



GEF Assembly Bulletin

A Summary Report from the Fourth Global Environment Facility (GEF) Assembly

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SUMMARY OF FOURTH GEF ASSEMBLY: 25-26 MAY 2010

The fourth Assembly of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was held in Punta del Este, Uruguay, on 25-26 May 2010 and preceded by a Civil Society Forum and a GEF Council meeting that took place in the same venue. The GEF Assembly gathered GEF stakeholders to review the policies and operations of the Facility. Over 1,000 participants attended the Assembly, representing member states, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, academia, and the private sector.

The GEF is an independent financial organization that provides grants to developing countries and countries with economies in transition for projects related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants (POPs). These projects benefit the global environment, linking local, national, and global environmental challenges and promoting sustainable livelihoods. It also acts as a financial mechanism, assisting developing countries in meeting the objectives of four international environmental conventions: the Convention on Biological Diversity; the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol; the UN Convention on Combat Desertification; and the Stockholm Convention on POPs. The GEF also collaborates closely with other related treaties and agreements like the Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer.

The Assembly featured plenary sessions and a series of roundtables in different languages to discuss two broad areas of reform, namely: enhancing country ownership; and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the GEF. Alongside these, participants took part in numerous side events and in an exhibition area featuring the work of donors, recipients, civil society, international organizations, and implementing agencies. The host country also organized several visits to GEF project sites. A special event to celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity took place on 27 May in the Uruguayan Parliament (for IISDRS coverage of this event, see: <http://www.iisd.ca/ymb/gef/gefassembly4/>).



Tango exhibition during Tuesday's GEF reception

The GEF's main decision-making body is the GEF Council, which is responsible for developing, adopting, and evaluating its operational policies and programmes. It is comprised of 32 appointed members, each representing a constituency (i.e. a group of countries including both donors and recipients). The GEF Assembly comprises representatives from all member states, which as of 15 May 2010 totaled 181. Previous GEF Assemblies were held in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2006, Beijing, China, in 2002 and New Delhi, India, in 1998.

The GEF is funded by donor nations, which commit money every four years through a process known as the GEF replenishment. Since its creation in 1991 the GEF Trust Fund has been replenished by US\$2.02 billion (1991), US\$2.75 billion (1998), US\$2.92 billion (2002), US\$3.13 billion (2006) and US\$4.25 billion (2010). The GEF also administers the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund, and provides secretariat services to the Adaptation Fund.

GEF funding is channeled to recipient countries through ten agencies: the UN Development Programme; the UN Environment Programme; the World Bank; the UN Food and Agriculture Organization; the UN Industrial Development

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GEF

The GEF was created in 1991 as a result of mounting concern in the preceding decade over global environmental problems and efforts to formulate financing responses to address these problems. The GEF operated in a pilot phase until mid-1994. Negotiations to restructure the GEF were concluded at a GEF participants' meeting in Geneva in March 1994, where representatives of 73 states agreed to adopt the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured GEF.

The GEF organizational structure includes an Assembly that meets every four years, a Council, and a Secretariat, as well as the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP).

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Organization; the African Development Bank; the Asian Development Bank; the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; the Inter-American Development Bank; and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

FIRST GEF ASSEMBLY: Held from 1-3 April 1998 in New Delhi, India, the first GEF Assembly focused on the GEF in the 21st century. More than 1,000 participants adopted the New Delhi Statement highlighting the GEF's unique role and calling upon it to accelerate its operations.

SECOND GEF ASSEMBLY: Convened from 16-18 October 2002 in Beijing, China, the second GEF Assembly considered the GEF's performance, operations and policies. It convened in plenary, roundtables, and panel sessions focusing on the GEF, its stakeholders, and the global environment. Participants adopted the Beijing Declaration, which supports the expanded mandate of the GEF in response to its evolving challenges, and calls, *inter alia*, for: enhanced activities at the country level; synergies among the global environmental conventions; enhanced strategic planning for allocation of scarce resources to high priority areas within and among focal areas to maximize global environmental improvement; better private sector engagement; and improved understanding of agreed incremental costs and the global benefits of GEF projects.

THIRD GEF ASSEMBLY: The third GEF Assembly convened in Cape Town, South Africa, from 29-30 August 2006. Participants reviewed the Facility's policies and operations, meeting in plenary and in a series of roundtables and panel discussions. Delegates took note of reports on the GEF Trust Fund and the Third Overall Performance Study of the GEF, and raised concerns over the provision of funding for land degradation and desertification, and also on the application of the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF). The RAF was also addressed in one of the three high-level roundtables; the other two focusing on market-based mechanisms for financing global environmental conventions, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

GEF COUNCIL MEETINGS: GEF Council members have met seven times between the third and fourth GEF Assemblies. Some of the most notable decisions taken during this period were: a shortening of the project cycle to fewer than 22 months; the adoption of principles and procedures for a programmatic approach that allows several projects to be grouped under a single programme; a redesign of the STAP to include six (rather than 15) members and the appointment of Thomas Lovejoy as STAP Chair; the adoption of a Strategic Programme to Scale up the Level of Investment in the Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies; and the provision of secretariat services to the Adaptation Fund Board. The Council also reviewed the existing RAF and designed a new allocation framework for the fifth GEF replenishment called the System for a Transparent Allocation of Resources. The Council also re-elected Monique Barbut as CEO of the GEF in 2008, and in May 2010 endorsed the results of the fifth GEF Replenishment negotiations.

FIFTH GEF REPLENISHMENT MEETINGS: GEF donors met six times, from March 2009 to May 2010, to discuss the fifth GEF Replenishment. The replenishment negotiations led to an agreement in which over 30 countries pledged a total of US\$4.25 billion to fund GEF projects. The financial pledges include some of the Fast Start Financing discussed at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference, and will feature the creation of a Sustainable Forest Management-REDD Plus initiative focused on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, as well as conservation, sustainable forest management, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.



