

Summary of the 61st Meeting of the Global Environment Facility Council: 6-10 December 2021

The 61st meeting of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council and the 31st meeting of the Council of the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) adopted Work Programs worth USD 210.32 million. As Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, GEF Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chairperson, highlighted in his opening remarks to Council Members, these projects will contribute to efforts “to tackle environmental challenges in an integrated way.” Rodríguez noted that many of the projects will also contribute to a blue and green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The GEF Work Program includes 25 projects and one program. The 43 recipient countries include ten Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and 16 small island developing States (SIDS). The program addresses a priority for the Chemicals and Waste focal area, and will deal with agricultural chemicals and their management. The GEF’s Biodiversity, Climate Change, Chemicals and Waste, Land Degradation, and International Waters focal areas are also addressed in the Program. In total, the Work Program is worth USD 190.7 million, and represents 5% of the entire GEF-7 replenishment.

In addition, the 31st meeting of the LDCF/SCCF Council adopted a Work Program totaling USD 19.62 million for three projects to address urgent climate change adaptation priorities in three LDCs – Malawi, São Tomé and Príncipe, and the Solomon Islands.

Leaders from the five conventions for which the GEF serves as a financial mechanism updated the Council on preparations for negotiations on biodiversity, climate change, chemical pollutants, mercury, and desertification. They discussed priorities for the conventions during the upcoming eighth replenishment period of the GEF Trust Fund (GEF-8), as well as pandemic-related delays in finalizing this input.

In addition to the decisions on the Work Program, the Council engaged in a lengthy discussion of the GEF Monitoring Report 2021 and the seventh comprehensive evaluation of GEF results and performance. Speakers highlighted that the GEF is a learning organization, and discussions focused on recommendations that should be incorporated into planning for GEF-8. The Council was also updated on the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel’s (STAP) recent work and its plans for the coming months.

The Council meeting concluded with a celebration of the 30th anniversary of the GEF. World Bank Group President David

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Malpass, UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director Inger Andersen, UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Achim Steiner, former GEF CEOs, and others provided video remarks highlighting the GEF's successes and evolution over the past three decades, and looked forward to its continued engagement in global efforts towards a green, resilient, and inclusive future for all.

A GEF Council Consultation with civil society organizations (CSOs) took place on Friday, 3 December 2021, prior to the 61st meeting of the GEF Council. The [discussion](#) focused on the theme, "GEF-CSO Consultations on Youth-led Advocacy and Solutions to the Planet's Environmental Crisis." Youth leaders described work they are undertaking, and called on the GEF and Council Members to take the interests of youth into every decision they take.

Rodríguez and Mette Møglestue, Elected Co-Chair for 2021, Norway, served as the Co-Chairs for the Council meetings, which took place online from 6-10 December 2021. At the conclusion of the meetings, Samoan Ambassador Aliioaiga Feturi Elisaia was elected Council Co-Chair for 2022.

The next GEF Council meeting will take place in June 2022. This meeting is expected to endorse the conclusion of negotiations on GEF-8. This next four-year programming cycle will begin in July 2022.

The present summary highlights the discussions and decisions from the 61st meeting of the GEF Council and the 31st meeting of the LDCF/SCCF Council.

A Brief History of the GEF

The GEF was created in 1991 to formulate financing responses to the mounting concern in the preceding decade over global environmental problems. The GEF operated in a pilot phase until mid-1994. Negotiations to restructure the Facility were concluded at a GEF participants' meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, in March 1994, where representatives of 73 countries agreed to adopt the GEF Instrument.

The GEF's organizational structure includes:

- an Assembly that meets every four years;
- a Council that meets twice a year;
- a Secretariat;
- the STAP; and
- the Independent Evaluation Office, which was created in 2003.

The organization's main decision-making body is the GEF Council, which includes both donor and recipient countries and is responsible for developing, adopting, and evaluating the GEF's operational policies and programs. Meeting twice a year, it is composed of 32 appointed Council Members, each representing a constituency, that is, a group of either donor or recipient countries.

The GEF Assembly has convened six times: 1-3 April 1998 in New Delhi, India; 16-18 October 2002 in Beijing, China; 29-30 August 2006 in Cape Town, South Africa; 25-26 May 2010 in Punta del Este, Uruguay; 28-29 May 2014 in Cancún, Mexico; and 27-28 June 2018 in Da Nang, Viet Nam.

The GEF is funded by donor countries, which commit money every four years through a process called the GEF replenishment. Since its creation in 1991, the GEF Trust Fund has been



Elected GEF Council Co-Chair for 2021, **Mette Møglestue**, Norway

replenished by USD 2.75 billion (GEF-1), USD 3 billion (GEF-2), USD 3.13 billion (GEF-3), USD 3.13 billion (GEF-4), USD 4.34 billion (GEF-5), USD 4.43 billion (GEF-6), and USD 4.1 billion (GEF-7). Negotiations for GEF-8 are currently ongoing.

The GEF administers the LDCF and the SCCF, and provides secretariat services to the Adaptation Fund established by the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The GEF also serves as a financial mechanism for a number of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), including the:

- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD);
- UNFCCC;
- UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD);
- Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants; and
- Minamata Convention on Mercury.

The GEF's work also focuses on sustainable forest management, international waters, and ozone layer depletion.

Funding from the Facility has been channeled to recipient countries through 18 "GEF Agencies": UNDP; UNEP; the World Bank; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO); the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); the African Development Bank (AfDB); the Asian Development Bank (ADB); the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD); the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB); the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); World Wildlife Fund-US.; Conservation International (CI); the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA); the Brazilian Biodiversity Fund (FUNBIO); the Chinese Foreign Economic Cooperation Office (FECO); the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF); and the West African Development Bank (BOAD).

Summaries of ENB coverage of past GEF Council and Assembly meetings can be found at: <https://enb.iisd.org/negotiations/global-environment-facility-gef>.

Report of GEF Council Meeting

Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, GEF CEO and Chairperson, opened the 61st meeting of the GEF Council on Monday morning, 6 December. He highlighted this as one of the most important Council meetings to date, particularly for the next generation. He also highlighted that the GEF is celebrating its 30th anniversary of providing support for environmental action worldwide.

Rodríguez noted that: the announcements and decisions made at the Glasgow Climate Change Conference kept the 1.5°C temperature goal “on life support,” and nature was “finally integrated into climate issues”; the pandemic is still severely impacting many parts of the world; and the floods, fires, and droughts being experienced around the world are the result of humanity pushing the Earth beyond its natural limits.

Reflecting on the GEF-CSO Consultation held on 3 December, Rodríguez highlighted the youth participants’ plea that “we must deliver on our promises.” He reflected on GEF-7 implementation and the Work Program to be presented to the Council, which, he said, demonstrates the GEF’s commitment to tackle environmental challenges in an integrated way. He noted that many projects will contribute to blue and green recovery from the pandemic. Rodríguez said the GEF-8 replenishment must deliver solutions for the post-pandemic era, noting the replenishment will enable the GEF to scale up the impact of its initiatives in an effective and efficient way.

Emphasizing the importance of the next ten years, Rodríguez stressed that the environmental crises the world is facing, such as climate change, land degradation, and ocean pollution, must be addressed together and with everyone at the table, in order to achieve a nature-positive, carbon-neutral, and pollution-free world.

