFs. The material yielded by NBFs will form the data basis of the evaluation.

The final draft report will be completed for submission to the GEF Council by mid-October 2005. For more

information, please, contact Jarle Harstad at jharstad@theGEF.org.

VII. News from the Implementing Agencies

UNDP

Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem Program Facilitates Sustainable Management and Protection of the Ecosystem

An initiative of Namibia, Angola and South Africa, the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem Program is working to facilitate the sustainable management and protection of the ecosystem. The program aims to improve the management structures and capacities of the three countries to deal with environmental problems and issues that transcend national boundaries. The GEF is supporting the program through UNDP.

The program is strengthening regional ecosystem management capacities in the Benguela Current Ecosystem by developing scientific and economic information on the ecosystem. It is also piloting measures and building capacity to address transboundary management problems associated with fishing, mining, oil exploration, coastal development, and pollution. A major emphasis is on developing the know-how and skills needed to ensure the longer term sustainability of an ecosystem-wide management approach. Activities include:

- (g) Operationalizing an ecosystem approach to fisheries management,
- (h) Developing a responsible aquaculture policy for the region,
- (i) Improving knowledge and understanding of the artisanal fisheries, especially in Angola,
- (j) Developing a regional oil spill contingency plan for the region,
- (k) Harmonizing national environmental policies and legislation for marine mining, dredging, and offshore petroleum exploration and production.

One of the main recommendations is the formation of an Interim Benguela Current Commission. A study to identify the needs and requirements for establishing a regional marine resources commission for the Benguela region was recently completed and the commission is now being established.

A list of the projects, along with a list of published articles and reports, are in Benguela Current News (2003, 2004) and found on www.bclme.org.

For more information on the program, please, contact Mick O'Toole, Chief Technical Adviser, BCLME, and Nik Sekhran: nik.sekhran@undp.org, Regional Coordinator, UNDP-GEF Southern Africa.

National Capacity Self Assessments for Serbia and Montenegro Help Ensure Ownership of Environmental Activities

Since the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia became a GEF member in 2001, the country has become a union of the two member states of Serbia and Montenegro, each with its own legislative and policy frameworks regarding environmental issues. Although these changes have occurred, the initial objective for UNDP-GEF involvement has remained the same: to support sustainable development in the areas of global environmental concerns.

Because of the country's political developments, the UNDP Serbia and Montenegro (SCG) country office faced new challenges concerning the national capacity self-assessment (NCSA) project. As the implementing agency, UNDP was mandated to assist the country, and thus the member state governments, in determining their capacities, assessing priority needs, and developing plans of action in order to implement conventions and meet the country's commitments to global environmental management.

To achieve these goals, UNDP developed the Twin-Track approach, now a common tool in implementing SCG European Union aspirations. Member state specifics had to be acknowledged, while UNDP's intermediary and facilitatory role helped in adopting a joint approach to common problems.

The NCSA project in Serbia and Montenegro has ensured full ownership of action plans and environmental commitments by the authorities in both member states, and the novel Twin-Track approach has been replicated by the UNDP-GEF enabling activity in climate change.

For more information on the NCSA or any other GEF/environmental activities in Serbia and Montenegro, please, contact saba.nordstrom@undp.org.

Promoting Energy Efficient End-Use Equipment through Market Transformation

Promoting energy efficient end-use equipment (such as domestic appliances, lighting, electric motors, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems) is important for mitigating climate change. Energy labelling and minimum energy efficiency standards

are instrumental for the large-scale transformation of markets for end-use equipment.

Standards and labels have proven to be one of the most promising policy instruments in countries where they have been introduced with care. Used for many years in numerous developed countries, they delivered tangible results. In the context of energy efficiency, the standards are a set of procedures and regulations that prescribe the energy performance of manufactured products. Labels affixed to manufactured products indicate energy performance and efficiency in a way that allows for comparison between similar products or endorses the product's use.

The GEF has already sponsored specific standards and labelling activities in China, Brazil, and Tunisia. Standards and labels projects have recently been approved in India and in the Andean countries, while other projects are in preparation in South Africa, Kenya, Southern Cone Region, Asia, and Eastern Europe.

As a fundamental step towards meeting the challenges of market transformation, UNDP-GEF has developed an alliance with the Collaborative Labeling and Appliance Standard Programme (CLASP), which has created the second edition of *Energy-Efficiency Labels and Standards: A Guidebook for Appliances, Equipment, and Lighting Products*. Available electronically

(<http://www.clasponline.org/disdoc.php3?no=289>) and in hard copy format, the updated publication is a comprehensive guide that should serve numerous governments and GEF partners around the world.

For more information, please, contact Benoît Lebot, UNDP-GEF Climate Change Technical Adviser benoit.lebot@undp.org.