L-R: Danilo Astori, Vice President of Uruguay; and Monique Barbut, GEF CEO and Chairperson

REPORT OF THE 4TH GEF ASSEMBLY

Monique Barbut, CEO and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), opened the fourth GEF Assembly, on Tuesday 25 May and introduced Danilo Astori, Vice President of Uruguay, who welcomed participants and emphasized that the fifth GEF replenishment is the largest in history, but noted still larger amounts will be needed to achieve sustainability goals. Delegates watched a video on the 19 years of GEF history.

Delegates elected Graciela Muslera, Minister of Environment, Uruguay, as Chair of the fourth GEF Assembly. Chair Muslera remarked on the importance of environmental protection for Uruguay, underscoring the role of multilateralism and the need to address the plight of the victims of chemicals mismanagement.

Delegates also elected Bruno Oberle, Switzerland, for donor countries and Abdul Rahman Al Ariani, Yemen, for recipient countries, as Vice-Chairs.

Delegates adopted the proposed agenda and organization of work (GEF/A.4/1/Rev.1).

Monique Barbut underscored the unprecedented amount of funding for the fifth Replenishment of the GEF (GEF-5), and described GEF transformations towards a more effective, transparent, accessible and equitable mechanism. Among the goals achieved, she highlighted the creation of a System for a Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) and the simplification of project approval processes, as a "driving force behind country ownership." On challenges for GEF-5, she mentioned: improving the partnership's efficiency by strengthening collaboration with multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs); simplifying the project cycle; setting up a results-based performance system; and increasing country ownership of projects.

STATEMENTS BY THE HEADS OF THE GEF AGENCIES

Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), welcomed the GEF replenishment, and highlighted how far we are from meeting countries' commitments made at Rio. He stressed the challenge of transforming economies and moving away from subsidizing unsustainable activities, such as the US\$27 billion annually spent on fishing subsidies. He urged the GEF to consider its strategic focus to go beyond financing implementation activities.



Achim Steiner, Executive Director, UNEP

Kandeh K. Yumkella, Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), highlighted UNIDO's Green Industry Initiative, which links the environment and development agendas, and the UN report "Energy for a Sustainable Future" on universal access to energy and energy efficiency.

Rebeca Grynspan, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), highlighted that national ownership is critical to develop synergies and finance initiatives for poverty reduction. She noted that climate change brings uncertainty and larger costs if policymakers are not prepared to identify effective development strategies.

Inger Andersen, incoming World Bank Vice-President for Sustainable Development, underscored that much of GEF's work has been done in partnership to heal the global commons, and lamented that climate change negative effects harm the poor disproportionately.

Wendy Watson-Wright, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), highlighted UNESCO's ability to mobilize local finance, promote technical assistance, provide capacity building, and integrate academic work in GEF's activities. She said that UNESCO has applied to be a GEF agency.

STATEMENTS BY THE HEADS OF THE CONVENTION SECRETARIATS

Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), welcomed the increase in the envelope for land degradation in GEF-5 in support of the UNCCD 10-year strategy, but exhorted countries to give higher priority to the land agenda to secure co-funding.

Donald Cooper, Stockholm Convention Executive Secretary, also welcomed the increased GEF-5 resources, and recalled the need for countries to look for additional funding sources.

Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), said biodiversity is central to the GEF, and recalled that the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the CBD, to be held in Japan, in October 2010, should agree on an access and benefit sharing regime and on a liability and redress protocol.

STATEMENTS ON BEHALF OF GEF CONSTITUENCIES

On Tuesday morning and Wednesday afternoon, the 32 GEF constituencies addressed the Assembly.

Constituencies from Africa: Algeria, for four North African countries, welcomed the GEF reforms, called for more flexibility in GEF projects and more equity in resource allocation; reiterated the voluntary nature of national plans,



Kandeh K. Yumkella,
Director-General, UNIDO



Inger Andersen, incoming
World Bank Vice-President for
Sustainable Development



Donald Cooper, Stockholm
Convention Executive
Secretary

which should not be seen as conditional for accessing resources; and stressed the need to reinforce the Small Grants Programme (SGP).

Cameroon, for eight Central African nations, saluted donor countries for their contributions and described projects underway with GEF support to conserve forest ecosystems, species, and freshwater resources and to address desertification, climate change, and transboundary transport.

Tanzania, for 13 East African countries, expressed gratitude for the significant increase in the replenishment, and suggested greater representation of African nations in the GEF decision-making process, and further project cycle streamlining.

Burkina Faso, on behalf of nine West African countries, welcomed the GEF's role in implementing the UNCCD, and called for financial support for climate change adaptation in small African inland states.

Côte d'Ivoire, for eight West African countries, expressed satisfaction for the GEF's allocation of funds for land degradation, which is a priority in his country and for the African Group.

South Africa, for nine Southern African countries, acknowledged efforts made by the GEF to streamline procedures and support countries to initiate programmatic approaches, but lamented that GEF-5 is not adequate to meet the basic environmental challenges of developing countries.

Constituencies from the Americas: Barbados, on behalf of 16 Caribbean countries, requested GEF special consideration when dealing with small island developing states on: programmatic approaches and multifocal area projects; rules and procedures on GEF access; capacity building; country-driven facilities for project implementation; and time frames for the project cycle.

Brazil, for the constituency including Colombia and Ecuador, highlighted their countries' determination to support GEF activities, underscoring the need to work on enhancing MEAs enforcement and synergies among implementing agencies.

Canada promoted the inclusion of the programmatic approach; measuring, monitoring and reporting on results; building synergies across focal areas; and enhancing relations with the private sector.

