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Summary of the 67th Meeting of the GEF Council: 17-20 June 2024

Work programs totaling USD 736.42 million were collectively adopted by the 67th meeting of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council, the 36th meeting of the Least Developed Countries Fund/Special Climate Change Fund (LDCF/SCCF) Council, and the second meeting of the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF) Council. The work programs will seek to bring global environmental benefits through activities addressing biodiversity loss, chemicals and waste pollution, land degradation, climate change, and international waters. Funding was also approved for a [Great Green Wall Program](#) established between the LDCF and GEF Trust Funds, a coral bond blended finance project that builds on the lessons from the 2022 rhino bond project, and a [Sustainable Cities Integrated Program](#).

Council Members lauded the historic nature of the first ever work program for the newly established GBFF, which includes three projects for a total of USD 37.82 million. The projects included in this work program – conserving [Mexican biodiversity through communities and their protected areas \(Mex30x30\)](#), [Biodiversity Conservation in Indigenous Lands in Brazil](#), and [Caatinga Protected Areas Program in Brazil](#) – all include a focus on Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs).

Following the adoption of the GBFF work program, David Cooper, Acting Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), commended the Council on the speed with which it responded to the request of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the CBD to establish this fund. Many speakers looked forward to the message this quick operationalization would send to parties at CBD COP 16, which is taking place in October 2024 in Cali, Colombia. While thanking Canada, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, Spain, and the United Kingdom for their support to the GBFF, GEF CEO and Chairperson Carlos Manuel Rodríguez stressed that more resources for the GBFF are urgently needed.

The largest ever LDCF work program was agreed, in the amount of USD 203 million, and includes projects and programs across 20 countries. The projects and programs focus on: agriculture, fisheries, and food security; nature-based solutions; water resources management; climate information services and early warning systems; disaster risk management; coastal zone management; climate-resilient transport; and urban resilience.

The work program adopted for the GEF Trust Fund consists of 25 projects and programs amounting to USD 495.6 million. With this agreement, 59% of the Eighth Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund (GEF-8) envelope has been programmed halfway into the replenishment period.

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The Council meetings took place against the backdrop of increasing challenges for the global environment. As detailed in her presentation to the GEF Council, Rosina Bierbaum, Chairperson of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), highlighted research demonstrating that the past year has seen record temperatures each month. She reported that recent research indicates that income losses from climate change are likely to be twice as high as previous studies showed; global e-waste is outpacing formal e-waste collection and recycling rates; the first global assessment of mangroves indicates sea-level rise is affecting one-third of global mangrove ecosystems; and infectious disease is driven by biodiversity loss, climate change, chemical pollution, introduced species, and habitat loss.

On a positive note, Bierbaum shared that the International Energy Agency has concluded that the world is now investing twice as much in clean energy as in fossil fuels. She highlighted a peer-reviewed article demonstrating that conservation efforts have increased the state of biodiversity or at least slowed its decline. In addition, she noted more than 100 new species were recently discovered off the coast of Chile.

During the session, speakers emphasized the GEF's unique role in addressing these global challenges and opportunities through its mandate to work across multiple global environmental issue areas and with multiple environmental agreements. In particular, Council Members discussed the linkages of their decisions with upcoming CBD COP in October, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP in November, and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) COP in December. The heads from these and other conventions discussed recent activities related to the GEF and identified ways the ninth replenishment of the GEF (GEF-9) could support implementation of their conventions.

Among other decisions, the Council appointed Carlos Manuel Rodríguez to a second four year term as the GEF's CEO and Chairperson.

Rodríguez co-chaired the second fully-hybrid GEF Council meeting alongside the 2024 Elected Chairperson Dawda Badgie, Executive Director, National Environment Agency, The Gambia, who joined the meeting virtually. The Council meetings took place at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, DC, from 17-20 June 2024. The 68th GEF Council meeting will be held fully on-line in December 2024.

A Brief History of the GEF

Originating with a 1989 proposal by France to formulate financing responses to mounting concerns over global environmental problems, the GEF was established as a pilot program in 1991 through arrangements between three "Implementing Agencies" – the World Bank, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) – to be housed in and administered by the World Bank. Its purpose was to provide concessional and additional funding of the incremental costs for achieving global environmental benefits (GEB), with an initial endowment of around USD 1 billion. The GEF was restructured through the



Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, GEF CEO and Chairperson

adoption of a new GEF Instrument in March 1994 in response to developing countries' calls for democratic decision-making, to replace the World Bank's weighted voting system based on share of the Bank's capital stock held by each member country. With this restructuring, the GEF became a separate institution, housed in, but not administered by, the World Bank. It operates as a key mechanism for global environmental funding.

The GEF's organizational structure includes:

- an Assembly that meets every four years;
- a Council that meets twice a year;
- a Secretariat;
- the STAP, which was established in 1995 and provides independent advice to the GEF on its work as well as assistance in the delivery of Members' responsibilities; and
- the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), which was created in 2003 and supports the improvement of accountability and learning in GEF strategies and operations through its evaluations.

The Council is the GEF's main governing body. It includes 32 members appointed by constituencies of GEF member countries (14 from developed countries, 16 from developing countries, and two from countries with economies in transition). Council Members rotate at different intervals determined by each constituency. The Council generally meets twice a year but in 2024 it will meet three times. The Council develops, adopts, and evaluates the operational policies and programs for GEF-financed activities, and reviews and approves the work program (projects submitted for approval), making decisions by consensus.

The GEF Assembly, which has convened seven times between 1998 and 2024, is the main guiding structure for the GEF, comprising 186 member governments. It provides a forum for discussion leading up to replenishment negotiations and is responsible for reviewing and ratifying recommendations of the Council.

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



View of the room during the GEF Council meeting

billion (GEF-5), USD 4.43 billion (GEF-6), USD 4.1 billion (GEF-7), and USD 5.33 billion (GEF-8).

The GEF administers the [LDCE](#), [SCCF](#), and [GBFF](#). It also serves as a financial mechanism for several multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), including the: CBD; UNFCCC; UNCCD; Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants; Minamata Convention on Mercury; and the Agreement under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement). In addition, the GEF's work focuses on sustainable forest management, and international waters, among others. Funding from the Facility is channeled to recipient countries through 18 [GEF Agencies](#).

GEF Consultation with Civil Society — Conversation on GEF initiatives and approaches to Civil Society: On the eve of the 67th meeting of the GEF Council, Secretariat staff and Council Members engaged in their 10th consultation with civil society organizations (CSOs) on the theme, “Conversation on GEF initiatives and approaches to Civil Society.” The consultation, facilitated by Gabriella Richardson Temm, GEF Secretariat, took place virtually on 14 June 2023, with approximately 450 people registered for the event, indicating significant interest in this topic.

CSOs, the GEF CSO Network, GEF Council Members, and GEF partners explored GEF initiatives and approaches to broader civil society engagements currently being implemented. These contribute to a heightened understanding of the GEF's current approach to enhancing civil society engagement and current initiatives; and leveraging participants' experiences and knowledge to inform the GEF partnership on pathways towards greater civil society engagement with a view to the GEF-9 replenishment and beyond.