World Bank

Transforming Markets for Efficient Lighting

In May, IFC released *The ELI Story: Transforming Markets for Efficient Lighting*, a publication on the Efficient Lighting Initiative (ELI). Supported by a \$15 million investment from the GEF, ELI ran from 1999 to 2003. It helped market development for energy-efficient lighting to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in seven countries—Argentina, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Peru, the Philippines, and South Africa. ELI achieved substantial market growth for efficient lighting during its three-year life span. In Peru, annual sales of compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) increased twenty-fold from 250,000 to over 5 million per year. In South Africa, thanks to ELI-

inspired pilots, a national electric utility is providing three million CFLs free-of-charge to poor communities to help manage energy demand as the government expands rural electrification programs.

Preliminary results from a post-program study of ELI suggest that, across the seven countries, ELI reduced energy consumption by 2,590 gigawatt hours and reduced CO2 emissions by 2 million tons between 2000 and 2003. Today, one of the ways ELI lives on is through a self-sustaining product certification institute in China, which will build on the institutional partnerships established in the ELI countries to extend product certification to a range of efficient lighting technologies worldwide. This will include market development for important new technologies, such as light emitting diodes.

The report on ELI will be available at www.ifc.org/enviro. For more information, please contact Russell Sturm, ELI Global Program Manager, rsturm@ifc.org and Li Tienan, ELI Quality Certification Institute, China Standard Certification Center, litrn@cecp.org.cn.

Phase 1 of Africa Stockpiles Programme Fully Funded

The Africa Stockpiles Programme (ASP) was conceived as a strategic partnership among the African Union, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the Pesticide Action Network, the World Bank, World Wildlife Fund, and the GEF. These partners agreed to pool resources and expertise in a collaborative, comprehensive effort to clean up and safely dispose of all obsolete pesticide stocks from Africa and to establish preventive measures to avoid future accumulation. Most of these chemicals—comprising mainly of persistent organic pollutants (POPs)—are poorly maintained and are leaking chemical toxins into the ground, water, and air. The resulting pollution is an urgent environmental hazard and growing threat to public health and wildlife.

The ASP is designed as a 12–15 year program, consisting of four overlapping phases, each of which will last 4–5 years. The total cost of the program is estimated at \$250 million, of which the GEF would contribute up to \$80 million. In 2002, the GEF approved \$25 million in support of Phase 1 of the ASP. A recent donation from Sweden and a commitment from the African Development Bank bring total commitments and contributions to the ASP to nearly \$60 million. Current plans are to bring the ASP to the World Bank's board for approval within a few months and to launch the program immediately thereafter.

In Phase 1, comprehensive clean-up and prevention will take place in Ethiopia, Mali, Morocco, South Africa, Tanzania, and Tunisia, with an additional pilot project in Nigeria dealing with prevention and preparation for disposal. In addition, Phase 1 will implement prevention programs and prepare for obsolete pesticide disposal in eight other African countries.

VIII. News from GEF Small Grants Programme

NEWS FROM GEF SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME

Commission on Sustainable Development-13

During the 13th session of the U.N. Commission on Sustainable Development, the Small Grant Programme (SGP) distributed a fact sheet on the collaboration between SGP and the UNDP Community Water Initiative, which will build on the success and experience of the SGP mechanism and other UNDP small grants schemes. The goal is to help countries in reaching Millennium Development Goals that place high priority on water resources management, water supply, and sanitation for the poor.

SGP, UNDP, and Columbia University Graduate Student Workshop

In April, 2005, the SGP, in collaboration with the Sustainable Energy Programme of UNDP and the Columbia University graduate school, held a seminar: Strategies for Scaling up Community-driven Energy Interventions to Reach the Millennium Development Goals. A study begun in 2005 is examining how community climate change projects can be scaled up to address local community development energy services. Three Columbia University student teams are focusing on SGP projects in Kenya (micro-hydro), Dominican Republic (solar PV), and Nepal (micro-hydro).

A final output of the study will feed into the larger UNDP advocacy and policy report on the importance of accessing energy services in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The policy report will contribute to discussions at the Millennium Summit in September.

SGP and U N Volunteers Collaborate on Tsunami Recovery

SGP is finalizing an agreement with U N Volunteers on post-Tsunami recovery and rehabilitation in Sri

Lanka. The agreement calls for 15-20 U N Volunteers to work with the SGP National Coordinator and the local communities towards this end.

Hawksbill Baby Turtles from Qeshm Island

In the three-year span of the SGP project, over 27,000 highly endangered baby Hawksbill turtles have been sent from Qeshm Island in Iran to the Persian Gulf. At the end of April 2005, SGP Iran was able to obtain a written permit from the Department of Environment to allow the tagging of the mother turtles. The program is in the process of buying the tags from Australia and is hoping to catch up with the turtles during egg-laying season.