Costa Rica, for four Central American countries, Mexico and Venezuela, highlighted biodiversity and desertification as regional priority topics, with the Mesoamerican corridor as an example of regional coordination; and said GEF projects and coordination mechanisms should be participatory, transparent and synergetic.

Paraguay, for six Southern Cone nations, expressed disappointment with the level of the fifth replenishment and with the need for increased co-financing by recipient nations, and called for shorter project approval cycles and greater efficiencies in using funds.

The US said that its increased contribution under the fifth replenishment demonstrated the Obama Administration's commitment to the GEF. He expressed support for new work in sustainable forest management, mainstreaming gender issues, programmatic approaches such as the Coral Triangle Initiative, involving the private sector, the SGP, and enhancing country ownership.

Constituencies from Asia and the Pacific: Australia, for the constituency including New Zealand and the Republic of Korea, welcomed the reforms and the increased GEF-5 resources, and reaffirmed their engagement to improve country ownership of GEF projects and GEF efficiency to make the most of its increased resources.

Lao, on behalf of eight East Asian countries, mentioned that the GEF provided significant support to their countries while further efforts should be made on the protection of livelihoods, ecosystems, poverty reduction, climate change and biodiversity.

China lauded the GEF's achievements over the last four years and proposed increasing country ownership, strengthening fundraising to assist international conventions, and further streamlining project cycles and efficiency.

India, for six Asian nations, welcomed the GEF's work, especially in Buthan and the Himalayas. He noted the existing financial burden on developing countries and their needs for support for sustainable development.

Iran noted that activities on technology transfer, which is an obligation of developed countries, are still to be materialized.

Japan recalled the GEF's leading role in environmental conservation, called for the implementation of result-based management for improving efficiency, and said the GEF should focus on capacity building.

Pakistan, for six West Asian countries, recalled the GEF's contribution to poverty reduction, and highlighted the need for project-cycle streamlining, clear guidelines for private sector cooperation, and for GEF projects to be country-driven and linked to local development priorities.

Samoa, on behalf of 17 Pacific island nations, welcomed GEF reforms that made projects more country-driven and GEF support for projects on desertification and land degradation, as well as the SGP.

Constituencies from Europe: Austria, on behalf of seven countries in Central Europe and Turkey, underscored their countries' support for GEF policy recommendations, highlighting remaining challenges such as country ownership, improvement of GEF portfolio quality, synergies with implementing agencies and collaboration with multilateral conventions such as United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and UNCCD.

Norway, for four Scandinavian countries, stated that the GEF replenishment is vital for following up on the Copenhagen accord.

France stressed: the role of the SGP in Africa; the need for the GEF to work toward new guidelines and respond to new challenges; and the GEF's role in helping countries to address climate change.

Germany stressed: the importance of maintaining the GEF's strong financial standards; the transversal programme on sustainable forest management; the importance of strong civil society participation; strengthening recipient nations' ability to use funds efficiently; and the need for more GEF biodiversity projects.

Italy highlighted country ownership of GEF projects and programmes and the need to avoid duplication with other international financial institutions, and encouraged streamlining of the project cycle and strengthening partnerships with GEF agencies.

Spain, for four European countries, welcomed the successful replenishment and the Council's endorsement of related policy recommendations. She highlighted the need for the GEF to: prepare to respond to new challenges; enlarge its partnership, especially with the private sector; and continue to explore new financial formulas.

Sweden, for three northern European countries, expressed satisfaction for the ambitious GEF reform package, the progress toward increased transparency, and the strengthened gender focus. She called for more feedback from evaluation of the GEF's work.

The Netherlands advised the GEF to: continue allocating generously; promote country ownership while recognizing many environmental problems are transboundary or regional by nature; encourage South-South cooperation while remembering it does not replace North-South cooperation; promote the inclusion of all sectors since their follow-up is crucial to giving GEF projects lasting impact; and not underestimate the role women play in improving environmental protection and combating poverty.

Other Constituencies: The Russian Federation, for the constituency also including Armenia and Belarus, congratulated the GEF for the replenishment, and said the GEF can catalyze joint action to address environmental problems at international and national levels.

Switzerland, for a constituency including six central Asian countries, highlighted desertification and chemicals as priorities, underscored the central role of the GEF in the international financial system, and stressed the importance of regulatory mechanisms in addition to financial ones. He added that Kyrgyzstan offered to host the next GEF Assembly.

STATEMENT BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

On Wednesday afternoon, Faizal Parish, for the GEF non-governmental organization (NGO) Network noted the Civil Society Forum and its key conclusion, namely that the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have been key GEF partners and have pioneered innovative approaches to engage civil society in safeguarding the global environment, but that recent declines in GEF resources for CSOs jeopardize these results. He said the Forum called for redoubled efforts to enhance the effective participation of civil society in all stages of GEF project design, execution and evaluation.

HIGH LEVEL ROUNDTABLES

On Tuesday afternoon six roundtables were held where delegates discussed two main themes, namely: improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the GEF; and enhancing countries' "ownership" of their respective GEF projects.

Roundtable 1: Participants agreed that country ownership of GEF projects and programmes must be based on integration of the work into national priorities and budgets. They welcomed the incentives included under GEF-5 to foster national consultations.

Many participants insisted on the importance of strengthening countries' capacities to engage in GEF-related matters while others noted that the GEF is still largely unknown at the country level. Some suggested the GEF Secretariat should improve its communication efforts. Participants emphasized the need to strengthen the focal points and involve them in project follow-up; and that well-functioning national GEF committees could become instrumental in expanding country ownership.