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

Report of the 67th Meeting of the GEF Council

On Monday, 17 June 2024, Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, GEF CEO and Chairperson, welcomed participants to the second

fully-hybrid GEF Council meeting. He said the 2024 Elected Chairperson Dawda Badjie, Executive Director, National Environment Agency, The Gambia, would join the meeting virtually. He also welcomed the new Council Secretary, Noemi Hernández, a former GEF Council Member from Mexico, and expressed gratitude to outgoing Council Secretary William Ehlers.

Highlighting the challenges facing the large oceanic small island developing states (SIDS), Rodríguez noted the GEF has invested more than USD 3.2 billion in 38 SIDS in more than 1,000 projects over the past 30 years. He said the GEF and SIDS partnership is a good example of the effectiveness and cost-effective benefits of the GEF family of funds approach.

He noted it is time to invest in a mature and reliable global carbon market, biodiversity credits, green bonds, third-generation debt swaps for nature, and the implementation of global systems that ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits that arise from the use of genetic resources. Rodríguez also stressed the important role of the GEF as the financial mechanism for multiple MEAs and said the next GEF replenishment can be a “game-changer in multilateralism and resource mobilization.”

Rodríguez called attention to the ongoing GEF reform within the Secretariat, which he said had resulted in the creation of seven divisions: General Management, Programming, Integration and Knowledge, Partnerships, Conventions and Funds, Policy and Operations, and Communications. He concluded noting that the GEF Partnership needs to be bigger, bolder, and better, and hoped this spirit would be taken forward to the GEF-9 replenishment negotiations.

Council Members adopted the Provisional Agenda ([GEF/C.67/01/Rev.01](#)) and proceeded to work through the agenda items during the four-day meeting.

Work Program for the GEF Trust Fund

On Monday, Claude Gascon, Director of Strategy and Operations, GEF Secretariat, presented the Work Program for the GEF Trust Fund ([GEF/C.67/03/Rev.01](#)). Outlining that the proposed work program consists of 25 projects and programs amounting to USD 495.6 million, he highlighted that its adoption would result in 59% of the entire GEF-8 envelope having been



Claude Gascon, Director of Strategy and Operations, GEF Secretariat



Ahou Sosthène Larissa Kouadio, Council Member, Côte d'Ivoire

allocated halfway into the replenishment period. He emphasized the projects would mobilize USD 5.1 billion in co-financing, which exceeds the target in the GEF-8 co-financing policy.

Gascon detailed the breakdown of funding by focal area as follows: biodiversity received the highest portion of funding with USD 169.2 million; chemicals and waste received USD 114.3 million; land degradation received USD 92.6 million; climate change received USD 64.7 million; international waters received USD 39.8 million; and the Non-Grant Instrument (NGI) Program received USD 15 million.

He called attention to: the multi-fund Great Green Wall Program between the LDCF and GEF Trust Fund; the coral bond blended finance project, which builds on the lessons from the rhino bond project; and the Sustainable Cities Integrated Program, which is the last of the Integrated Programs to be funded. He stressed that activities under this work program will make a significant contribution to meeting GEF-8 outcome targets, with nine out of ten metrics having met over 50% of their targets at the halfway mark.

Council Members welcomed the work program with many commending it for exceeding the GEF-8 co-financing goal, its geographical distribution, and progress towards achieving targets. They also complemented the coral bond project, gender equality efforts, and the Sustainable Cities Integrated Program.

The GEF CSO Network raised concerns regarding the level and process for stakeholder engagement across the whole project cycle in the Sustainable Cities Integrated Program. The Network also expressed concern about a project on ecosystem restoration in seven national protected areas of Argentina.

Whilst many Members welcomed the increase in programming towards chemicals and waste, some also pointed out that the focal area is still below target. Gascon responded that this focal area emphasizes using resources strategically towards high priority areas and concepts, which often takes more time to prepare projects. He noted three large programs are in the pipeline, which will push the focal area well above the 50% target by June 2025.

Many Council Members expressed concern over the concentration of funding towards a few Implementing Agencies, with UNDP and UNEP receiving around 50% of the funds in the work program. Several Members requested further analysis and

options for action. Gascon said the GEF Secretariat will present a paper to the Council in December 2024 on the strength of the GEF Partnership. He said it could include options for developing incentives or policy tools to enable the Partnership to have a better distribution of resources.

On how the GEF Secretariat will support countries that have not yet used their STAR (System for Transparent Allocation of Resources) allocations, Gascon said the Secretariat has a comprehensive country engagement strategy to ensure allocations are used. One Member suggested that, due to their region's lack of capacity to submit individual country projects, the GEF could view the region as a single entity to ensure economy of scale.

Noting the level of private sector finance is still below expectations, several Council Members asked for a draft report on lessons learned and options for scaling up private sector involvement. Gascon reported that preliminary data indicates co-financing from the private sector is around 15%, an increase from 10%.

To questions about why five projects were rejected under the NGI Program, Gascon said the program is a competitive window for which projects are screened for eligibility and finance elements. He informed Members that, if proposals do not pass both screenings, they do not go ahead.

Two Council Members asked for a second review of some projects and announced they would send written notifications. One Member requested that the meeting's written record reflect his country's opposition to a Council decision that supports work program projects proposed in China, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Zimbabwe.

Decision: In Decision 22/2024, the Council approves the work program comprising 25 projects and programs, subject to comments made during the Council meeting and additional comments that may be submitted in writing to the Secretariat by 18 July 2024. Total GEF resources approved in this work program amount to USD 495.6 million, including GEF project financing and Agency fees.

GEF Business Plan and Corporate Budget for FY25

On Monday, Peter Lallas, GEF Secretariat, presented the GEF Business Plan and Corporate Budget for FY25 ([GEF/C.67/04](#)).



Peter Lallas, GEF Secretariat

He highlighted the GEF reform and restructuring of its internal organizational structure. He said continued priorities include the GEF's engagement with civil society, including women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples. He explained that the Secretariat has decreased its reliance on consultant support compared to FY24 and has instead increased staff capacity. He also provided an update on negotiations with the World Bank on office space and administrative support charge. He recalled that: at its 64th meeting in June 2023, the Council reviewed the issue of the appropriate level of charge by the World Bank for the administrative support it provides to the GEF; and the Council decided, in the context of the Secretariat's analysis, that the 11% indirect charge as set out in the budget document is the upper limit for the GEF, on the condition that the World Bank provides a sufficient justification for this level, and otherwise may be adjusted to a level of 7%. He noted that, in the interest of finding resolution, the GEF CEO asked if the World Bank could accept an adjusted rate of 10.5% (direct cost) for consideration by the Council.

Many Council Members supported the decision and prioritizing staff hiring over reliance on consultants. In reference to the negotiations with the World Bank over the appropriate indirect charge level, one Member reiterated it is not fair to apply the Bank's methodology to "equally" (one-size-fits-all) charge all Financial Intermediary Funds because the GEF's governance is different from such Funds. Several Members asked for an explanation from the World Bank, noting a higher charge undermines work program delivery.