GEF Council Co-Chair Mette Møglestue, Norway, highlighted the GEF’s 30th anniversary, and underlined the need to reflect on the GEF’s many achievements as we look into the future.

Adoption of the Agenda

The Council approved the provisional agenda (GEF/C.61/01/Rev.01) without amendment.

The GEF Monitoring Report 2021

GEF CEO Rodríguez presided over discussion on 6 December. Françoise Clottes, GEF Secretariat, presented “The GEF Monitoring Report 2021” (GEF/C.61/03), and reviewed the results as presented in the report’s Portfolio Scorecard. She noted multiple areas with good progress, including the timing for the first disbursements and quality of implementation. She said the timing of Mid-Term Review (MTR) submission is an area needing further attention, highlighting that pandemic travel restrictions have prevented many project teams from holding MTRs as planned.

During discussion of this agenda item, Council Members stressed the role of MTRs in identifying lessons learned and identifying options for course correction, and inquired about risk assessments and the Secretariat’s definition of risk, among other issues.

Council Members complimented the findings that ratios of project implementation remain at a satisfactory rate and that more financing than expected has been mobilized. Areas for improvement highlighted by Council Members include the quality and timeliness of MTRs, such as by incorporating more qualitative information. Council Members also lamented the reduction in the disbursement ratio.

Council Members called for:

- serving all regions in a balanced manner;
- greater balance in funding across the GEF Agencies;
- including more regional development banks as Agencies;



Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, CEO and Chairperson, GEF

- attention to LDCs in the Caribbean and Africa; and
- more information on how the private sector is involved in GEF projects.

One Council Member noted a misalignment between national budget approval processes and the budget timelines of the GEF and its implementing Agencies, as well as co-financing challenges arising from countries having to reallocate resources to sectors such as health due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Secretariat expressed appreciation for the support of the scorecard framework, and noted that the risk ratings are provided by each implementing Agency and are not normed across agencies, although the data are still useful to track. Clottes noted that co-financing cannot be mandated but is a critical element of a project’s integrity.

On the decrease in disbursement ratio between last year and this year, the Secretariat said some issues are related to the pandemic, and the Secretariat and implementing Agencies are monitoring this issue.

Gustavo Fonseca, GEF Secretariat, said the Secretariat can refine the Private Sector Engagement Strategy with more regional analysis and detailed company descriptions. He highlighted challenges relating to the availability and comparability of data, noting difficulties with extracting data points automatically. Regarding co-financing, he said the GEF will continue to support Agencies by connecting them to private sector partners.

CEO Rodríguez reiterated the GEF’s commitment to support the strengthening of operational focal points. The Council adopted the draft decision without amendment.

Decision: In decision 25/2021, the Council welcomes the report and requests Agencies, through engagement with the Secretariat, to ensure the timely and quality delivery of MTRs as a tool for enhancing implementation progress.

UNDP Third-Party Review of Compliance with GEF Minimum Fiduciary Standards

Co-Chair Møglestue opened discussion of this agenda item on 6 December. Clottes presented “UNDP Third-Party Review of Compliance with GEF Minimum Fiduciary Standards” (GEF/C.61/04), noting that a similar review is scheduled for all GEF Agencies in the final year of GEF-7. She reported that UNDP met all 15 minimum fiduciary standards. Clottes highlighted standards where improvement is needed, including on procurement processes and oversight, whistleblower protections,

and anti-money laundering. She added that monthly reporting on action will continue, and recommended that subsequent monitoring continue through 2022.

Graham Joscelyne, Third-Party Reviewer, presented highlights from the report, noting in particular the complicated work involved with reviewing interconnected standards and sub-standards. He said the UNDP Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) conducted a successful audit assessment, and suggested that the launch of the new Enterprise Resource Planning system could lead to behavior change through a new system of checks and balances.

Pradeep Kurukulasuriya, UNDP, noted that UNDP must deliver on 31 action items as a result of the OAI audit. He said UNDP is waiting for findings of a second audit report and that it will be re-audited in 2023 and 2024 at the Green Climate Portfolio level. He welcomed the review as an opportunity for heightened due diligence, and said work will continue on these assessments, including through a reconstituted inter-bureau task team in January 2022.

During discussion, Council Members expressed appreciation that responsibilities have been established and lessons are being identified. Speakers noted that tightening regulations will not be enough by itself but must be accompanied by a change in culture. Council Members requested monthly updates with qualitative and quantitative data.

Council Members called for clarification on the grievance process and more information on the whistleblower policy. They said the decision should “direct” rather than “urge” the minimum standards to be implemented.

In response, the Secretariat noted that the next review will be initiated at the end of next calendar year. Joscelyne noted that behavioral changes will take time to take hold. UNDP noted that shifts have occurred, and individuals are going through the UNDP accountability system. Kurukulasuriya said the whistleblower protection policy has been updated.

The Secretariat confirmed that the action plan to be submitted by March 2022 will be the action-oriented response from UNDP to the third-party review. Noting this review is the first conducted by the GEF and is intended to be extended to other implementing Agencies, Clottes identified lessons learned from the process, including: agency self-assessment is essential and should be done

in conjunction with expert advice; the process is time- and labor-intensive; and a risk-based approach is critical.

UNDP reported that a standalone policy on anti-money laundering and financing of terrorism was adopted on 5 May 2021, which consolidates the Agency’s existing principles on the issue. He further reported that an implementation plan for the policy’s rollout was adopted in September 2021.

Discussion of this agenda item continued in executive session, and the Council approved a decision on the final day.

Decision: In Decision 26/2021, the Council takes note of the Independent Third-Party Review of UNDP and:

- urges UNDP to continue to implement actions required to come into full compliance with GEF Minimum Fiduciary Standards;
- requests UNDP to present a time-bound Action Plan to address the gaps identified by the Review, to be presented by 31 March 2022 for inter-sessional distribution to Council;
- requests UNDP to continue to provide monthly reports to the Secretariat on implementation of all actions under its Management Action Plan, and the Secretariat to continue to provide updates to the Council based on these reports until the end of 2022;
- requests UNDP to provide an updated self-assessment by 30 June 2022, and the Secretariat to commission an Independent Third-Party Review of that assessment to be presented to the Council at its 63rd meeting in December 2022;
- requests UNDP to provide an updated self-assessment by 30 June 2023, and the Secretariat to commission an Independent Third-Party Review to be presented to the Council at its 65th meeting in December 2023, with a focus on actions by UNDP that need a longer timeframe to be assessed; and
- requires that all projects included in the Work Program implemented by UNDP be circulated by e-mail for Council review at least four weeks prior to CEO endorsement/ approval.

Follow-up of UNDP Related Decisions from the 59th Council Meeting

GEF CEO Rodríguez opened discussion of this agenda item on 6 December. This discussion comprised oral reports from the Secretariat and UNDP on actions taken, under their respective responsibilities, in response to Council decisions relating to UNDP, approved at the 59th Council Meeting in December 2020.

Clottes said the Secretariat has communicated with all projects, reviewed projects, and transmitted findings of the audit to the Council. She said regular monthly reporting has taken place.