Three SGP Projects Win Awards in Senegal

Three SGP projects won awards at the Grand Prix of the President of the Republic of Senegal. The topic of the competition was sustainable management of natural resources. First prize went to the Regional Federation of the Association for the Promotion of Women in Ziguinchor for a project on community-based, integrated and sustainable management of the mangrove swamp ecosystem in the region of Ziguinchor. Third prize was given to a women's association in the Natural Reserve of Popoungine for a project to restore and conserve biodiversity. A prize was also given for the SGP project to reforest a mangrove swamp in Senegal.

IX. Good Practice Notes

Côte d'Ivoire: Country Coordination and the GEF

The government of Côte d'Ivoire has established a coordinating unit and advisory body to monitor the management of the GEF portfolio. The unit reports to the Ministries for Economy and Finance, Environment, Water and Forests, and Foreign Affairs.

The GEF Operational Focal Point is assisted by a small committee known as the Technical Secretariat. The Technical Secretariat is composed of four members representing the technical ministries responsible for the environment and other development institutions.

The GEF Coordinator works closely with stakeholders at the national level in the design and implementation of GEF projects, ensuring communication with executing agencies, the Political Focal Point, and convention focal points. Civil society representatives, such as women, youths, NGOs, the private sector, and representatives of other ministries are also involved in developing projects from the design stage

to the implementation phase. To promote greater awareness of the GEF, the Operational Focal Point conducts outreach activities through workshops and the mass media.

Since October 2001, the GEF Coordination Unit has organized information workshops in collaboration with the UNDP and the World Bank. Workshops cover various goals, including general outreach and information, and project development. The GEF Coordination Unit also uses mass media to discuss information on the GEF. For example, a television program featured the coordinators of the GEF thematic focal areas and of GEF-financed projects in Côte d'Ivoire, as well as certain NGOs. The aim of the program was to introduce the GEF to the public at large.

Looking ahead, the Coordination Unit plans to put more emphasis on soil degradation. There are plans to organize a workshop to inform officials of the relevant ministry about these concerns.

Alimata Kone-Bakayoko, the GEF Operational Focal Point in Côte d'Ivoire, contributed to this article.

X. Other News

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, a project implemented by UNEP and partially funded by the GEF, was launched on March 30, 2005 in various cities throughout the world. The Assessment focused on the linkages between ecosystems and human well-being and, in particular, on ecosystem services. It synthesized information from the scientific literature and relevant peer-reviewed data and models but did not aim to generate new primary knowledge. It involved approximately 1,360 experts from 95 countries who volunteered to conduct the assessment, while 900 served as reviewers and editors.

The four main MA findings are the following:

- (a) Humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively in the last 50 years than in any other period. This was done largely to meet rapidly growing demands for food, fresh water, timber, fiber and fuel. More land was converted to agriculture since 1945 than in the 18th and 19th centuries combined. Scientists said that this resulted in a substantial and largely irreversible loss in diversity of life on Earth.

- (b) Ecosystem changes that have contributed substantial net gains in human well-being and economic development have been achieved at growing costs in the form of degradation of other services. Approximately 60 percent (15 out of 24) of the ecosystem services that support life on Earth are being degraded or used unsustainably. Only four ecosystem services have been enhanced in the last 50 years including crops, livestock and aquaculture. The use of two—capture fisheries and fresh water—is now well beyond levels that can sustain current, much less future, demands. Scientists say that these problems will substantially diminish the benefits for future generations.
- (c) The degradation of ecosystem services could grow significantly worse during the first half of this century and is a barrier to achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals. In all the four plausible futures explored by the scientists, they project progress in eliminating hunger, but at far slower rates than needed to halve the number of people suffering from hunger by 2015. The scientists warn that changes in ecosystems influence the abundance of human pathogens such as malaria and cholera, as well as the risk of emergence of new diseases.
- (d) The challenge of reversing the degradation of ecosystems while meeting increasing demands can be met under some scenarios involving significant policy and institutional changes. However, these changes will be large and are not currently under way. The report cites options to conserve or enhance ecosystem services, while at the same time-reducing negative trade-offs or positively impacting other services.

The MA Board concluded: "It lies within the power of human societies to ease the strains we are putting on the natural services of the planet, while continuing to use them to bring better living standards to all. ... Achieving this, however, will require radical changes in the way nature is treated at every level of decision-making... The warning signs are there for all of us to see. The future now lies in our hands."

GEF Activities at CSD-13

The GEF participated in the 13th session of the U.N. Commission on Sustainable Development in New York from April 11–22, 2005. This session focused on policy recommendations for overcoming obstacles in the areas of water, sanitation, and human settlements.