Several Members highlighted the importance of strengthening support for the Country Engagement Strategy and Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT), and engagement with civil society.

The GEF CSO Network lamented that only USD 55,000 is allocated for engagement with civil society. Rodríguez stressed such engagement is mostly covered by program funds.

Decision: In Decision 23/2024, the Council takes note of the GEF Business Plan, and approves:



Faizal Parish, Global Environment Centre, Malaysia, and Chair, GEF CSO Network



Rosina Bierbaum, STAP Chair

- a FY25 corporate budget from the GEF Trust Fund of USD 42.994 million, comprised of: (a) USD 35.932 million for the GEF Secretariat, of which USD 2 million will be paid from GEF-7 administrative budget underruns; (b) USD 3.138 million for STAP; and (c) USD 3.924 million for the Trustee;
- a FY25 administrative budget for the Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund of USD 22,200; and
- a FY25 administrative budget of USD 0.434 million for the CBIT from the CBIT Trust Fund.

The Council also decides that, in the context of the Secretariat's analysis, the 11% level of indirect charge is the upper limit for the GEF, provided sufficient justification is provided by the World Bank for this indirect charge.

The Council also:

- reiterates its decision at its 64th meeting in June 2023 on the topic of indirect charge; and
- requests the Secretariat, in consultation with STAP and the Trustee, to present a combined FY26 corporate budget and business plan for discussion at its June 2025 meeting.

Report of the STAP Chair

On Monday, Rosina Bierbaum, STAP Chair, introduced the report of the STAP Chair ([GEF/STAP/C.67/Inf.01](#)), highlighting new scientific discoveries, recent STAP reports, STAP assessments of the work programs, and GEF-9 directions. Bierbaum welcomed two new members to the STAP: Jonathon Barnett (climate adaptation) and Ermias Betemariam (land degradation). She noted it would be the last meeting for John Donaldson (biodiversity).

On STAP reports, she outlined that the [STAP blended finance information note #2](#) (GEF/STAP/C.67/Inf.03) proposes three considerations for project design: Does it account for how GEBs will be delivered? What are the incentives for those who are responsible for delivering GEBs and what is the role of technical assistance? And does the governance of the project ensure the expected GEBs and that financial returns are delivered?

On a [report on delivering adaptation benefits from GEF Trust Fund projects](#) (GEF/STAP/C.67/Inf.02), Bierbaum outlined the report's recommendations to improve the characterization of climate change impacts and adaptation benefits in projects, define impacts of climate trends on projects as part of the theory of

change, and ensure co-benefits are properly tracked and reported in the project.

She explained that a [report on transboundary water projects](#) (GEF/STAP/C.67/Inf.04) highlights that such projects are usually designed to promote cooperation or to prevent or avoid conflicts. She noted that promoting cooperation requires effective legal and institutional interventions and policy coherence, while avoiding conflicts requires understanding root causes and drivers and designing interventions that address them.

With regard to future work, Bierbaum said initial consultations have highlighted the need to mobilize three positive tipping points. To operationalize a whole of society approach, she stressed the need to ensure synergies between GEBs and social and economic co-benefits. To achieve policy coherence, she underscored the need to maintain sustained engagement in policy reform and implementation. To catalyze durable transformational change, she highlighted the need to consider how to best address resistance to transformation and to identify necessary societal learning and adaptive management.

On the work programs being considered at this meeting, she suggested that some projects would be improved with more emphasis on the presentation of the theory of change and logical pathways. She also flagged the need to better review the role of stakeholder engagement in the projects.

During the discussion, Council Members and the CSO Network highlighted the need to include co-benefits during the project design stage and to account for them during implementation. More information on the consultation process used for the GEF-9 discussions was requested. One Council Member highlighted that electric vehicle battery waste is likely to become an issue in the near future. Council Members and stakeholders highlighted the value of the guiding areas for preparing for GEF-9. Thanks was expressed for the study of transboundary water projects. Council Members and stakeholders discussed options for enhancing the analysis of the climate impact of all projects. They noted the value of a green taxonomy to help the private sector understand how to align with the



Jonathan Caldicott, Policy and Operations Division, GEF Secretariat



Annette Windmeisser, Council Member, Germany

GEF, and sought advice on projects not approved for the work programs

One Council Member requested recommendations for how the Secretariat could take up the recommendations on blended finance. Council Members also discussed the STAP's role in providing guidance and the IEO's role in providing recommendations.

Streamlining the GEF Project Cycle: Report from the Working Group on the Streamlining Process

On Monday, Jonathan Caldicott, GEF Secretariat, presented the report from the Working Group on the Streamlining Process ([GEF/C.67/05/Rev.01](#)). He noted the Working Group has reviewed the current status of the project cycle and the impact of various efficiency and streamlining measures introduced by the Secretariat in recent years.

Several Council Members said efficiency gains should not come at the expense of project execution. In support, the Indigenous People's Advisory Group echoed the comment, and Caldicott agreed.

Many Council Members spoke in support of the Working Group's findings. Several asked how the Secretariat expects to act on the areas identified for streamlining and efficiencies. Caldicott indicated it will depend on other processes.

A Council Member expressed support for the Working Group's intention to improve the GEF's project cycle, noting Agencies should also identify areas for improving efficiency. Others highlighted benefits from reducing review time by the Secretariat and Implementing/Executing Agencies and having meetings with Agencies to address inefficiencies. Another Council Member agreed with the advice to consult with key stakeholders throughout the project cycle.

The GEF CSO Network recommended calling for, *inter alia*, shortening the time between project inception and initial fund disbursement, and options for sharing information on the pipeline for GEF projects prior to submitting the work program to the Council. An Implementing Agency highlighted benefits of playing the role of both Implementing and Executing Agency.



Rolph Poyet, Executive Secretary, Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions

Decision: In Decision 24/2024, the Council:

- appreciates the work of the Council Working Group and supports its continued work up to the next Council meeting in December 2024;
- endorses continued work by the Secretariat as outlined in this report, with support from Agencies and others as appropriate;
- encourages Agencies to identify areas for further streamlining and efficiencies within their own processes and communicate these to the Secretariat and Working Group; and
- endorses further development of proposals for a decision in December 2024, considering advance consultation requirements for any proposals requiring changes to policy and guidelines.

Gap Analysis of GEF Policies and Key Social Inclusion Issues – Timetable for Policy Actions

On Monday, Jonathan Caldicott presented on the Gap Analysis of GEF Policies and Key Social Inclusion Issues – Timetable for Policy Actions ([GEF/C.67/06](#)). Caldicott noted the document was prepared to identify areas where the GEF may need to strengthen its approach and guidance, including with respect to: people marginalized by virtue of their sexual orientation or gender identity and provisions to protect the rights of LGBTQ+ persons; youth as effective change-makers; and disability inclusion.

Many Council Members welcomed the document and the timetable.

Decision: In Decision 25/2024, the Council requested the Secretariat to proceed in accordance with the timetable and approach presented.