Kurukulasuriya presented actions taken by UNDP, including: a screening of risks raised by the OAI audit; a review of audit history and conflicts of interest relating to financial management and procurement planning; and online awareness raising for staff on the changes that have been introduced. He noted that a first follow-up audit on management actions was completed, as well as updated guidance on an anti-money laundering policy, conflict of interest on project boards, and whistleblower policy. Kurukulasuriya noted that an assessment report will be presented to the Council by January 2022, outlining the success of UNDP actions taken in response to the OAI audit and further steps needed.



Pradeep Kurukulasuriya, Director and Executive Coordinator, Nature, Climate and Energy, UNDP

Council Members called for internal controls, documentation of measures taken, and effective follow-up. Some Council Members underlined the need to take disciplinary action against those engaged in wrongdoing, and called for greater transparency and protection of whistleblowers. Responding to a proposal to share lessons learned with other Agencies, UNDP confirmed this is ongoing.

Discussion on this agenda item continued in executive session.

Share of GEF Financing in Agencies' Portfolios

GEF CEO Rodríguez chaired discussion of this agenda item, which took place on 7 December. Clottes introduced the report on “The Share of GEF Financing in Agencies’ Portfolios” (GEF/C.61/05). She explained that two issues have been discussed in this regard: relative levels of GEF financing in each GEF Agency’s overall operations, and concentration of GEF funding for each implementing Agency. Clottes said the report addresses the former issue, and finds that for all Agencies, the level of GEF financing in their overall operations is well below the 30% ceiling. As a result, she said, the proposed decision does not recommend additional measures beyond light monitoring of the issue going forward.

During discussion, Council Members inquired about the distinction between Agency focus and the share of GEF funding, and highlighted the need to increase the number of Agencies that can be considered for project funding. Several stressed that countries must retain the ability to choose the Agencies that will implement their GEF projects.

The Council adopted the draft decision without amendment.

Decision: In decision 27/2021, the Council, having reviewed document GEF/C.61/05, “The Share of GEF Financing in Agencies’ Portfolios,” takes note of the report and decides that:

- in light of the lessons learned and reported data, additional measures are not warranted at this time; and
- the Secretariat should continue to monitor this issue and submit a recommendation to the Council if it is determined that additional measures are warranted in the future.

Working Toward a Greener Global Recovery – Executive Summary of OPS7

Council Members considered the [report](#) prepared by the GEF’s Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) (GEF/E/C.61/Inf.01). The report, which was prepared to inform GEF-8, summarizes the seventh comprehensive evaluation of GEF results and performance, and is organized along three themes: what works in the GEF; how things work in the GEF; and why things work in the GEF.

Juha Uitto, Director, GEF IEO, outlined the eight conclusions from the evaluation, including the continuing relevance of the GEF, and the GEF’s strong performance record, with 80% of projects rated as satisfactory on outcomes and 68% on sustainability. He also presented the nine recommendations to the GEF, covering issues such as innovation and risk, the Small Grants Programme (SGP), and private sector and country engagement.

Presenting the [GEF’s management response](#) to the report, Sonja Teelucksingh, GEF Secretariat, noted that many of the report’s findings and recommendations have been forwarded to the GEF Council over the past three years and incorporated



Juha Uitto, Director, GEF IEO

into ongoing implementation of the GEF-7 and draft GEF-8 programming and policy directions.

Fonseca and Clottes discussed the nine recommendations contained in the report, identifying how both the GEF Secretariat and the GEF Partnership more broadly will implement the recommendations. On integrated programming, Fonseca said the criteria for country participation in each integrated program will consider commitment to nature-based solutions, stakeholder engagement, innovative finance, and relevant policies. On priority country groups, Fonseca noted the Secretariat is working on the GEF-8 System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) formulation that includes enhancements that will increase the distribution of resources to SIDS and LDCs.

On innovation and risk, Fonseca said the Secretariat will seek guidance from the STAP and the GEF Council to help examine the trade-offs between risk and innovation, in order to establish a clear baseline for risk acceptance in GEF-8 programming and to do a risk assessment of ongoing projects and programs in the GEF portfolio. He said the Secretariat has accepted the recommendation to create a specific window for financing innovation with a higher risk tolerance, which is included in the Programming Directions submitted to the third replenishment meeting.

On the SGP, Clottes highlighted the proposed GEF-8 SGP Strategy that was presented to the second replenishment meeting, which reflects an increased ambition and approach to move towards a “SGP 2.0” in GEF-8 and beyond. She said the proposed strategy suggests piloting a new financial window, under which GEF Agencies will channel financing to civil society actors and organizations aligned with emerging GEF priorities and ambitions.

On synergies and cooperation among Agencies, including concentration among Agencies, Clottes clarified that additional GEF rules on this issue could add complexity to accessing GEF financing and increase the risk of inconsistency between GEF and Agency policies and procedures. She said instead the Secretariat proposes changes and enhancements, including through activities already under exploration for GEF-8, such as developing learning and country engagement strategies. She said these will enhance the support provided to countries and operational focal points, to help them make fully informed decisions on the choice of GEF Agency.



Françoise Clottes, GEF Secretariat

Responding to the report and subsequent management response, several Council Members emphasized the value of keeping the GEF a learning institution, and emphasized the need for more responsive management. They called for strengthening country ownership and the Country Support Program in particular, including through support of the operational focal points. The need for an overall country engagement strategy was also mentioned.

On integrated programming, one Council Member cautioned against having too many programs, calling for balancing the need for achieving maximum impact while preventing fragmentation. Several speakers supported the recommendation to create a specific window that would have more tolerance of risk. Others asked how the GEF defines an acceptable level of risk. A few speakers noted the relevance of peace and security concerns for this discussion.

Some speakers noted the need to close the gap between having good policies on paper and implementing them effectively. Several supported streamlining the application process while providing a robust review of project design.

Several speakers requested a document that outlines all steps GEF management will take in response to the evaluation report. Many welcomed a GEF focus on LDCs and SIDS.

Report of the Chairperson of the STAP

Co-Chair Møglestue opened discussion of this agenda item on 8 December. Rosina Bierbaum, STAP Chair, presented the STAP report to GEF-61 (GEF/STAP/C.61/Inf.01). She summarized new climate change science, highlighting four new reports that show stabilizing global temperature at 1.5°C is possible but will be tough and requires urgent global action. She also described new science on ecosystems, droughts, and the ocean.

On the Panel's recent work, Bierbaum discussed the STAP's [paper](#) on the South-South Knowledge Exchange, and highlighted recommendations for GEF-8 programming, to: organize knowledge in a coherent manner; develop a database of best practices from the SGP; and empower GEF operational focal points with the skills and understanding to define knowledge exchange needs and report results. She also presented STAP reports on "[Enabling Elements of Good Project Design](#)" and "[How to Design Circular Economy Projects](#)."

Bierbaum described the STAP's ongoing work on the sustainable blue economy. She noted that early consultations with Agencies and other experts underscore a key niche for the GEF in helping translate high-level blue economy commitments into

practical policy and implementation measures at the national level. Bierbaum reported that the Panel is developing guidance that will propose criteria for investments in this area to be integrated, durable, and transformative. She said the STAP is planning a workshop in early 2022 that will draw on these criteria and provide a consolidated final guidance document.