During the roundtables delegates discussed two main themes, namely: improving efficiency and effectiveness of GEF; and enhancing country ownership of GEF projects

Countries expressed concerns about the role of implementing agencies, which sometimes have been responsible for long delays and have not been able to mobilize necessary expertise. Some participants called for direct access to funds under some circumstances, and for better coordination and earlier consultation with countries on regional or global projects.

Several delegates considered the extension of the GEF network to other institutions as a positive development and said that criteria should be based on comparative advantages and competence. Some noted that the private sector, and in particular regional and development banks, could be involved.

To improve the project cycle, participants felt that monitoring and evaluation activities are very important, and called for reducing delays in responses, avoiding frequent changes in procedures, and for increased involvement of CSOs.

Participants agreed on the usefulness of the programmatic approach, which they said should be strengthened under GEF-5.

Roundtable 2: Indonesia recommended defining clearer rules and responsibilities for applying for GEF grants. Iran suggested the establishment of a GEF national board for project approval, and recommended development of best practices materials. Serbia said that GEF application requirements are too long. Niue described the difficulty of fulfilling GEF requirements. Antigua and Barbuda reported problems experienced working through the implementing agencies, and requested direct access to GEF funds.

The United States said that funds invested in projects with strong country ownership generate a higher return on investment of donor funds. UNIDO said countries must develop the capacity to “own” projects, and that funds may be needed to allow this. Syria added that when countries contribute their own funds to the GEF it builds ownership. Samoa described the many steps it has taken to work effectively with the GEF, including the establishment of a national GEF office.

Kiribati said that indigenous peoples know what projects are needed in their home regions. A CSO representative said NGOs and indigenous peoples should have more access to the GEF decision-making process. Finland mentioned increased interest in the GEF among the media and other stakeholders. Yemen expressed satisfaction with small GEF grants that it has received and said that these have fostered local project ownership.

Roundtable 3: Participants generally agreed the project cycle needs to be shortened and to become more transparent, but some also emphasized maintaining accountability. Many participants praised the programmatic approach, but cautioned that work remains to realize its promise.

Participants also discussed whether and how direct access to funds would work. All participants stressed the importance of country ownership. Participants from Africa, the Caribbean, India and South Africa said the GEF has not done enough to build country capacity to manage GEF projects.

Several African nations expressed misgivings about the impact of STAR. Some African and Caribbean nations complained that the replenishment was too small to make resource allocation equitable. Nigeria lamented that a handful of countries receive the lion’s share of GEF monies.

Several African and Caribbean nations said meeting the co-financing requirement would be a great challenge and a potential burden for recipient countries, especially for small nations and those hard hit by the global economic crisis.

Bhutan, supported by some African nations, called for considering a results-based approach that would allow countries more flexibility in meeting specific targets.

Several nations called for expanding the GEF network, and bringing in more development banks, but others cautioned that new entities should only be brought in if they could add value.

Roundtable 4: Lebanon hoped GEF reforms would enable governments to implement projects in line with national priority plans. Lesotho underscored the need for policy change to respond more effectively to environmental challenges. She highlighted the importance of assisting countries in formulating and improving GEF projects intended to counter land degradation to protect food security. She noted the need to include civil society, especially rural women, in project implementation.

Cambodia suggested more flexible rules to allow access to funds by Least Developed Countries. The Netherlands called attention to the need improve the GEF’s communications capacities. Egypt said that the GEF could be a tool to increase countries’ ownership, which will lead to successful project design. Brazil, China, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Slovenia, the Marshall Islands and Turkey highlighted the need to enhance countries’ capacity to strengthen their ownership. Gambia suggested the inclusion of more implementing agencies, while the Philippines suggested promoting regional ownership, especially on transboundary issues. Some developing countries supported South-South cooperation initiatives.

Sweden highlighted the importance of sharing experiences and avoiding more bureaucracy and competition within implementing agencies in GEF-5.

Roundtable 5: Many developing countries emphasized problems with the GEF project cycle, including uncoordinated approaches to project design by different implementing agencies, which in some cases have led to countries not using the financial resources allocated to them during GEF-4.

Some proposed strengthening interagency coordination, rather than focusing on increasing the partnership, to ensure that existing partners are able to share a single approach to project development. Several delegates also highlighted the need for GEF partners to speak with one voice regarding project definition and approval processes. Others proposed strengthening local government officials’ capacity to better understand the respective competencies of each agency. Angola underscored that there is no clear leadership among the GEF partnership, so agencies conflict on which process to follow when developing projects.

Bahamas proposed issuing standard best management practices for project design so that developing countries can better understand project procedures. Lao suggested that the GEF Secretariat could help countries to define national priorities and get these preapproved to ensure countries can use their allocations within GEF-5.

On programmatic approaches, Angola said they are useful but should not detract from some specific projects that may be necessary in line with country priorities. Afghanistan also cautioned that projects within programmes should not take longer to approve.

Roundtable 6: Chair Muslera provided a parallel analysis of the GEF reforms and the national prioritization of environmental protection. She noted Uruguay is hosting the One UN pilot project. She said the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) implementation had reduced small countries access to funding. She also underscored GEF-5’s challenges as avoiding overlap and reducing administrative costs. Héctor Malarin, Inter-American Development Bank, called for considering the lessons learned by implementing agencies on project programming and the programmatic approach.

El Salvador, Argentina and others said GEF-5 is insufficient to cover developing countries’ environmental needs. Cuba noted the GEF is still based on obligations assumed by donor

countries in the 1992 negotiations and should take into account developing countries' priorities such as adaptation to climate change. Delegates also underlined the need to strengthen the Assembly competences.

On improving GEF efficiency, many Latin American countries discussed proposals to: set out time frames for project approvals; avoid high agency and consultant costs; increase synergies among national institutions; take advantage of regional institutions and plans; increase the frequency of GEF project assessments; and adjust project requirements according to their size. Argentina underscored that related proposals were already in the GEF's Fourth Overall Performance Study (OPS).

