



GEF CSO Network Statement

Agenda Item 8 - Seventh replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund

51st GEF Council Meeting, 25-27 October

We welcome that the Council "requested the Trustee, in cooperation with the Secretariat, to initiate the discussions on the seventh replenishment of resources of the GEF Trust Fund" and believe that civil society has a fundamental role in this process.

We appreciate very much that the GEF values stakeholder engagement and wants to strengthen it, recognizing "the positive and critical roles played by civil society organizations (CSOs), including Indigenous Peoples, in safeguarding the global environment and contributing to the work of the GEF" (GEF/C.46/07).

At the same time, we highlight some critical points in the present financial phase:

- The lack of balance in the fund allocation to the SGP (limits for the access to STAR funds and effective reduction of CORE funds) is an area of profound concern for the following reasons:
 - The SGP is an effective space for public involvement and stakeholder engagement at all levels around the GEF mission and focal areas. This becomes visible in co-funding, which is more than 200% in some cases.
 - The SGP accompanies local interventions in a global perspective, contributing to coordinate numerous stakeholders towards significant impacts on safeguarding the global environment and promoting sustainable development.
 - The SGP is a fundamental instrument to promote climate change adaptation, favoring co-benefits of interventions in the GEF focal areas, under an integrated approach, which guarantees multiple objectives and multiple benefits.
 - The SGP capillary action is essential for the cost-effectiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), especially for climate change adaptation, frequently guaranteeing it after the projects end.
- Civil society, including Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth, frequently finds it difficult to access medium and full size projects due to challenges in relationship with national governments and co-funding and fiduciary standards established for medium and full size projects.
- Currently the reporting system does not properly represent the real involvement of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth in project implementation, which is lower than it appears, since it focuses mainly on the number of projects more than on the quality of their involvement.
- Support to private sector can be useful, but is also risky if potential conflicts of interest, lack of regulation, perverse incentives and limits to global growth and to demand from international market are not addressed.



- Regarding PIP and Safeguards, it is mandatory that agencies consider Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth as part of the projects. Nevertheless, there is no mandatory for the agencies to integrate direct involvement and benefits for them.
- Regarding land degradation, we have several concerns, such as the classification of degraded lands and the concept of land degradation neutrality, which allows offsetting degradation. In fact, the classification of lands as degraded is now subjected to the interest of commercial operators who can obtain benefits from such lands for implementing projects in other areas, disregarding the interest of communities. Furthermore, the situation of community lands facing degradation is very often not properly taken into account and the potential of the communities for restoration is not recognized. Similar considerations apply for climate change, biodiversity conservation and the other focal areas as well.

For the aforementioned reasons, we firmly recommend that in the Seventh Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund:

- 1- The GEF allocates more funds to the SGP and other dedicated funding mechanisms for civil society and Indigenous peoples.
- 2- In the allocation of funds to the SGP, the GEF guarantees:
 - a. The elimination of limits for countries to allocate STAR funds to the SGP.
 - b. The increase of Core funds allocation.
 - c. The increase of the allocation, in the corresponding operational phase, for SIDs, which are among the most vulnerable territories.
- 3- The GEF establishes a mandate for agencies to create capacity for fund management in CSOs, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth to help enhance their access to medium size projects.

The GEF establishes more effective indicators for reporting about the real involvement and benefits for Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth. An effort is needed for making the projects more inclusive, effective and with greater social benefits. To this end, we recommend that:

- a. There should be a mandatory assignment of funds directly to Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth for all the GEF focal areas.
 - b. Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth should be involved in all the phases of the project, including project design.
- 4- The GEF CSO Network hopes that it will be actively engaged in the replenishment process from an early state including engagement in the Review and refinement of the Focal Area Strategies through Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs) or other mechanisms; as well as being provided support to participate in all replenishment – related meetings.