On adaptation work, Bierbaum described examples, including: a decision tree user guide, which aims to ensure that adaptation projects deliver effective and durable outcomes; and an adaptation services framework, which will analyze GEF-supported adaptation services and aims to complement non-GEF adaptation investments. Bierbaum further discussed ongoing work on natural capital approaches, reporting, for instance, that the STAP is working with the Stanford University Natural Capital Project on identifying when, where, and why natural capital approaches have worked best.

Bierbaum presented highlights from the GEF Work Program, identifying three projects as good examples:

- an FAO project on strategies and social solutions to manage bycatch in tropical large marine ecosystems, noting it incorporates a good theory of change, a consideration of drivers, and a focus on long-term viability of the fisheries sector;
- a UNEP/ADB project on financing agrochemical reduction and management (FARM), saying it addresses the nexus of agricultural management, biodiversity conservation, and water pollution; and
- an FAO project on land degradation neutrality (LDN) for improved equity, sustainability, and resilience, highlighting it as a good application of the LDN conceptual framework of "avoid, reduce, reverse."

Bierbaum concluded by identifying areas of forthcoming STAP work on co-benefits, the blue economy, scenario planning, transformational change, and natural capital approaches.

In response to the STAP presentation, GEF CEO Rodríguez noted the report will help the GEF better strategize project funding, especially regarding climate change adaptation and mitigation. He added that GEF-8 and GEF-9 project funding will be crucial in light of the latest climate change models.

Council Members, *inter alia*: supported the work on the blue and circular economy; stressed the importance of tracking co-benefits across GEF programming; expressed appreciation for the guidance on what constitutes a climate-relevant project for funding purposes; and called for greater inclusion of social science components, such as indicators measuring impacts in rural areas.

One Council Member questioned the lack of reference to the pandemic in the STAP report, and asked how the STAP assessed COVID-19 risks.

Bierbaum said most Project Identification Forms have sections on COVID-19 and that staff take related risks into account when considering possible GEF projects. Fonseca said the GEF has been using a One Health approach and will apply this model to projects going forward.

Relations with Conventions and Other International Institutions

On 8 December, Co-Chair Møglestue opened this agenda item, noting it covers: presentations by the Executive Secretaries of four conventions the GEF serves; an update on the 26th session



Ibrahim Thiaw, UNCCD Executive Secretary

of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26) to the UNFCCC; and consideration of a report on the conventions.

Presentations by the Executive Secretaries of the Conventions the GEF Serves as a Financial Mechanism:

Ibrahim Thiaw, UNCCD Executive Secretary, highlighted the multiple benefits that accrue from efforts to restore degraded lands, including income for the poor, food for local communities, ecosystems and biodiversity restoration, and carbon sequestration where it belongs – in the soil. He highlighted that GEF funding incubated the Great Green Wall project when it started, and reported that it is now receiving funding from banks. He looked forward to GEF-8 finding innovative ways to address global challenges, and noted that UNCCD Parties are developing LDN targets and innovative ways to meet these targets. Thiaw said UNCCD COP 15 will take place in May 2022 in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire.

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, CBD Executive Secretary, noted that the virtual, first part of CBD COP 15 took place in October. Among other things, she noted that the session had adopted the budget for 2022, built ambition for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and concluded with a Kunming Declaration. She noted that the postponement of the January 2022 sessions of the subsidiary bodies will delay Parties’ input to GEF-8, but added that close collaboration and consultation with the GEF will ensure that priorities in the global biodiversity framework and directives in GEF-8 align. She emphasized that decisions to be made in multilateral processes in the coming months, including the second part of CBD COP 15 in mid-2022, will have profound implications for the future, and that a strong GEF-8 replenishment is essential.

Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary, Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions, said the allocation of resources for addressing persistent organic pollutants in the GEF has not been commensurate with the evolution of the Stockholm Convention, and noted upcoming deadlines to address legacy chemicals. He discussed expectations for the triple-COP meeting that is expected to take place in person in June 2022, and said it will discuss guidance for GEF-8. He noted that the Stockholm Convention is not the only Convention that has had to delay its COP meeting and development of input to the GEF-8 negotiations, and expressed hope there would be a way to deal with emerging issues.



Elizabeth Mrema, Executive Secretary, CBD

Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary, Minamata Convention on Mercury, discussed plans for an in-person fourth COP session in Bali, Indonesia. She stressed the need to assess the impact of mercury across sectors, and highlighted the need to make the science-based rationale for addressing mercury clearer across ministries. She highlighted that Parties’ first full national reports are due at the end of December 2021, and noted the need to improve information sharing on results of investments in implementation.

During discussion, several Council Members expressed concern about the postponement of the resumed sessions of the 24th meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, the third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, and the third meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, previously scheduled to take place in person in January 2022. They inquired about the impact this postponement would have on guidance and input to the GEF-8 replenishment discussions.

Council Members also highlighted the importance of nature-based solutions, and asked how the various conventions are considering this issue. Members also discussed: collaboration between the GEF and the Green Climate Fund (GCF); the GEF’s involvement in the Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction process; GEF support to developing countries in preparing their biennial transparency reports (BTRs) under the Paris Agreement’s Enhanced Transparency Framework; and GEF work to ensure co-benefits from addressing environmental issues, such as pollution, biodiversity, and climate change.

Responding to Council Members, Thiaw noted the nature-based solutions concept is relatively new but has made progress, highlighting two declarations that came out of Glasgow – on Forests and Land Use, and on Forests, Agriculture, and Commodity Trade.

On the postponement of the CBD meetings, Mrema clarified the Secretariat hopes to schedule the meetings for early March 2022. She explained this would require postponing the second part of CBD COP 15, to ensure documents can be provided to Parties within the six-week deadline. Mrema noted that several subsidiary body meetings have already been held and draft recommendations provided, and urged the Council to consider these recommendations as input to GEF-8.

Payet highlighted that the FARM project will help address several pesticides and agricultural plastics.

Stankiewicz noted that chemicals and waste programs also provide co-benefits.

Fonseca said the GEF has incorporated elements of the draft global biodiversity framework into its work and will attend the upcoming meetings to ensure continued alignment.

Outcomes of COP 26: Co-Chair Møglestue invited Ovais Sarmad, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNFCCC, to provide a summary of COP 26 outcomes. Sarmad noted the Paris Agreement rulebook is now complete and that a call to phase down unabated coal production was included in a decision for the first time. He highlighted the focus on adaptation and the establishment of a Work Programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation. Sarmad also noted the importance of an enhanced transparency framework on financing in order to build trust.

In response, GEF CEO Rodríguez welcomed guidance from the UNFCCC, and noted the joint partnership between the GEF and GCF. Council Members expressed concern that the increase in adaptation support should not be at the expense of support for mitigation, and highlighted the need for funding to support the preparation of BTRs, among other issues.

Fonseca said the GEF is already considering aspects of the enhanced transparency framework for financing under GEF-8. Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat, summarized the GEF activities meant to enhance support for BTRs.