On country ownership, Latin American countries mentioned national experiences, noting GEF projects should emerge from national priority identification exercises and thus be aligned with national development plans. They also highlighted that implementation should be done through national institutions and local consultants, involving local authorities and communities throughout the whole project cycle, including communicating results. Colombia proposed considering the Paris Declaration and other lessons learned from international cooperation. Spain recalled the policy recommendations in GEF-5 aimed at promoting recipients' ownership and increasing private sector involvement and called for further planning and proposals by recipients. NGO representatives called for further involvement of civil society in environmental priorities and the project cycle.

REPORT ON GEF MEMBERSHIP

Chair Graciela Muslera presented the Report on GEF Membership (GEF/A.4/5/Rev.2) to plenary on Wednesday afternoon.

Serbia objected to the inclusion of Kosovo as a GEF member and presented a Declaration saying that the act of notification of participation in the GEF by the representatives of the "so-called 'Republic of Kosovo' is in violation of international law." The representative of Serbia further added that Kosovo is part of the Republic of Serbia currently under United Nations administration pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999). Serbia said that since Kosovo is not a State it should not be a member of the GEF.

Many countries including Cuba, Chile, Algeria, Romania, China, Argentina, Egypt, Brazil, Uruguay, Ecuador, Venezuela and Indonesia supported Serbia.

Monique Barbut, GEF CEO, clarified that Kosovo was accepted as a member country by the World Bank which "automatically" enables it to be a member of the GEF. She added that since the World Bank is a UN specialized agency, Kosovo meets the requirements to be a GEF Member. She also considered that according to the GEF's constitutive Instrument the Assembly is not entitled to decide the acceptance or rejection of new members. Following a break for informal discussions, the Chair's Summary was presented stating that, on this point "there was no consensus on the inclusion of Kosovo as a Participant of the GEF in document GEF/A.4/5/Rev.2, Report on GEF Membership."

OTHER REPORTS

Chair Muslera presented, and the Assembly took note, of the reports on: credentials (GEF/A.4/Misc.1); the GEF Trust Fund during GEF-4 (GEF/A.4/6); and the Fifth Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund (GEF/A.4/7).

AMENDMENT OF THE INSTRUMENT

Chair Muslera presented, and the Assembly approved, the proposed amendments of the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility (GEF/A.4/9), which includes: eliminating the role of implementing agencies



L-R: Monique Barbut, GEF CEO; and Graciela Muslera, Minister of Environment, Uruguay, Chair of the fourth GEF Assembly, at the end of the assembly

in appointing the GEF CEO; making the GEF available to serve as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD; and GEF CEO appointment and term limits.

SUMMARY OF THE HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS AND CLOSING OF THE ASSEMBLY

Homero Bibiloni, Environment Minister, Argentina, lamented that funding for the GEF did not match expressions of commitment to the planet, and represented a loss of 17% in purchasing power since the GEF began. He called for the GEF to help build local capacity through national scientific and technical communities instead of engaging international consultants for GEF projects. He also urged greater emphasis on South-South cooperation.

Abdul Rahman Al Ariani, Yemen, presented the summary of the high-level roundtable (GEF/A.4/CRP.1) discussions and highlighted that it covered themes such as governance, capacity building, project cycle, financing issues, and GEF agencies.

Chair Muslera presented the Chair's Summary, which was approved by the Assembly with minor corrections. GEF CEO Monique Barbut thanked Uruguay for hosting the meeting, all participants for their hard work, the volunteers and the GEF staff. She closed the meeting at 8:16pm.

SELECTED SIDE EVENTS

FOURTH OVERALL PERFORMANCE STUDY OF THE GEF

In this side event, Robert D. Van Den Berg, GEF, introduced the Fourth Overall Performance Study of the GEF (OPS4).



Robert D. Van Den Berg, GEF

He underscored that GEF-5 adjusted its goals to align them with global environmental needs, emphasizing that the national portfolio approach enables recipient countries to support and maximize project impacts. He noted the SGP proved to be an effective tool to achieve impact, while addressing the livelihood needs of local populations.

Claudio R. Volonte, GEF, described OPS4 research carried out in 57 countries based on almost 2,400 projects. He highlighted GEF achievements, with "70% of completed projects showing moderate to solid progress toward impact." He supported the creation of GEF national committees to promote national programming. Participants discussed direct access to funds, synergies between GEF and the international conventions, and involvement of the GEF with the private sector, among others.



The dais during the side event on "Global Environmental Benefits through Innovative Community Approaches at the Local Level - SGP"

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS THROUGH INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY APPROACHES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL – SGP

The GEF SGP convened a roundtable on finance for local projects. Participants heard presentations from grantees and SGP officers, and viewed a short background film showcasing SGP support for more than 12,000 projects in 122 countries.

A grantee from Peru discussed conservation of local varieties of cotton, and the digging of a well to bring clean water to her family along with new cooking technologies that produce less smoke. A grantee from Fiji discussed environmental education for climate change adaptation on a remote island. A member of the NGO network lauded the work of local NGOs as custodians of the environment.

During the discussion Katharina Kummer Peiry, Secretary General of the Basel Convention, asked why SGP has not funded more waste management projects and whether it might in the future. The Minister of Environment of Somalia and a participant from Eritrea agreed that projects to address waste are important.