Relations with Conventions and Other International Institutions

On Tuesday, executives from international conventions discussed recent activities related to the GEF and identified ways GEF-9 could support their conventions' implementation.

Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary, UNCCD, addressed the Council through a video link and stressed the importance of large-scale restoration through multi-country actions that build resilience for drought, secure food for all, and reduce tensions.

He said the GEF Council should pay attention to trends in land loss and droughts.

Miguel de Serpa Soares, UN Legal Counsel and Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, reviewed momentum towards the entry into force of BBNJ Agreement. He noted the Agreement already has 90 signatories and seven ratifications (Federated States of Micronesia, Mauritius, Monaco, Seychelles, Belize, Chile, and Palau) and emphasized the importance of early entry into force, as well as building states' capacity to become parties.

Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary, Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions, discussed upcoming milestone events for the Stockholm Convention, including the expiration of specific exemptions for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, including perfluorooctanoic acid and perfluorooctane sulfonic acid and the need for parties to phase out and eliminate these chemicals. He noted the need to work with stakeholders, especially in LDCs and SIDS, to support these efforts. He called attention to the need to keep 2030 deadlines for polybrominated diphenyl ethers (used as flame retardants) on the radar for GEF-9. Also for GEF-9, Payet suggested continuing to mobilize resources, fostering coordination among MEAs and UN agencies, and keeping the Stockholm Convention's deadlines and goals in mind. Payet congratulated the Council on moving so quickly toward establishing the GBFF and emphasized the need to develop projects on all of the GBFF's targets, including on pollution.

Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary, Minamata Convention on Mercury, emphasized a role for the GEF in promoting synergies, including between mercury and biodiversity action. She highlighted recommendations that will be considered by CBD COP 16 that could promote synergies between biodiversity and pollution, including with regard to the adoption of indicators. She emphasized the need for the GEF to take the Minamata Convention's timeframes into account.

David Cooper, Acting Executive Secretary, CBD, supported a focus on the GBFF as a whole and added that the GEF's broad approach is well-placed to ensure that will happen. He outlined four areas where major achievements need to be made during CBD COP16:



Miguel de Serpa Soares, UN Under-Secretary-General and United Nations Legal Counsel



Ramón López Pérez, Council Member, Spain

- demonstrate the GBF is being implemented and countries are setting targets aligned with it;
- negotiation of a multilateral mechanism for fair and equitable sharing of benefits from digital sequence information on genetic resources (DSI), including a new fund that will have resources from the use of DSI;
- a new program of work on how IPLCs will support the GBF; and
- mechanisms to mobilize resources and continue the GEF's role as a financial mechanism.

In a video message, Daniele Violetti, Senior Director, UNFCCC, highlighted a role for the GEF in building capacity, said access to financial resources must be simplified, and noted the GEF's role in funding adaptation.

During the discussion, Council Members and the GEF CSO Network emphasized the need to engage with CSOs. One speaker highlighted an upcoming proposal to add "drought" to the name of the "land degradation" focal area. One Member recalled that the sixth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) focused on MEA synergies and asked whether the GEF will play a larger role at UNEA-7 to follow up on the UNEA-6 discussions. Speakers also emphasized the need to think about simplifying access to funding, with one noting that the ongoing negotiations on a plastics treaty will also consider how implementation will be financed.

In response to interventions, the heads of the conventions highlighted the opportunity that UNEA-6 provided for MEAs to interact and for ministers to see how MEAs fit into the landscape of governance and implementation. The commitment of secretariats to promote synergies was noted, including through coordination among the Presidencies of the COPs of the three Rio Conventions.

In response to a question about the increasing workload for the GEF Secretariat and how this was factored into the restructured Secretariat, the GEF Secretariat noted that one division will be focused on MEAs. In response to another question about the GEF's role in the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the GEF Secretariat noted that staff from the Secretariat attended recent COPs for both the CMS and the Convention on



Geeta Batra, GEF IEO Director

International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), citing its support for efforts across biodiversity-related conventions.

GEF CEO Rodríguez then introduced an annex contained in document [GEF/C.67/07/Rev.01](#), titled "Multilateral climate funds action plan on complementarity and coherence". He said this draft action plan is being developed by the Adaptation Fund, the Climate Investment Funds, the GEF, and the Green Climate Fund (GCF), following a joint announcement at UNFCCC COP 28. He shared that the final action plan will be published by the heads of the multilateral climate funds (MCFs) at UNFCCC COP 29.

Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat, then presented the action plan with its five action areas and highlighted its guiding principles, namely: accountability, flexibility, diversity, transparency, and inclusivity.

Many Council Members welcomed the draft action plan and commended the GEF for leading this work amongst the MCFs. Several Members highlighted the need for clear key performance indicators to measure the success of the implementation of the action plan. One Member cautioned that, given that the aim of this work is to reduce bureaucracy and workload, the process should not add complexity. Another Member highlighted the importance of having flexibility as a guiding principle and focusing on creating a user driven system.

Several Members noted links to the G20 sustainable finance working group and the GEF-GCF long term vision, the new Loss and Damage Fund under the UNFCCC, and the multilateral development bank (MDB) reform agenda. Speakers also suggested exploring further options and experiences with country platforms to align national policies with financial resources.

Decision: In Decision 31/2024, the Council welcomes the report and the [Multilateral Climate Funds Action Plan on Complementarity and Coherence](#), 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.

Evaluation of Co-financing in the GEF and Management Response

On Tuesday, Geeta Batra, GEF IEO, introduced the "Evaluation of Co-financing in the GEF" ([GEF/E/C.67/01](#)), and



Richard Bontjer, Council Member, Australia

Jonathan Caldicott, GEF Secretariat, introduced the Management Response ([GEF/C.67/10](#)). Batra highlighted that the GEF has disbursed over USD 24 billion, with partners committing an additional USD 138 billion in co-financing for projects aimed at generating global environmental and adaptation benefits. She explained that co-financing is often an indicator of sustainability and described the factors that attract co-financing.

Caldicott summarized the recommendations in the Management Response, noting the Secretariat will revisit the guidelines relevant to co-financing in the context of the review of applicable policies in GEF-8. He said, where needed, the Secretariat will provide additional guidance to agencies on the nature of evidence required through revisions to these guidelines.

One Council Member agreed with the need to reassess the guidelines and suggested further strengthening the Management Response by adding a table with all actions to be taken. Another suggested the need for more precise guidance in the Management Response. One Member asked for more disaggregated information on co-financing from the public and private sectors. Several Members stressed that co-financing should not be a condition for accessing funds, and that it is important to maintain flexibility. Welcoming the evaluation and recommendations, two members called to track co-financing carefully. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development noted that the GEF model must become more conducive to attracting private sector co-financing.

The GEF CSO Network stressed it is not feasible or appropriate to put a financial value on projects led by Indigenous Peoples and groups.

Decision: In Decision 26/2024, the Council notes the related Evaluation recommendations and endorses the Management Response to address them.