Report on Relations with the Conventions and Other International Institutions: The GEF Council was then invited to comment on the report titled, “Relations with the Conventions and Other International Institutions” (GEF/C.61/07), which updates the Council on the GEF activities in support of the following MEAs: the CBD; the UNCCD; the UNFCCC; the Stockholm Convention; the Minamata Convention on Mercury; and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

Council Members encouraged the GEF to explore potential synergies among the MEAs and with the GCF. The Secretariat indicated that a report on collaboration with the GCF will be prepared soon, and reports from the GEF to the upcoming COP meetings will be sent to Council Members once complete. The Council adopted the decision on this agenda item as drafted.

Decision: In decision 29/2021, the Council, having considered document GEF/C.61/07, “Relations with the Conventions and Other International Institutions,” welcomes the report and requests the GEF network to continue to work with recipient countries to reflect the guidance and national priorities in their GEF programming and activities.

Work Program for GEF Trust Fund

On Thursday, 9 December, GEF CEO Rodríguez introduced this agenda item (GEF/C.61/06). Fonseca presented the proposed Work Program to the Council, noting it is the seventh GEF-7 work program. He said the Program requests the Council to approve a total of USD 190.7 million, comprising USD 174.6 million for projects and USD 16.1 million for associated Agency fees, which represents 5% of the entire GEF-7 replenishment.

Explaining that the Work Program consists of 25 projects and one program, Fonseca said it would direct significant resources to vulnerable countries in Africa and Asia, and across LDCs and



Gustavo Fonseca, GEF Secretariat

SIDS. He highlighted that the Program is expected to leverage a total of USD 1.4 billion in co-financing, of which USD 1.1 billion represents mobilized investment, and that this figure exceeds the overall GEF-7 co-financing aspiration. He said 90% of financing will be provided to official development assistance-eligible countries.

Fonseca said eight of the 18 implementing Agencies will receive resources under the Program, with UNDP, followed by the World Bank and UNEP, receiving the largest share. He explained that the Chemicals and Waste, and International Waters focal areas will receive the largest allocations in this Work Program, noting these two areas were lagging behind in the previous GEF-7 Work Programs. Regarding recipient countries, he noted 43 countries comprising ten LDCs and 18 SIDS would receive funding, with the Asia region receiving the largest share of 42.7%, followed by Africa and SIDS.

Fonseca highlighted that the Non-Grant Instruments Program submitted one project for approval under the Work Program – “Green Finance and Sustainable Agriculture in the Dry Forest Ecoregion of Ecuador and Peru,” which would receive USD 6 million and mobilize USD 68.2 million of co-financing. He explained the project adopts an innovative concept that seeks to mobilize private sector resources through the issuance of two green bonds for sustainable land use and conservation in the capital markets of Peru and Ecuador. Fonseca said the project aims to support biodiversity conservation in prioritized territories of the dry forests in Ecuador and Peru by financing sustainable agricultural practices, building capacities, and transferring technology to small and medium farms. He said the project is expected to benefit 24,300 smallholder farmers in the two countries.

Fonseca concluded by highlighting the joint World Health Organization, FAO, UNEP, and World Organisation for Animal Health [Statement on the definition of “One Health.”](#) He said the redefinition of what a One Health approach should look like is in line with the proposed GEF-8 strategy and conclusions of the [white paper on the GEF COVID-19 Response Strategy](#).

Responding to the presentation, Council Members supported the increased attention to the Chemicals and Waste focal area but several questioned why the Climate Change focal area was lagging behind, both under this Work Program and under GEF-7 in general. Some Members also noted decreased participation of Latin America and the Caribbean, and asked for clarification about the distribution of projects across focal areas and regions.

Some Council Members reiterated the need for a better distribution of resources among GEF Agencies. One Member highlighted LDN targets are voluntary and only one of several approaches to combat drought and desertification, and warned that projects should not inadvertently make this a mandatory target.

Responding to Council Members' comments and questions, Fonseca acknowledged that LDN is a voluntary target and said there is no intention to make it mandatory. Regarding the distribution of projects across focal areas and regions, he cautioned against identifying a trend from this Work Program alone, clarifying that the distribution of projects in this specific Work Program is not indicative of the distribution under the overall GEF-7 cycle. He explained that some regions and focal areas were lagging behind in previous GEF-7 Work Programs and are now catching up, which is why it may seem like they are receiving a greater allocation under this Program.

Several Council Members highlighted the importance of considering and reporting on gender in all GEF projects. Fonseca explained that project reporting and evaluation is done via the scorecard with the ultimate goal that all projects will address gender disparities in the future.

Council Members also discussed the need for a second review of the project in India on thermal energy efficiency. One Member addressed concerns as to whether this project extends fossil fuel use. He noted the goal is to decarbonize but national circumstances should be taken into account. The Council Member added the project will lead to large reductions in greenhouse gases, and welcomed further discussion with the Council on the project moving forward.

GEF CEO Rodríguez reminded the Council that climate change has the largest flexibility of all focal areas, and that 80% of GEF financing is climate related because of integrated programming.

The Council then approved the Work Program.

Decision: In decision 28/2021, the Council recommends approval of a Work Program comprising 25 projects and one program with total resources amounting to USD 190.7 million, which includes GEF project financing and Agency fees. Major changes to project objectives or scope after initial Project Identification Form approval shall be posted on the internet for Council review and CEO endorsement. The decision outlines project details and funding breakdowns within the GEF-7 cycle.

A global project, the program Financing Agrochemical Reduction and Management (FARM), will be implemented in Ecuador, India, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Philippines, Uruguay, and Viet Nam.

Regional projects include: enhancing the sustainable management of Senegalo-Mauritanian Aquifer System to ensure access to water for populations facing climate change in the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, and Senegal; enhancing environmental security and transboundary cooperation in the Golok/Kolok River Basin, in Malaysia and Thailand; strategies, technologies and social solutions to manage bycatch in tropical Large Marine Ecosystem Fisheries in Barbados, Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago; and implementing the Strategic Action Programme of the Drin Basin to Strengthen Transboundary Cooperation and Enable Integrated Natural



Brenda Pequeño, Council Member, Mexico

Resources Management in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia.

Among the projects to be implemented in individual countries are the following: strengthening biodiversity governance systems for the sustainable management of living natural resources in Cabo Verde; promoting sustainability in the agave-mezcal value chain through restoration and integrated management of biocultural landscapes in Oaxaca, Mexico; sustainably managing and restoring degraded landscapes for achieving LDN in India; promoting integrated management and environmentally sound disposal of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) Pesticides and Mercury in Healthcare and Agricultural Sectors in Sri Lanka; and improving management of e-waste and healthcare waste to reduce emissions of unintentionally produced POPs in Egypt.

Assessment of the Pilot on Adjusted Co-Chairing Arrangements

On 9 December, Clottes presented the background document on the assessment of the pilot on adjusted co-chairing arrangements (GEF/C.61/08). Based on the Council's decisions 22/2020 and 23/2020, the GEF has been piloting for one year an "adjusted co-chairing arrangement." The pilot involved appointing the elected Chairperson for one year instead of a single meeting to facilitate stronger involvement of the elected Chairperson in providing input to the agenda, the chairing of the meeting, and the meeting report. Clottes explained that the Working Group that was to conduct the assessment of the pilot co-chairing arrangement did not meet in 2021, so the assessment has not yet been conducted.