MINISTRIES PERSPECTIVES ON GEF'S IMPACT IN DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

The presenters and panelists in this side event discussed difficulties in getting environment ministries to communicate with finance and sectoral ministries "in the same language." They agreed that assessing the long-term economic value of natural resources and environmental protection is essential. They stressed that obtaining the necessary resources and loan approvals is not possible without the cooperation of legislatures and support of the general public. Some suggested that GEF grants be bundled with loans from other sources, to receive higher national priority. Barbados urged the Banks and the GEF to consider a regional approach to finance responses to climate change. The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and World Bank panelists recognized their institutions might have to rethink how they lend for renewable energy and for response to climate change.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE: CAN WE FEED THE WORLD AND SAFEGUARD THE ENVIRONMENT?

This side event showcased success stories from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and GEF projects, mostly with small-scale farmers. Charles Riemenschneider, Director, FAO Investment Centre, highlighted the challenges of increasing food production to feed the growing world population in 2050, in the face of land and water shortages, decline of commercial marine species, and loss of plant and animal genetic resources.

Elwyn Grainger-Jones, IFAD, recalled promising experiences with small-scale and large-scale farmers adopting sustainable agriculture based on reduced fertilizer and pesticide inputs. Carmen Pires, Embrapa, Brazil, showcased a GEF global project on the economic importance of pollinators for farmers. Mark Tonkin, Design Technology and Irrigation, presented a technology-based solution for irrigation in Jordan,

useful for adaptation. Rufino Espedito, Brazil, presented a project that is working on youth and women's social inclusion through sustainable agriculture. Marco Vivar and José Luis Tuquinga, Ecuador, reported on alternative approaches to support the livelihoods of small-hold farmers.

CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN URUGUAY: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

During this side event, national authorities from Uruguay's Ministry of Environment, including Graciela Muslera,



Graciela Muslera, Minister of Environment, Uruguay, and Chair of the fourth GEF Assembly

Minister of Environment, and Tabaré Aguerre, Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, presented examples of successful implementation of GEF projects. These focused on sustainable use of land pastures, recovery of degraded lands, and biodiversity conservation. Two videos showcased agro-ecological activities and biodiversity conservation projects.

Experiences in funding projects for sustainable development were presented by: Marc Antoine Martin, *Fond Français pour l'Environnement Mondial*; Susan McDade, UN Resident Coordinator in Uruguay; Amb. Jean Christophe Potton, France; and Jose Luis Pimentel, Spain. They all highlighted the country's engagement in and support for environment and development activities, condensed in the country's slogan "Uruguay Natural," which recognizes that welfare conditions are intrinsically connected to ecosystems. Participants welcomed the creation of, and international support for, the protected areas network in Uruguay, and called for further work on developing indicators on impacts of projects on the ground.

NEW SCIENCE FOR A SUSTAINABLE PLANET – STAP

In this side event, N.H. Ravindranath, GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), said that an additional investment of US\$10.5 trillion is required to limit warming to 2°C and 450 CO₂ ppm. He stressed the large mitigation potential of land-based options, particularly reducing deforestation and peat land degradation. Louisa Wood, UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre, describing drivers of change and impacts on ocean ecosystems, said 30% of world fisheries have collapsed and underscored the importance of coastal management for climate change mitigation. Patricio Bernal, IUCN, spoke on developing science for the protection of ecological services in the high seas and said oceans are responsible for the equivalent of 70% of oxygen production. Georgina Langdale, Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), gave an overview of a TEEB study, highlighting increased interest in valuation of ecosystem services. She added that an important target audience of TEEB is the financial sector.



The dais during the side event on "Architecture of Forest Financing." L-R: Ione Egles, Brazilian Ministry of Science and Technology; Barry Gardiner (United Kingdom); Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary, UNCCD; Jan McAlpine, Director, UNFF; Inger Andersen, World Bank; Justin Nantchou Ngoko (Cameroon); and Gustavo Fonseca, GEF.

THE CORAL TRIANGLE INITIATIVE

During this side event, Nessim Ahmad, Asia Development Bank (ADB), explained that the Coral Triangle (CT) region is located along the Equator at the confluence of the Western Pacific and Indian oceans, and underscored that its coral and marine resources are under risk.

Bruce Dunn, ADB, noted the CT initiative is an example of the ability to address landscape-level issues using integrated ecosystem-based approaches both at national and transboundary levels.

Kate Newman, WWF, underscored that pressures on the CT include habitat loss and unsustainable fishing and coastal development. She noted that the CT Initiative aims to designate and effectively manage priority seascapes. On the CT's importance for the Philippines, Analiza Teh said it promotes public-private partnerships for green finance, strengthens management activities and facilitates regional coordination. Sade Bimantara, Indonesia, highlighted the importance of developing the CT Plan of Action, and outlined some obstacles for implementing such plan. Nik Sekhran, UNDP, summarized UNDP collaboration in the CT, emphasizing the importance of linking natural resource management to poverty reduction.

THE LARGER LANDSCAPE OF BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION: ECOSYSTEM-BASED APPROACHES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Opening this event, Karin Kemper and Jocelyne Albert, World Bank, outlined the Bank's biodiversity projects, including GEF climate change projects that also promote biodiversity conservation.

Pedro Alvarez, Mexico Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, underlined that this project helped preserve ecosystem connectivity among 24 protected areas and promoted awareness-raising activities and participation in 130 communities.

Onno Huyser, WWF South Africa, outlined the Cape project to build biodiversity corridors in the Cape Floral Kingdom. Mario Nanclares, Argentina, presented a GEF

project in his country, which aims at biodiversity conservation in productive forests in three ecoregions through adequate planning and management.

Elizabeth Taylor, Coralina, Colombia, reported on a marine protected area that aims to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable use of the coastal and marine resources through the ecosystem approach and multiple-use zoning. Mohamed Zmerli, Tunisia, described the main activities for coastal and marine biodiversity in the Gulf of Gabes.