Eighth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF Approach Paper

On Tuesday, GEF CEO and Chairperson Rodríguez invited Geeta Batra, GEF IEO, to introduce the Eighth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS8) Approach Paper ([GEF/E/C.67/04](#)). She noted OPS8 will focus on two interconnected themes: the GEF programming strategy and institutional issues; and GEF

performance, impact, and sustainability. She stated that GEF-9 will occur within an extraordinarily challenging context where, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, much of the world is in social and economic recovery mode, necessitating a delicate balance between stimulating economic growth and addressing systemic vulnerabilities exposed by the crisis. She noted this has imposed substantial limitations on available finance. She said the IEO had already conducted stakeholder consultations including with five external advisers and the final OPS8 report will be published by the December 2025 Council meeting.

The GEF CSO Network questioned the context of OPS8, noting the primary challenge is not to maintain balance between stimulating economic growth and addressing systemic vulnerabilities exposed by the COVID-19 crisis. Instead, the GEF CSO Network said the appropriate framing is to focus on the well-being of human society and the ecological systems on which life depends.

Several Members stressed the need for OPS8 to assess the concentration of GEF funding within a few Implementing Agencies. One Council Member emphasized the need to look at the complementarity of the GEF Trust Fund with other GEF funds.

One Member asked for OPS8 to include an evaluation of the contribution of the GEF to UN agreements such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as their deadlines are in 2030. Batra responded she would need further guidance on this issue to understand how deep the Council would like the IEO to go.

Decision: In Decision 29/2024, the Council approves the approach paper. The Council requests the IEO to conduct the OPS8 and to provide the Evaluation report to the replenishment process and to the Council according to the schedule presented.

Evaluation of the Global Wildlife Program

On Tuesday, Geeta Batra introduced the “Evaluation of the Global Wildlife Program” ([GEF/E/C.67/02/Rev.01](#)). The evaluation was presented through a video presentation that highlighted the role of the COVID-19 pandemic in delaying project start-up and inception, thereby offsetting the project timelines in both GEF-6 and GEF-7. However, progress was made through: inclusion of a more comprehensive wildlife conservation and landscape management strategy; effective coordination in addressing illegal wildlife trade; integrating policy coherence; and identification of climate change, conflict and fragility, and COVID-19 and other zoonotic diseases. She concluded that demand for illegal wildlife trade remains a challenge and said venues should be created that prioritize cross-border collaboration on illegal wildlife trade.

Hannah Fairbank, GEF Secretariat, introduced the Management Response to the IEO Evaluation of the Global Wildlife Program ([GEF/C.67/08](#)). She noted the Secretariat agrees with the recommendation for the GEF to explore avenues to bolster support for Global Wildlife Program child projects that prioritize enhanced cross-border collaboration on illegal wildlife trade. She said the Secretariat partially agrees with the



Hannah Fairbank, GEF Secretariat

recommendation for aligning results frameworks and indicators selected in the child projects with the program framework document to demonstrate overall program-level effectiveness and additionality.

Many Council Members welcomed the Evaluation and the Management Response and related recommendations

Decision: In Decision 27/2024, the Council takes note of the related Evaluation recommendations and endorses the Management Response to address them.

Assessing Portfolio-Level Risk at the GEF and Management Response

On Tuesday, Geeta Batra introduced the document on “Assessing Portfolio-Level Risk at the GEF” ([GEF/E/C.67/03](#)). She highlighted that the GEF aims to embrace more calculated risks in its efforts to achieve transformative environmental outcomes and that changing the risk profile of GEF-funded projects will also require risk management within the GEF.

Jonathan Caldicott then introduced the Management Response to Assessing Portfolio-Level Risk at the GEF ([GEF/C.67/09](#)). He highlighted that the Secretariat shares the IEO’s view expressed in the report, that paying due attention to risk management in the GEF portfolio is needed. He also said the Secretariat recognizes the importance of ensuring risk-informed project design and implementation, noting it has initiated several measures to strengthen risk management in response to evaluations from the IEO as well as technical and scientific advice from the STAP.

Several Council Members welcomed the Assessment and Management Response and proposed operationalizing ways the GEF can manage risk. One Member asked for clarification on whether the recommendations call for managing risk or taking greater risk for greater reward. Batra responded that the idea was to shed light on how other organizations manage risk to determine whether to take it.

Decision: In Decision 28/2024, the Council takes note of the related Evaluation recommendations and endorses the Management Response to address them.

IEO 2025 Work Program and Budget

On Tuesday, CEO and Chairperson Rodríguez invited Geeta Batra to introduce the IEO 2025 Work Program and Budget ([GEF/E/C.67/05](#)). Batra said the report includes an update on independent evaluations completed and ongoing evaluations and knowledge management activities during the reporting period, as well as a Management Action Record. She launched the GEF IEO’s first online training tool on environmental evaluation through a video and encouraged participants to enroll.

One Council Member outlined their intention to keep supporting the IEO with a donor funded position. The GEF CSO Network urged the IEO to explore options to promote participatory monitoring and to train IPLCs to do so. A few Members noted the need for the IEO to inform the Council if it observes higher indirect costs than outlined in the budget and consider trade-offs and prioritization of its work. Batra shared that staffing of the IEO has been relatively flat over the last 15 years. She said if the IEO is to begin using Artificial Intelligence and data science in its evaluation work, it will need to request more resources during the next replenishment period.

Decision: In Decision 30/2024, the Council acknowledges the progress made by the IEO in the reporting period. The Council approves the annual IEO budget for FY25 for a total of USD 8.967 million, which includes the 11% indirect overhead charge in accordance with the decision made by the GEF Council at its 64th Session in June 2023.

Guidelines for the Preparation of the Review of the Implementation of Article 7 of the Minamata Convention

On Tuesday, Anil Sookdeo, GEF Secretariat, introduced the “Guidelines for the Preparations of Reviews of the Implementation of Article 7 of the Minamata Convention on Mercury” ([GEF/C.67/11](#)). He noted that Article 13 of the Minamata Convention establishes a financial mechanism that shall include the GEF Trust Fund and the Specific International Programme to support capacity-building and technical assistance.

Members welcomed the Guidelines.



Anil Sookdeo, GEF Secretariat

Decision: In Decision 32/2024, the Council approves the inclusion of this enabling activity under the Minamata Convention on Mercury for support, and requests the Secretariat to make provisions for such support to be accessed by eligible GEF recipient countries.

Other Business

On Tuesday, a Council Member raised a question related to the concentration of projects within agencies, noting concern that some Implementing Agencies face restrictions to engage with more projects due to geographical barrier limits. He inquired whether geographic areas could be expanded for some GEF agencies.

The GEF CEO replied that this issue would be addressed in the paper the Secretariat will submit to the next Council meeting on strengthening the Partnership.

Edgar Heredia Salazar, Vice Minister of Environment, Ecuador, announced his country would host the Latin American regional workshop for GEF-8.

Noemi Hernández, Council Secretary, announced the dates for the next three Council meetings. The 68th meeting will take place virtually during the week of 16 December 2024. The 69th meeting will take place in a hybrid format in Washington, DC, at the World Bank during the week of 2 June 2025. The 70th meeting will take place virtually during the week of 15 December 2025.