GEF participation was important because GEF works with more than 135 countries to restore transboundary water resources and prevent conflicts among different users, an important step to ensuring a reliable supply of clean water. Over the past 14 years, GEF has invested more than \$1 billion to help prevent conflict among and within nations competing for limited water resources. These GEF grants have catalyzed an additional \$3.6 billion in cofinancing from partners. GEF's contributions in this area are primarily through its international waters and biodiversity focal areas.

Len Good, GEF Chairman and CEO, participated on a Panel of Finance and Development Cooperation Ministers and in a ministerial session on implementation challenges. His major themes covered the importance of managing land and water resources in an integrated manner and balancing competing water uses if the Millennium Development Goals are to be reached.

Over the two-week period, GEF maintained a strong presence at the meeting. GEF, UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank organized a side-event in which representatives of the governments of China and Brazil, and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River made presentations about their GEF projects.

On behalf of the GEF, UNDP organized a side event on *How to Obtain a GEF Grant*, which provided practical information on GEF grant financing. The GEF Secretariat and the Implementing Agencies also organized a briefing at the CSD-13 Learning Center, which focused on integrated water resources management based on practical experiences in GEF projects.

XI. New GEF Publications

GEF Global Action on Water (Folder and Fact Sheets)

The *GEF Global Action on Water* series was launched through a news release and at the GEF exhibit at CSD-13. These fact sheets highlight GEF's contribution to transboundary water resources management, water scarcity, groundwater protection, conflict resolution, and pollution reduction. They are available at www.theGEF.org

GEF Global Action on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Map, Folder and Fact Sheets)

[Available in English, French and Spanish]

This series highlights the GEF's efforts to help developing countries combat persistent organic pollutants (POPs), and was released to coincide with the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Stockholm Convention in Punta del Este, Uruguay in May, 2005. The fact sheets address how the GEF is helping countries destroy dangerous pollutants and

control termites without harmful chemicals, foster civil society participation, and develop national implementation plans. The series also features the Africa Stockpiles Programme (see above article on ASP).

GEF Website New Content

The GEF website now features separate pages for the different focal areas:

Biodiversity -

www.thegef.org/Projects/Focal_Areas/bio/bio.html

Climate Change -

www.thegef.org/Projects/Focal_Areas/climate/climate.html

International Waters -

www.thegef.org/Projects/focal_areas/iw/iw.html

Land Degradation -

www.thegef.org/Projects/focal_areas/land/land.html

Persistent Organic Pollutants -

www.thegef.org/Projects/focal_areas/pops/pops.html

Ozone Depleting Substances -

www.thegef.org/Projects/focal_areas/ozone/ozone.htm

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XII. Focal Point Update

New GEF Council Members, Alternates and Focal Points March 2005 - May 2005			
Alternates			
Name	Country	Category	Date of Nomination
Mr. Tibor Farago	Hungary	Alternate Member / Political Focal Point	04/06/2005
Mr. Anton HILBER	Switzerland	Alternate Member / Political Focal Point	04/07/2005
Prof. Alfred OTENG-YEBOAH	Ghana	Alternate Member	04/13/2005
Council Members			
Name	Country	Category	Date of Nomination
Ms. Verónica Querejazu	Bolivia	Council Member / Political Focal Point / Operational Focal Point	03/23/2005
His Excellency Pierre Hele	Cameroon	Council Member	03/23/2005
Mr. Ton van der Zon	Netherlands	Council Member	05/13/2005
Ms. Claudia Grayeb Bayata	Mexico	Council Member / Political Focal Point	05/18/2005
Operational Focal Points			
Name	Country	Category	Date of Nomination
Mr. Jafar Ahmed Chowdhury	Bangladesh	Operational Focal Point	03/23/2005
Mr. Nima Wangdi	Bhutan	Operational Focal Point	03/23/2005
Mr. Alain Edouard Traore	Burkina Faso	Operational Focal Point	03/24/2005
Mr. Petipong Pungbun Na Ayudhya	Thailand	Operational Focal Point	03/24/2005
Mr. Vyacheslav Kruk	Ukraine	Operational Focal Point	03/24/2005
Mr. Bing Wang	China	Operational Focal Point	03/30/2005
Mr. Lionel Nurse	Barbados	Operational Focal Point	04/21/2005
Mr. Agus Purnomo	Indonesia	Operational Focal Point	04/21/2005
Political Focal Points			
Name	Country	Category	Date of Nomination
His Excellency Keod Smith	Bahamas	Political Focal Point	03/23/2005
Mr. Nima OME	Bhutan	Political Focal Point	03/23/2005
His Excellency Moshe Semonetta	Israel	Political Focal Point	03/30/2005
His Excellency Suhair Al-Ali	Jordan	Political Focal Point	04/21/2005
Mr. Nikola Ružinski	Croatia	Political Focal Point	04/26/2005
Mr. Leander Treppel	Austria	Political Focal Point	05/04/2005