Co-Chair Møglestue described ways she had been involved in preparing for Council meetings during the one-year pilot, from commenting on agenda items to working closely with the Secretariat. She offered to brief her successor on lessons learned, and thanked the Council for entrusting her with this responsibility.

During discussion, Council Members expressed an interest in extending the current arrangement to 2022.

Decision: In decision 30/2021, the Council requests the Working Group on Governance to submit its assessment of the pilot co-chairing arrangement and options for the future, and recommendations as may be necessary, at its 62nd meeting. The Council further decides to extend the current pilot co-chairing arrangement until its 63rd meeting in December 2022.

Note on the Organization of the Seventh GEF Assembly

On 9 December, Clottes presented a document updating the Council on the organization of the Seventh GEF Assembly (GEF/C.61/09). Clottes said the Assembly was originally planned for May 2022, but the dates may need to be changed, and a decision by mail will be proposed for Council consideration should this become necessary. She said the proposed budget of USD 1.7 million is based on the experience of the past two Assemblies.

GEF CEO Rodriguez said the Secretariat is in ongoing conversations with a country to serve as the host. During discussion, one Member suggested the possibility of visits to GEF project sites be explored.

Some Council Members asked if there were contingency plans for a virtual event, given the pandemic. A Member recommended that Council meetings alternate between virtual and in-person events even after the pandemic subsides.

Responding to comments, Clottes explained that if pandemic conditions make it difficult to hold the Assembly, it does not need to be held in conjunction with the Council meeting. She said the Council has to take a decision on the full replenishment package by the end of June 2022, but an Assembly decision is not necessary to launch the work of GEF-8.

With Council Members approving the budget, the decision was adopted as drafted.

Decision: In decision 31/2021, the Council approves USD 1.7 million for the Special Initiative to fund the organization of the Seventh Assembly.

Other Business

Dates of Future Meetings: In decision 34/2021, the Council agrees to hold its 62nd meeting in the week of 20 June 2022.

The Secretariat said the meeting format, whether in-person, virtual, or hybrid, will be decided at a later date.

GEF CEO Rodriguez discussed planning for the final replenishment meetings. He said the location of an in-person meeting in January 2022 remains to be decided. The fourth meeting is expected to take place from 6-8 April 2022, at a location to be announced.

Election of Members to the Ethics Committee: The Council adopted the decision as drafted.

Decision: In decision 35/2021, the Council approves the updated membership of the Ethics Committee as follows: Yoshiko Motoyama, Alternate Council Member of Japan, for a term of two years or until the expiration of her term as Council Member, whichever comes first; Lavern Queeley, Council Member for Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago, for a term of two years or until the expiration of her term as Council Member, whichever comes first; Miguel Stutzin, Council Member for Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay, for a term of two years or until the expiration of his term as Council Member, whichever comes first; and Gerard Bussier, Council Member for Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda, for a term of two years or until the expiration of his term as Council Member, whichever comes first.

Election of Members to the Working Group on

Governance: In response to an inquiry on this item, William Ehlers, GEF Secretariat clarified that only Council Members can participate in the Working Group on Governance, but the Working Group can invite anyone to participate, including other Council Members, observers, and other stakeholders. Ehlers also clarified that pursuant to paragraph 25 of the Rules of Procedure, only Council Members can add items to the agenda, and this must be done at least 14 days before the Council meeting.

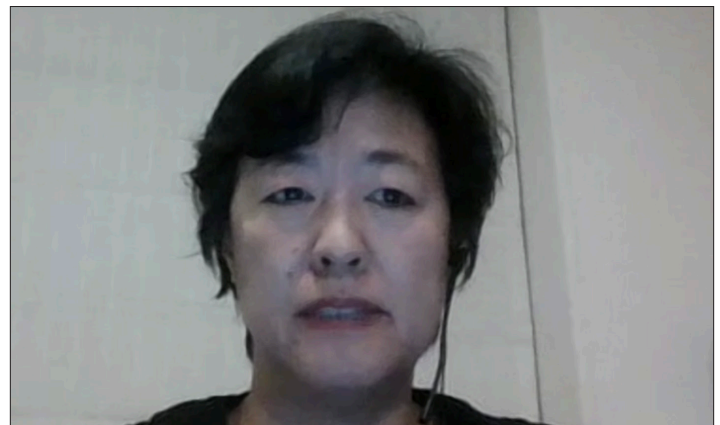
The Council adopted the decision as drafted.

Decision: In decision 36/2021, the Council elects the following members for this Working Group: Gabriela Blatter, Switzerland, Council Member for the Constituency of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan; Mathew Haarsager, US, Council Member; Tom Bui, Canada, Council Member; Richard Bontjer, Australia, Council Member for the Constituency of Australia, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea; Brenda Pequeño Vargas, Mexico, Council Member for the Constituency of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Venezuela; Baba Drame, Senegal, Alternate Council Member for the Constituency of Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and the Gambia; Samantha Justin, Saint Lucia, Alternate Council Member for the Constituency of Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Surinam, and Trinidad and Tobago; and Hoda Elshawadfy, Egypt, Council Member for the Constituency of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia.

Election of the New Co-chair: The Secretariat introduced the draft decision on 9 December, explaining that the new co-chair will preside over the next Council meeting but is being elected at this Council meeting so that this individual can participate in the preparation for the meeting they will be co-chairing.

One Council Member clarified that pursuant to the amendment to the decision on the co-chairing arrangements, the pilot would continue, and the new co-chair will therefore preside for the entire year comprising two Council meetings. The Secretariat consulted with the co-chair candidate on whether this would be acceptable, and on Friday the Council elected the new co-chair.

Decision: In decision 37/2021, the Council elects Ambassador Aliioaiga Feturi Elisaia, Samoa, as the Elected Co-Chair for 2022.



Yoshiko Motoyama, Alternate Member, Japan

Following his election, Elisaia called on all Members to be part of the solution to the many challenges the world is facing, stressing that “many hands make light work.” Outgoing Elected Co-Chair Møglestue thanked the Council for their support, and congratulated Ambassador Elisaia on his election, reiterating her offer to share lessons learned during the first year of the pilot on one-year chairing arrangements.

Gender: One Council Member proposed consideration of an item on gender. She noted that although a lot of progress has been made in recent years on gender mainstreaming, the Seventh Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF shows this progress is not enough. Noting the need for increased gender mainstreaming, including by the implementing Agencies, she asked how this will be addressed under GEF-8, and proposed establishing a working group on gender.

In response, the Secretariat suggested preparing a report on this issue for consideration at the next meeting of the Council. Council Members agreed to this suggestion.

Report of the LDCF/SCCF Council Meeting

GEF CEO Rodríguez opened the 31st meeting of the LDCF/SCCF Council on 9 December 2021. He reflected on the threat of climate change, and said the international community needs to better support all adaptation funds in order to better address the needs of LDCs and SIDS.

The Incoming Chair of the LDC Group, Madeleine Diouf Sarr, Senegal, celebrated the longstanding partnership between LDCs and the GEF. She lamented the severe impacts of COVID-19 on LDCs, which, she said, has exacerbated preexisting inequalities. She noted USD 413 million in new funding for the LDCF was announced during a pledging event at COP 26. She said around 1.1 billion people living in LDCs depend on the LDCF and SCCF for critical support.