Hernández also announced proposed changes to the Membership on the Selection and Review Committee and Ethics Committee. The Council agreed.

Report of the 2nd GBFF Council Meeting

On Wednesday, GEF CEO and Chairperson Rodríguez opened the 2nd Council Meeting for the GBFF, noting how less than one year after the Fund's launch, the first work program is now ready. He pointed to this as an example of the efficiency of the GEF Partnership. He emphasized that Indigenous-led conservation underpins the three proposed projects, with an average of 62% of the total GBFF project financing being directed to support IPLCs. While thanking Canada, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, Spain, and the United Kingdom for their support, he stressed more resources are urgently needed.

The CBD Women's Caucus underscored the importance of integrating gender concerns in the decision-making and funding processes. The Global Youth Biodiversity Network drew attention to gaps in support of Target 22 (Ensure Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice and Information Related to Biodiversity for All) and Target 23 (Ensure Gender Equality and a Gender-Responsive Approach for Biodiversity Action in the GBF), in reference to a lack of transparency in the period between Council meetings hindering their meaningful contributions.

Rodríguez invited Benjamin Bélair, Québec's Delegate in Washington DC, to address the Council. Bélair underscored the long-standing engagement of Québec in international



Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat

cooperation, through international climate cooperation projects, and support to, among others, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), the African Climate Change Fund, and the CBD.

The Council then adopted the agenda for the meeting ([GEF/GBFF.02/01](#)).

Terms of Reference for Advisory Group(s) and Auxiliary Body

On Wednesday, Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat, introduced the “Terms of Reference (ToR) for Advisory Group(s) and Auxiliary Body for the GBFF” ([GEF/GBFF.02/04](#)). She outlined the background, purpose, composition, and establishment, as well as the organization, modalities, and schedule, of the Advisory Group and the Auxiliary Body and outlined updates to the document since the last Council meeting. She reminded participants of the GEF Council decision outlining that the Advisory Group (or Groups) may include without limitation non-sovereign participants, taking into account the potential for conflicts of interest and equity concerns, for the purpose of providing advice and recommendations to the GBFF Council. She also outlined that the Auxiliary Body, which will include representatives of GBFF participants from developing countries with areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, will provide advice and recommendations to the GBFF Council.



Benjamin Bélair, Québec's Delegate in Washington DC



Edda Fernandez, CBD Women's Caucus

Many Council Members welcomed the revised ToR and urged its adoption in a spirit of compromise. Several Members proposed that the Advisory Group should also include non-contributors to encourage them to provide funding towards the GBFF. One Member expressed minor reservations around the merit of having non-contributors in the Advisory Group, cautioning against overcomplicating the process. A few Members noted there is no upper limit for Advisory Group membership or minimum level of contribution, to which Aoki said the members of the Group will ultimately be decided by the Council, who thereby can limit numbers.

Several Members called for expanding the membership of the Auxiliary Body for constituencies that have considerable biodiversity and ecosystems. Others cautioned that the expert members of the Group should not overlap with countries that serve as Council Members or alternates. The Conservation and Philanthropic Organizations constituency group called for the Auxiliary Body to include experts on inland waterway ecosystems, sustainable use, and land management, as well as IPLC involvement.

The CBD Women's Caucus underscored that IPLCs, women, and youth should be guaranteed a space in both the Advisory Group and Auxiliary Body. The Global Youth Biodiversity Network called for attention around potential conflicts of interest of private sector members of the Advisory Group who might also be engaged in activities that harm nature. She also recommended that during the third GBFF Council Meeting, the Council consider establishing a second Advisory Group on monitoring and improving relations with IPLCs, women, and youth.

Decision: In Decision GBFF 05/2024, the Council approves the document and requests the Secretariat to:

- make provisions to establish the Advisory Group of non-sovereign participants;
- make provisions to establish the Auxiliary Body; and
- report to the third meeting of the GBFF Council on progress made on their establishment.

Work Program for the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund

On Wednesday, Chizuru Aoki introduced the "Work Program for the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund" (GEF/



Noemi Hernández Rodríguez Borjas, Council Secretary, GEF Secretariat

GBFF.02/03). The proposed work program comprises three projects: Conserving Mexican biodiversity through communities and their protected areas; Biodiversity Conservation in Indigenous Lands, in Brazil; and Caatinga Protected Areas Program, in Brazil. Total GBFF resources in this work program amounted to USD 37.82 million, including GEF project financing and Implementing Agency fees.

Aoki noted these projects were submitted in response to the first call for proposals. A fourth proposal, for "Addressing Outstanding Barriers and Leveraging a Durable Financial Mechanism to Achieve Target 3 in Gabon," has been circulated to the Council for a four-week review. A second selection round, which was open from 4 March to 1 April 2024, received 66 proposals, 18 of which were selected for consideration in the second GBFF work program.

During the discussion, most Council Members and constituency groups took the floor and recognized the historic nature of the adoption of this first work program.

Many complemented the focus of the three projects on support to IPLCs. A constituency group expressed concern that Indigenous Peoples would not have direct access to the funds and that, while they were being supported throughout the projects, they were not necessarily the primary drivers of the projects. A Council Member noted that having an internationally harmonized definition for "IPLC" would be good and called on the Secretariat to work to improve the methodology to calculate the share of IPLCs engaged in projects.

Council Members highlighted the agreement that the GBFF portfolio should target 39% of funding for LDCs and SIDS and expressed hope that future work programs would move towards this allocation. Speakers also pointed to agreement that international financial institutions (IFIs) and MDBs would receive 25% of project funding, with the goal of helping these Implementing Agencies scale up their biodiversity funding. Several speakers encouraged IFIs and MDBs to submit more requests in the next funding round.

Council Members requested additional information on the proposed projects, including co-financing and disaggregated data based on age for those engaged in project preparation and implementation. The importance of engagement of women in project design and implementation, including through gender action plans, was noted.



David Cooper, Acting Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity

Speakers requested information on project design and the decision process for the proposals that were selected, to assist other focal points in preparing proposals. They also requested feedback on proposals that did not advance. Aoki noted such information has been shared and reiterated that GBFF funding is a competitive process.

Many Members emphasized the need for additional funding for the GBFF. One Council Member highlighted the recent launch of the Kunming Biodiversity Fund by China and looked forward to its coordination with the GBFF.

The Council then adopted the work program.

Decision: In Decision GBFF 04/2024, the Council approves the work program comprising three projects, subject to comments made prior to and during the Council meeting and additional comments that may be submitted in writing to the Secretariat by 3 July 2024.

Closing of the GBFF Council Meeting

David Cooper, Acting Executive Secretary, CBD, was invited to comment after the first GBFF work program was adopted. He congratulated the Council on adopting the work program and commended the Council on the speed in which it responded to the request of CBD COP 15 to establish this fund. He said it was encouraging to see the high proportion to IPLCs activities and progress towards other GBF targets. He noted the GBFF requires more resources to allow future progress towards meeting these targets.

GEF CEO and Chairperson Rodríguez then closed the meeting.