ARCHITECTURE OF FOREST FINANCING

During this event, panelists, including UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) Director Jan McAlpine and UNCCD Executive Secretary Luc Gnacadja: welcomed the inclusion in GEF-5 of a window for SFM funding; estimated SFM funding needs of US\$19 billion per year; and underscored that forests should be further integrated into poverty reduction strategies with a multisectoral and comprehensive approach.

Several panelists commented on ongoing forest management initiatives such as the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD) and the World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, highlighting that they have to be based on local partnerships among civil society, indigenous peoples, government and the private sector. They also called for the promotion of synergies among biodiversity, climate change and forests, both at international and national levels.

National examples were presented to discuss key problems in forest management, including: poor coordination among national institutions; insufficient or inconsistent funding due to lack of flexibility in the provision of funds; scarce exchange of lessons learned; poor decision-making process; access to funding by local communities; and the need for better management of protected areas and integrated approaches to tackle deforestation and poverty.

INVESTING IN SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT: INVESTING IN KNOWLEDGE

Chaired by the World Bank, this event included a presentation by Zhihong Zhang, GEF, on investments and strategies to promote sustainable transport. Colin K. Hughes, Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, detailed the challenges of estimating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from road transport and a proposed GHG methodology for the GEF. Richard Hosier, World Bank, described how the World Bank and the GEF could build an effective GHG and transport knowledge base.

Daniele Ponzi, GEF Coordinator of the ADB, discussed its transport portfolio, and Maria Cordeiro, Inter-American Development Bank, addressed freight transport, opportunities for GEF-5, and the Smartway programme. Siham Mohamedahmed, African Development Bank, delineated challenges and prospects for reforming the transport sector in Africa.



L-R: Mohamed Zmerli, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Tunisia; Elizabeth Taylor, Coralina, Colombia, and Onno Huyser, WWF, South Africa



The dais during the Civil Society Forum. L-R: María Leichner, Fundación ECOS; Jorge Patrone, Vice Minister for Housing, Land Planning and Environment, Uruguay; Monique Barbut, GEF CEO and Chairperson; Faizal Parish, Director of the Global Environment Centre, and Central Focal Point of the GEF NGO Network; and Miguel Reynal, Fundación ECOS, Uruguay.

CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

A Civil Society Forum was held on 24 May, on the day prior to the GEF Assembly. Monique Barbut, GEF CEO and Chairperson, opened the Civil Society Forum noting the crucial role of CSOs in GEF-5. She said GEF-5 provides an opportunity to reform key aspects of GEF operations and added that CSOs should participate in the development of national GEF business plans and be part of national delegations to GEF regional meetings. She emphasized CSOs are an integral part of the GEF mission and key to achieving results at the global level.

Jorge Patrone, Vice Minister of Environment, Uruguay, noted the key role of civil society in the definition of national environmental policy in Uruguay.

Faizal Parish, Director of the Global Environment Centre, and Central Focal Point of the GEF NGO Network, highlighted civil society has historically contributed a larger portion to GEF co-financing than any other source. He identified key CSO-related objectives for GEF-5, namely to: enhance civil society engagement in the GEF and engage stakeholders in national GEF planning exercises; reverse the decline in CSO-led GEF projects; stimulate the formation of national civil society networks; and ensure the GEF CSO network is further strengthened.

Miguel Reynal, Fundación ECOS, Uruguay, cautioned against the trend in the reduction in the allocation of funds for CSO-led GEF projects as it would lead to the disappearance of such projects.

Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director, highlighted the innovative value of GEF financing and the success of the SGP, but cautioned that independent projects are not enabling the transformational change needed to address the challenges of environmental degradation and climate change in the present era. He urged participants to think about means to scale up projects and deliver global results.



Ambassador Raúl Estrada Oyuela, Academia Argentina del Ambiente

Ambassador Raúl Estrada Oyuela, *Academia Argentina del Ambiente*, presented the main challenges and the role of civil society in climate change negotiations and emphasized civil society's role in the sensitization of politicians.

Thomas Lovejoy, Heinz Center for Science, Economics and the Environment, recalling the ecological impacts of climate change, called for a planet

re-engineering based on strengthening natural ecosystem processes, with the participation of civil society.

THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN SAFEGUARDING THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

Representatives of CSOs reported on experiences with civil society participation in GEF projects. Ermath Harrington, Caribbean Conservation Association, presented a project in Antigua and Barbuda on island natural resources monitoring and use. Minnie Degawan, the Philippines, presented a global project on increasing awareness and participation of indigenous peoples' organizations in the CBD and GEF processes. Essam Nada, Arab Network on the Environment and Development, introduced the Nile Basin Development project and the involvement of civil society in building confidence among Nile Basin countries. Presenters emphasized the role of civil society in bridging communication, knowledge and technical gaps in GEF project implementation.

LOCAL AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AS GUARDIANS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

This session featured case studies from the GEF SGP. Delfin Ganapin, GEF SGP Global Manager, highlighted SGP partnership with indigenous peoples worldwide. Yolanda Contreras Avalos, representing a Peruvian female artisans organization, presented how an SGP cotton recovery project contributed to poverty reduction in her area. Samuel Dotse, HATOF Foundation, Ghana, described the main features of 52 projects supported by SGP on, *inter alia*: community protected areas; bio-fuel production; forest product processing and marketing; and ecological restoration. Daniel Macías, *Grupo para la Protección Ambiental Activa*, Uruguay, described a CSO-led SGP project for the creation of a protected area in Uruguay. He showcased how with just US\$20,000 his organization achieved the creation and monitoring of a protected area, several wildlife studies and more than 60 educational activities for children and youth. Participants reinstated the value of the SGP, and cautioned tenure issues should also be addressed by SGP projects to ensure indigenous peoples fully benefit from them.