Co-Chair Møglestue invited the Council to adopt the Agenda as presented in document GEF/LDCF.SCCF.31/01/Rev.02. It was adopted without amendment.

Work Program of the Least Developed Countries Fund

GEF CEO Rodríguez chaired discussion of the LDCF Work Program on 9 December. Fonseca introduced the LDCF Work Program (GEF/LDCF.SCCF.31/03). He said the Work Program requests a total of USD 19.62 million for three projects to address



William Ehlers, GEF Secretariat

urgent climate change adaptation priorities in three LDCs – Malawi, Sao Tome and Principe, and Solomon Islands.

Regarding Comoros, Madagascar, and Niger – the three LDCs that have not yet accessed GEF-7 funds, Fonseca noted there is still an opportunity to access funds, and said the Secretariat will prioritize support to LDCs to reach funding caps. He reminded the Council of the need for improved stability and predictability of resources, and that co-financing is not required for these funds.

During discussion, Council Members expressed surprise at the low number of projects in the Work Program, and inquired if there are more projects in the pipeline. Members suggested continuing to hold pledging events like the one that took place at the Glasgow Climate Change Conference, and inquired about the GEF’s plans for the January 2022 meeting of the fifth UN Conference on the LDCs (LDC5).

The Secretariat replied that it does not want projects in the pipeline to become out of date while waiting for funding. Aoki noted Secretariat plans to organize an event at LDC5 to showcase the GEF’s adaptation work.

The LDCF/SCCF Council then adopted the Work Program.

Decision: In decision LDCF.SCCF 7/2021, the Council, having reviewed the Work Program for the LDCF, approves the Work Program comprising three projects, subject to comments made during the Council meeting and additional comments that may be submitted in writing to the Secretariat by 7 January 2022. Total resources approved in this Work Program amount to USD 19.62 million from the LDCF, inclusive of GEF project financing and Agency fees.

The three projects address the following topics: Integrated Economic Development and Community Resilience in Solomon Islands; Transformational Adaptation for Climate Resilience in Lake Chilwa Basin of Malawi; and Co-management of Climate Extremes for Agriculture Resilience via Innovative Technologies for Irrigation in São Tomé and Príncipe.

Progress Report on the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund

On 10 December, GEF CEO Rodríguez opened discussion of the “Progress Report on the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund” (GEF/LDCF.SCCF.31/04/Rev.01).

Aoki reviewed the project portfolios and results from the two Funds. She outlined expected results for the LDCF: 51.34 million direct beneficiaries; 5.8 million hectares of land better



Elected GEF Council Co-Chair for 2022, Feturi Elisaia, Samoa

managed to withstand effects of climate change; 1.04 million people trained on adaptation strategies and measures; and 2,521 policies and plans to integrate adaptation strategies and measures. She reported that no new pledges have been received during the reporting period for the SCCF. She outlined expected results for the SCCF as: 7.38 million direct beneficiaries; 4.01 million hectares of land better managed; 209,301 people trained to identify, prioritize, implement, and evaluate adaptation strategies and measures; 462 policies, plans, and processes developed or strengthened to integrate adaptation strategies and measures; and 175 risk and vulnerability assessments.

Aoki highlighted the Challenge Program competition, from which new project concepts were identified. GEF CEO Rodríguez praised the level of innovation in the submissions to the Challenge Program, and said it was hard to narrow down the winners.

On visibility and awareness-raising efforts in the 2021 fiscal year, Aoki highlighted that there had been 240 mentions of the Funds in the media and 51,290 views of GEF webpages containing the words “adaptation,” “LDCF,” and “SCCF.” Rodríguez thanked Council Members for their support for communication and outreach to position the LDCF and SCCF on the frontline of assistance to vulnerable societies.

Council Members supported a suggestion to disaggregate data by age and gender, and commended efforts to raise the visibility of the Funds. They inquired about how to sustain interest in the Challenge Program when only a limited number of projects are funded.

Aoki reported that there are ongoing discussions to enhance the Challenge Program in GEF-8.

The LDCF/SCCF Council adopted the decision as drafted.

Decision: In decision LDCF.SCCF 8/2021, the LDCF/SCCF Council welcomes the progress report and, with appreciation, takes note of the progress made under the LDCF and the SCCF.

Update on the Development of the GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change for the LDCF and SCCF and Operational Improvements

Co-Chair Møglestue chaired discussion of this agenda item on 10 December. Aoki presented the report (GEF/LDCF.SCCF.31/Inf.04), which covers the period from July 2022 to June 2026. She noted that developing the strategy required prioritizing, identifying options for resource mobilization, and evaluating the Funds. She said a revised draft will be distributed prior to the next LDCF/SCCF Strategy meeting in February.



Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretaria

Aoki said consultations were held with: outside scientific and technical experts on climate change adaptation to get insights from the field; donors on operational priorities and financing modalities; and recipient countries on their programmatic priorities and needs.

Council Members inquired about the relationship between the LDCF and Adaptation Fund. Some speakers supported a shift towards innovation and private sector engagement, and called for a gender focus in project approval and delivery. One Council Member urged other donors to contribute to encourage more to do so.

Aoki noted that LDCF staff collaborate closely with the Adaptation Fund and GCF on best practices, monitoring, and other strategies. She highlighted that CSO community engagement is important to the successful functioning of the Fund.

GEF CEO Rodríguez said the GEF will look to 2022 as a year to work more strategically and increase collaboration among the Funds. He stated that the GEF could find ways to bring mitigation-focused projects into the realm of adaptation, adding that nature-based solutions can provide large-scale impacts on both. Co-Chair Møglestue then closed the agenda item.

2021 Program Evaluation of the SCCF and Management Response

Uitto presented the report on this agenda item (GEF/LDCF.SCCF.31/E/01/Rev.01) on 10 December. He noted that the main focus of the SCCF has been support for adaptation in non-LDCs, with 83% of the funds going to this funding window and the remaining 17% going to the funding window on technology transfer for adaptation. He said no funding has been channeled to the funding window for mitigation in certain sectors such as energy and transport, or to the funding window for economic diversification in oil-exporting countries.

Uitto concluded that the SCCF has reached a near-dormant phase due to limited funding since 2014 and few new project approvals, noting that only ten projects have been approved since the last evaluation in 2017. He noted, however, that the planning, monitoring, and reporting of ongoing projects continue. He said despite the GEF’s communication efforts, most donors are not considering funding the SCCF, instead directing funding to the GCF.

Uitto reported on the SCCF’s:

- effectiveness, noting all completed projects developed or introduced new technologies or approaches and improved private sector engagement;
- efficiency, underlining it is seriously undermined by limited and unpredictable funding; and
- sustainability, reporting that 75% of completed projects had sustainable outcomes, compared to 63% for GEF Trust Fund projects.

Highlighting that the SCCF has a unique role as the only fund with a dedicated technology transfer window for adaptation, Uitto called for the Fund to be revitalized in order for it to attract new financing and continue its work.

Uitto said the IEO’s recommendation is that the GEF Secretariat acknowledge the semi-dormant state of the SCCF and, together with the key and emerging donors and stakeholders, develop a proactive action plan to revitalize the Fund. He said this plan should include:

- removing the two funding windows that have received no funding;
- refocusing the Fund towards, *inter alia*, technology transfer and innovation in non-LDCs; and
- communicating the SCCF's niche and brand in the climate finance architecture.