Report of the 36th LDCF/SCCF Council Meeting

On Wednesday, GEF CEO and Chairperson Carlos Manuel Rodríguez opened the 36th meeting of the LDCF/SCCF Council, noting it is sometimes difficult to comprehend the impact of the LDCF's work around the world. He invited the Council Members to watch a video on an LDCF project site visit in Bhutan. He explained that the work program under consideration, in the amount of USD 203 million, is the largest in the history of the LDCF. He called for donors to make new pledges.

Rodríguez also paid tribute to Klaus Töpfer, former German Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, and former Executive Director of UNEP, who



Evans Njewa, Chair of the LDC Group, and Alternate Council Member, Malawi

passed away recently. Rodríguez highlighted his extraordinary contributions to nature conservation and mentorship to many who work and have worked on global environmental issues.

Evans Njewa, Chair of the LDC Group and Alternate Council Member of the constituency consisting of Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Eswatini, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, expressed appreciation for the cooperation between the GEF and LDCF and stressed that climate adaptation is one of the priorities for LDCs.

The Council adopted the agenda ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.36/01](#)).

Work Program for the LDCF and SCCF

On Wednesday, Chizuru Aoki and Fareeha Iqbal, GEF Secretariat, presented the "Work Program for the LDCF" ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.36/03/Rev.01](#)). Aoki noted strong engagement of IFIs and alignment with national priorities. She provided an overview of the two programs and 12 projects from 11 countries, namely Angola, Cambodia, Chad, Comoros, Gambia, Guinea, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), São Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Tanzania. The programs and projects focus on: agriculture, fisheries and food security; nature-based solutions; water resources management; climate information services and early warning systems; disaster risk management; coastal zone management; climate-resilient transport; and urban resilience.



Stéphane Cieniewski, Council Member, France



Martín Gronda, Council Member, Argentina

Iqbal noted the programs include a global program focused on adaptation innovation, including in Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi and Somalia; and a multi-trust fund program for the Great Green Wall Initiative involving Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, and Mauritania. She said all projects considered in the work program have embedded gender equality considerations at the initial design stage.

Several Council Members welcomed the work program and encouraged greater efforts on resource mobilization. Another welcomed the focus on gender inequality but encouraged defining women, especially women entrepreneurs, as beneficiaries. Aoki said several projects feature women entrepreneurs as beneficiaries.

Two Council Members highlighted the strong cooperation between the GEF and GCF. A Council Member noted that Yemen and Afghanistan have yet to access funding from this Fund. Aoki responded that there is a Project Identification Form on Afghanistan under review. Another Member asked why the program did not entertain proposals on climate resilient management of coastal and marine areas, which was identified as a priority topic.

Decision: In Decision LDCF.SCCF 4/2024, the Council approves the work program comprised of 12 projects and two programs, subject to comments made during the Council meeting and additional comments that may be submitted in writing to the Secretariat by 18 July 2024.

Total resources approved in this work program amount to USD 203 million from the LDCF, inclusive of GEF project financing and Agency fees.

FY23 Annual Monitoring Review of the LDCF/SCCF

On Wednesday, Chizuru Aoki and Yuki Shiga, GEF Secretariat, presented the “FY23 Annual Monitoring Review of the LDCF and the SCCF” ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.36/04](#)). Aoki said the review outlines the performance and results of, and lessons learned from, the portfolio of projects and programs financed under the LDCF and SCCF. She shared the key highlights of the review, namely that:

- the SCCF and LDCF portfolios are performing well;
- the SCCF continued to demonstrate a very high level of performance;

- engagement of CSOs and NGOs is strong, particularly in the SCCF; and
- the overall risk rating of the portfolio has remained the same as in previous financial years.

Shiga presented the results of 70 projects in the LDCF, including: reaching over 2.5 million beneficiaries, of which 50% are female; 317,540 hectares of land under management for climate resilience; 295 policies/plans developed to mainstream climate resilience; and 28,174 people trained, of which 49% are female.

Shiga also presented the results of 20 projects in the SCCF, including: reaching over 800,000 beneficiaries, of which 52% are female; 426,195 hectares of land under management for climate resilience; 66 policies/plans developed to mainstream climate resilience; and 168,860 people trained, of which 49% are female.

Many Council Members said they were pleased with the good performance of both funds, especially the gender-specific results and the large rate of participation by African countries. The GEF CSO Network critiqued the fact that the evaluation of projects focuses on outputs rather than outcomes and impacts.

Several Members asked about the low performance ratings of UNDP, UNEP, and the UN Industrial Development Organization, to which Shiga responded that the overall satisfaction rating of 70% is comparable to the GEF Trust Fund. He added that UNDP has recently been applying a more stringent approach to rating their projects, which might affect performance ratings. Regarding a question on how they are responding to low performing projects, Aoki said the Secretariat follows up with Agencies who often are already very aware of the performance and are taking mitigation measures.

Decision: In Decision LDCF.SCCF 5/2024, the Council welcomes the review and appreciates the progress made in reporting portfolio level performance, results, and lessons learned under the LDCF and the SCCF.

The Council welcomes the overall finding that the LDCF and SCCF portfolio under implementation in FY23 performed satisfactorily.

Progress Report on the LDCF and SCCF

On Thursday, GEF CEO Rodríguez opened the discussion of the “Progress Report on the LDCF and SCCF” ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.36/05](#)) and invited the Council Member from Saint Lucia to provide insights on a recent expanded constituency workshop that took place for Caribbean SIDS. She indicated the participating countries discussed climate adaptation challenges, best practices, and solutions. In addition, each participant designed a GEF project based on their country’s priorities. She thanked the donors to the SCCF and called for more pledges focused on technology transfer and the private sector.

Jason Spensley, GEF Secretariat, presented on LDCF progress, noting all projects are expected to reduce vulnerability for 64.98 million direct beneficiaries. He noted the highest percentage of projects is focused on agriculture, followed by water. On SCCF progress, he stated that approved projects are expected to reduce vulnerability for 8.99 million direct beneficiaries, and the highest percentage of SCCF projects are focused on water, followed by agriculture.



Olusola Ikuforiji, GEF Secretariat, and **Jason Spensley**, GEF Secretariat

Olusola Ikuforiji, GEF Secretariat, discussed the communications and outreach strategy for the LDCF and SCCF, noting the hiring of a new communications officer to focus on these two funds.

During the discussion, the GEF CSO Network and Council Members emphasized the importance of these funds. The need to ensure just transitions, including by creating jobs through small and medium-sized enterprises owned by women, was highlighted. Another Member highlighted the need to ensure all LDCs submit their National Adaptation Plans.

The Council approved the decision.

Decision: In Decision LDCF.SCCF 6/202, the Council welcomes the progress report and takes note, with appreciation, the progress made under the LDCF and the SCCF.

FY25 Administrative Budget and Business Plan for the LDCF and SCCF

On Thursday, Chizuru Aoki and Alope Barnwal, GEF Secretariat, presented the document on “Administrative Budget and Business Plan for the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund” ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.36/06](#)). They summarized developments and achievements, including: two work programs requesting over USD 400 million of LDCF/SCCF resources; support to LDCs and SIDS; and implementation of the inclusive GEF Assembly Challenge Program.