LATIN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES WITH GEF PROJECTS: SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

An interactive panel was held with leaders of the environmental movement in Latin America highlighting successes, challenges and opportunities arising from GEF projects. Panelists presented experiences on: conservation and sustainable development in the Atlantic forest of Paraguay; participatory integrated coastal management for sustainability and biodiversity conservation in Patagonia; management for disaster risk reduction and climate change in Central America and Mexico; challenges and opportunities for indigenous

peoples in international conventions and the UNFCCC in particular; emerging issues in the Rio+20, and water and gender in Brazil; as well as activities of the NGO *Pindó Azul* in Uruguay.

ENHANCING PARTNERSHIP WITH CIVIL SOCIETY IN GEF-5

Participants addressed mechanisms to improve CSO participation in the next GEF period. Faizal Parish said CSOs should be given priority access to medium-sized projects, and Maria Lechner, Fundación ECOS, presented a survey of CSO expectations for GEF-5 in Latin America. Yannick Glemarec, UNDP-GEF Executive Coordinator, explained some of the successful experiences gained with CSO-led SGP projects noting their scaling up potential, and emphasized the GEF is the only facility with a funding window exclusive for CSOs, making the SGP a unique financing example. Legborsi Saro Pyagbara, Indigenous Focal Point, Africa GEF NGO Network, said rights recognized in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples must be incorporated into GEF projects. Brennan van Dyke, GEF Secretariat, highlighted CSOs should participate in national portfolio formulation exercises to ensure their adequate participation in GEF-5.

CONCLUSION AND FORUM STATEMENT

A draft Punta del Este Civil Society Forum declaration was presented. The Forum recommended, *inter alia*, that: CSOs and GEF should work to strengthen the recognition of indigenous peoples rights; GEF outreach to CSOs should be enhanced; equitable access to funds should be ensured and funds allocated to CSOs should be at least 20-25% of total GEF funding through the introduction of targets and incentives; the SGP should be maintained; CSOs should be more engaged in oversight and guidance of national and regional full-sized projects; the GEF voluntary fund to support consultation and empowerment of CSOs should be made operational; and the role and function of the GEF CSO network should be strengthened.

The GEF Secretariat expressed great satisfaction for the participation and outcomes of the Forum, thanked the organizers and closed the Civil Society Forum at 6.27pm.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

38th GEF COUNCIL MEETING: The Meeting will take place in Washington, D.C., United States, from 29 June to 1 July 2010. Council members representing 32 constituencies will develop, adopt, and evaluate GEF programmes, and an NGO Consultation will be held on the first day. For more information contact: GEF Secretariat; tel: +1-202-473-0508; fax: +1-202-522-3240/3245; e-mail: secretariat@thegef.org; Internet: http://thegef.org/interior_right.aspx?id=17146

2010 ANNUAL MEETINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND AND THE WORLD BANK GROUP: The Annual Meetings will take place in Washington, D.C., United States, from 9-11 October 2010. These meetings will discuss, *inter alia*, a range of issues related to poverty reduction, international economic development and finance. For more information contact: Annual Meeting organizers; tel: +1-202-473-7272; fax: +1-202-623-4100; e-mail: bffoffice@worldbank.org; Internet: <http://www.imf.org/external/am/index.htm>

TENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CBD: The COP will take place in Nagoya, Japan, from 18-29 October 2010. The High-level Segment will be held from 27-29 October 2010. CBD COP-10

is expected to assess achievement of the 2010 target to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss, adopt an international regime on access and benefit-sharing and celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity 2010. For more information contact: CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: secretariat@cbd.int; Internet: <http://www.cbd.int/meetings/>

39th GEF COUNCIL MEETING: The Meeting will take place in Washington, D.C., United States, from 15-18 November 2010. An NGO Consultation will be held on the first day. The GEF Council Meeting will develop, adopt, and evaluate GEF programmes. For more information contact: GEF Secretariat; tel: +1-202-473-0508; fax: +1-202-522-3240/3245; e-mail: secretariat@thegef.org; Internet: http://thegef.org/interior_right.aspx?id=17146

SIXTEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNFCCC AND SIXTH MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE KYOTO PROTOCOL: The COP and MOP will take place in Cancún, Mexico, from 29 November to 10 December 2010. These meetings will continue the negotiating process to enhance international climate change cooperation. For more information contact: UNFCCC Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-1000; fax: +49-228-815-1999; e-mail: secretariat@unfccc.int; Internet: http://unfccc.int/meetings/unfccc_calendar/items/2655.php?year=2010

FIFTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE STOCKHOLM CONVENTION: This meeting is expected to convene in Buenos Aires, Argentina, during the second quarter of 2011. The COP will address issues relating to the banning and control of persistent organic pollutants. For more information contact: Stockholm Convention Secretariat; tel: +41-22-917-8729; fax: +41-22-917-8098; e-mail: ssc@pops.int; Internet: <http://chm.pops.int/>

TENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION: UNCCD COP-10 is expected to convene in Changwon City, Republic of Korea, in October 2011. The Convention addresses desertification as a major economic, social and environmental problem of concern to many countries in all regions of the world. For more information contact: UNCCD Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2800; fax: +49-228-815-2898; e-mail: secretariat@unccd.int; Internet: <http://www.unccd.int/>

FIFTH GEF ASSEMBLY: The GEF Assembly is expected to take place in 2014. The venue will be confirmed. For more information contact: GEF Secretariat; tel: +1-202-473-0508; fax: +1-202-522-3240/3245; e-mail: secretariat@thegef.org; Internet: <http://gefassembly.org/j2/index.php>



On Thursday, 27 May 2010, an event celebrating the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) was co-hosted at the Legislative Palace in Montevideo, Uruguay, by the GEF and the Uruguayan Council for International Relations (CURI)