Presenting the GEF Secretariat's management response, Fonseca appreciated the many positive conclusions about the SCCF, including its support to national priorities and overall effectiveness and performance. He agreed that the GEF should articulate and communicate the SCCF's niche and distinct role within the climate finance architecture. Fonseca noted that the Secretariat has been actively doing so, including through the draft GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change for the LDCF and the SCCF, which proposes an SCCF focus on SIDS and on technology transfer and innovation, in alignment with the IEO's recommendation.

On acknowledging the semi-dormant state of the SCCF, Fonseca said the Secretariat does not accept this recommendation as the SCCF is still operational, with an active portfolio. He further underlined that the Secretariat does not accept the IEO's recommendation about the removal of the two funding windows that have not received any funding, noting this action would need to be mandated by the UNFCCC COP. He added that the Secretariat has not received any indication that the existence of these two funding windows has precluded donors from contributing to the SCCF in the past. Fonseca concluded by saying that the Secretariat will implement the actionable aspects of the IEO's recommendation and keep the LDCF and SCCF Council updated on progress.

Council Members thanked the IEO and GEF Secretariat, expressing support for the management response. One speaker asked the IEO to develop a monitoring toolkit that can be used to evaluate SCCF projects at country level, as well as capacity building for governments to, *inter alia*, use the toolkit. One Council Member supported restructuring of the SCCF, and called on the GEF to continue to communicate the Fund's niche within the global adaptation landscape, including through a statement on its relationship with, and complementarity to, the GCF. The Council adopted the decision as drafted.

Decision: In decision LDCF.SCCF 9/2021, the LDCF/SCCF Council takes note of the evaluation's recommendation and endorses the management response to address it, which is presented in GEF/LDCF.SCCF.31/05.

Closing of the Council Meetings

Joint Summary of the Co-Chairs

Co-Chair Møglestue opened discussion of the Joint Summary of the GEF Council Co-Chairs on 10 December. Council Members reviewed and approved the summary with minor edits.

Co-Chair Møglestue then opened discussion of the Joint Summary of the LDCF/SCCF Council Co-Chairs. Council Members reviewed and approved the summary without amendment.

GEF 30th Anniversary Celebration

GEF CEO Rodríguez opened the celebration of the GEF 30th Anniversary at the close of the 61st meeting of the GEF Council.

Ehlers began the celebration, reflecting on his time at the GEF as one of the original Council Members. He said he is proud to see how the Council, Secretariat, and implementing Agencies have grown over time, and highlighted that more stakeholders are engaged in the work than ever before.

GEF CEO Rodríguez celebrated the integrated approach the GEF takes in focusing on both the "drivers and symptoms" of environmental degradation, and shared the release of the new [GEF publication](#) reflecting on 30 years of GEF activities.

Co-Chair Møglestue highlighted that the GEF is crucial to transforming multilateral decisions to action on the ground and could serve as a great model to other multilateral funds.

Following [video messages](#) from past GEF CEOs, heads of implementing Agencies, and leaders during the early days of the GEF Partnership, GEF staff and Council Members expressed their support for the GEF's work and looked forward to many more decades. Derrick Mugisha, GEF CSO Network, noted the critical role the GEF plays for LDCs, and suggested the GEF engage in promoting climate literacy in the countries it works in. He closed by appreciating the presence of youth at the table, and hoped that more youth-led projects would be funded.

Council Members thanked GEF donor countries for their past support, and encouraged them to continue to support developing countries through the GEF. Many Council Members also expressed appreciation to the GEF Secretariat for its support and hard work.

Wishing the GEF a happy birthday and thanking everyone for their hard work, GEF CEO Rodríguez closed the meeting at 10:54 am EST.

Upcoming Meetings

Resumed Fifth Session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5): UNEA-5 will take place in person under the theme, "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the SDGs." At this Conference, UNEA will also discuss whether to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee towards a new agreement on marine litter and plastic pollution. The in-person session of UNEA-5 will be followed by a Special Session of the UNEA, on 3-4 March 2022, to commemorate UNEP's 50th anniversary. **dates:** 28 February – 2 March 2022 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea5

Second Segment of the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury (COP-4.2): The in-person segment of COP-4 will resume the meeting opened at the virtual segment (COP-4.1). Parties will consider several substantive issues, including effectiveness evaluation, and amendments to Annexes A and B proposed in advance of COP-4. COP-4.2 will also discuss the 2023 programme of work and budget. **dates:** 21-25 March 2022 **location:** Bali, Indonesia **www:** www.mercuryconvention.org/en/meetings/cop4

Resumed sessions of the CBD Subsidiary Bodies and Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF): The resumed sessions of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-24), Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI-3), and the third meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the GBF were scheduled to reconvene face-to-face in January 2022 but have been postponed to a later date due to the

emergence of the Omicron variant. The meetings will address, as a core topic, outstanding issues in regard to the GBF. **dates:** TBC **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** www.cbd.int/meetings/

UNCCD COP 15: COP 15 is expected to take place during the second and third weeks of May 2022. **dates:** 9-21 May 2022 **location:** Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire **www:** www.unccd.int

Second Part of the UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP 15): The second part of CBD COP 15, the 10th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and the 4th meeting of the COP serving as the MOP to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing are scheduled to reconvene in a face-to-face format in Kunming, China. COP 15 is expected to take a final decision on the post-2020 GBF, as well as decisions on related topics, including capacity building and resource mobilization. **dates:** TBC 2022 **location:** Kunming, China **www:** www.cbd.int/meetings/

Stockholm+50: The UN General Assembly decided to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the UN Conference on the Human Environment held in 1972 in Stockholm, Sweden. **dates:** 2-3 June 2022 **location:** Stockholm, Sweden **www:** government.se/government-policy/stockholm50/

UNFCCC Subsidiary Body Meetings: The 56th sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies will convene to prepare for COP 27, the 17th Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 17), and 4th Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 4). **dates:** 6-16 June 2022 **location:** Bonn, Germany **www:** unfccc.int/event/first-sessional-period-2022

Basel Convention COP15, Rotterdam Convention COP10, and Stockholm Convention COP10: The face-to-face segment of the 15th meeting of the COP to the Basel Convention, the 10th meeting of the COP to the Rotterdam Convention, and the 10th meeting of the COP to the Stockholm Convention will convene back-to-back. The theme is “Global Agreements for a Healthy Planet: Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste.” **dates:**

6-17 June 2022 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** www.brsmeas.org/default.aspx

62nd Meeting of the GEF Council: The next meeting of the Council is expected to take place in the week of 20 June 2022. It will be preceded by the GEF CSO Consultation. **dates:** 20-24 June 2022 **location:** TBC **www:** www.thegef.org/events/62nd-gef-council-meeting

For additional meetings, see sdg.iisd.org/

Glossary

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSO	civil society organization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEF-8	eighth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
LDCs	least developed countries
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund
MEA	multilateral environmental agreement
OAI UNDP	Office of Audit and Investigations
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
SIDS	small island developing States
STAP	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change



Participants at the 61st meeting of the GEF Council