Barnwal noted the 2025 budget is 12.2% higher compared to the FY2024 budget, reflecting staffing needs and better support for LDCF and SCCF needs. He highlighted the three dedicated programs for FY2025 on: communication and visibility enhancement; outreach and capacity support; and organizational learning and coordination.

Council Members supported the proposed Budget and Business Plan, with two Members suggesting inserting language on the Council’s view on cost recovery. Aoki noted this would be reflected in the Decision. Another Member noted that the GEF Secretariat’s share of the office lease in FY25 is a little high at 10%. Aoki noted that the staff physical footprint has increased. A Member asked to better understand the vision for staffing to justify the budget increase. Aoki explained this is

linked to staff positions being approved during the past fiscal year, with onboarding and related expenses kicking in in FY25.

Decision: In Decision LDCF.SCCF 7/2024, the Council approves the proposed budget for the GEF Secretariat, STAP, and the Trustee as follows:

- USD 4,247,305 (GEF Secretariat), USD 139,000 (STAP), and USD 590,000 (Trustee) from the LDCF; and
- USD 1,341,899 (GEF Secretariat), USD 139,000 (STAP), and USD 130,000 (Trustee) from the SCCF.

FY25 Work Program and Budget for the IEO of the GEF under the LDCF and SCCF

On Thursday, Geeta Batra, IEO Director, and Anna Viggh, IEO, introduced the “FY25 Work Program and Budget for the GEF IEO under the LDCF and SCCF” ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.36/E/01](#)). Batra shared that the IEO has prepared the LDCF/SCCF Annual Evaluation Report (AER) 2024 to provide an overview of the performance of the Funds, which happen biannually. Viggh outlined that the AER 2024 presents a synthesis of evidence from five GEF Trust Fund evaluations that have integrated adaptation to climate change and covered LDCF/SCCF projects. She said the AER identified several cross-cutting priorities and considerations to address climate change adaptation effectively: strengthening innovation; private sector engagement; gender equality; youth empowerment; resilience to climate and non-climate related shocks; institutional capacity development; and climate adaptation awareness raising.

Council Members welcomed and supported the AER and the work program.

Decision: In Decision LDCF.SCCF 8/2024, the Council approves the annual budget of USD 347,788 to carry out the work program for fiscal year 2025. The budget is in line with the term of the evaluation work, which spans multiple years. The approved budget is being distributed as follows:

- USD 203,073 from the LDCF; and
- USD 144,715 from the SCCF.

Joint Summaries of the Co-Chairs and Closing

On Thursday, Council Secretary Hernández presented the joint summaries of the Co-Chairs of the 67th meeting of the GEF Council, 36th meeting of the LDCF/SCCF Council, and second meeting of the GBFF Council paragraph by paragraph. The summaries were approved without comment.

2024 Elected Chairperson Dawda Badgie expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to co-chair the meeting and thanked all participants for their hard work. He underscored that the planet is facing many environmental problems which are impacting human health and the survival of all. He reminded participants that addressing global environmental changes and biodiversity loss requires a systematic approach and working together.

GEF CEO and Chairperson Rodríguez thanked the Secretariat and closed the meetings at 11:07 am.

Upcoming Meetings

Organizational Meeting of the BBNJ Preparatory

Commission: The Preparatory Commission created to prepare for the entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement and the convening of the first COP to the Agreement will hold a three-day meeting to discuss organizational matters. **dates:** 24-26 June 2024 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** un.org/depts/los/bbnj.htm

High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

(HLPF) 2024: HLPF 2024 will take place on the theme, “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions.” It will conduct in-depth reviews of SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals). **dates:** 8-17 July 2024 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York, US **www:** hlpf.un.org/2024

IPCC 61: This meeting will be the third meeting of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) seventh assessment cycle. **dates:** 27 July - 2 August 2024 **location:** Sofia, Bulgaria **www:** ipcc.ch/meeting-doc/ipcc-61

Second meeting of the *Ad hoc* Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Benefit-sharing from the Use of DSI on Genetic Resources

Resources: At the second meeting of the OEWG on DSI, parties will continue discussing the development and operationalization of a multilateral mechanism for benefit-sharing from the use of DSI on genetic resources, including a global fund, set to be finalized by CBD COP 16. **dates:** 12-16 August 2024 **location:** Montreal, Canada **www:** cbd.int/meetings/WGDSI-02

Summit of the Future: The event will explore “multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow” and adopt the “Pact for the Future,” an action-oriented declaration of solidarity with present and future generations. **dates:** 22-23 September 2024 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** un.org/en/common_agenda/summit-of-the-future

SBI 5: The fifth meeting of the CBD’s Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) will take place immediately preceding the 2024 UN Biodiversity Conference. **dates:** 16-18 October 2024 **location:** Cali, Colombia **www:** www.cbd.int/meetings/SBI-05

2024 UN Biodiversity Conference: CBD COP 16, Cartagena Protocol COP/MOP11, and Nagoya Protocol COP/MOP 5 will address a series of policy, administrative, and implementation-related items of relevance to the CBD and its protocols and the effective implementation of the GBF. **dates:** 21 October - 1 November 2024 **location:** Cali, Colombia **www:** www.cbd.int/meetings/COP-16

UN Climate Change Conference Baku: This event will include UNFCCC COP 29, the 19th session of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP19), and the sixth session of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA6). The agenda will include the first Enhanced Transparency Framework and the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG), among other matters. The 61st sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA 61) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 61) will also meet. **dates:** 11-22 November 2024 **location:** Baku, Azerbaijan **www:** unfccc.int/cop29

G20 Brazil Leaders Summit 2024: The Summit is expected to continue conversations on finance, sustainable infrastructure, and climate change, among other topics. **dates:** 18-19 November 2024 **location:** Rio de Janeiro, Brazil **www:** g20.org/en

UNCCD COP 16: The 16th session of the COP to the UNCCD (COP 16) will focus on land restoration, resilience, the SDGs, and a people-centered approach. **dates:** 2-13 December 2024 **location:** Riyadh, Saudi Arabia **www:** unccd.int/cop16

68th Meeting of the GEF Council: During this meeting, the GEF Council will consider the work program among other agenda items. **dates:** 16-20 December 2024 **location:** virtual **www:** www.thegef.org

For additional upcoming events, see: sdg.iisd.org

Glossary

BBNJ Agreement	International Legally Binding Instrument under UNCLOS on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSO	Civil society organization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
GBFF	GBF Fund
GEB	Global environmental benefits
GEF-8	Eighth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund
GEF-9	Ninth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund
IEO GEF	Independent Evaluation Office
IFI	International financial institution
IPLCs	Indigenous Peoples and local communities
LDCs	Least developed countries
LDCF	LDC Fund
MCF	Multilateral climate fund
MDB	Multilateral development bank
MEA	Multilateral environment agreement
NGI	Non-Grant Instrument
OPS8	Eighth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
SIDS	Small island developing states
STAP	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCLOS	UN Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNEP	UN Environment Programme