

REPORT

GEF-NGO CONSULTATION

May 13, 2003
Washington, DC

This is a summary of the discussions and NGO discussions during the GEF-NGO Consultation meeting, that took place on May 13, 2003, in Washington DC. .

The GEF-NGO Consultation meeting was chaired by Dr. Joth Singh, from the Caribbean Conservation Association (Barbados), representing the NGOs; and Dr. Bonizella Biagini, NGO Coordinator representing the GEF Secretariat.

Mr. Mohamed El-Ashry, CEO and Chairman of the GEF, opened the meeting, acknowledging the efforts made by the GEF-NGO Network to set new rules for its functioning. He also mentioned that this was the last Consultation meeting that he will be acting as CEO for the Facility, as the next meeting Mr. Len Good will be acting as CEO.

Mr. El-Ashry mentioned that 2002 was a milestone for the GEF: the replenishment, with 32 donors contributing to the GEF; the WSSD where the GEF got significant support; and the Second GEF Assembly. The GEF will follow-up on all these issues, and some of the recommendations are already included for this Council meeting. At the Assembly, the issue of the Small Grants Programme (SGP) was discussed, and now it is operating in half of the countries. In the proposed Business Plan, the Council will decide how the SGP will be expanded. The GEF-NGO relationship has evolved in 12 years. Since the first time NGOs came to read one statement, until they now sit at the Council meetings as observers. A relationship built on policy and projects. There is complete transparency on the GEF side, as every document is in the website.

The CEO also expressed his gratitude for the commitment and support given by NGOs to the GEF and the global environment.

Interventions by NGO followed, by Liliana Hisas, Konrad von Ritter and Rex Horoi¹.

After listening to the NGO comments, Mr. El-Ashry responded that the GEF nor the Network are perfect. As the GEF is participatory, they ask the Network to be participatory. There is a responsibility to share information, and representativeness as the GEF can not bring all accredited NGOs to the meetings. Regarding the Country Dialogue Workshops (CDWs), he mentioned that it is GEF's effort to ensure participation at the local level . In some countries, a follow-up to the workshops was made. The GEF hired a person for this

¹ See Compilation of NGO interventions

purpose as the Council also identified this issue also. He suggested that sub-regional CDW could be developed, and also once a year meetings among all focal points and other stakeholders. He stressed that the GEF will need help from the NGOs in this respect.

Yoko Watanabe made an intervention regarding the Medium Sized Projects (MSPs).²

Mr. El-Ashry very much supported the NGO concerns regarding MSPs. He committed to put together a MSP Task Force before June, as he also wanted MSPs procedures to improve.

Joith Singh commented on the Small Grants Programme (SGP).³

The CEO responded that the Programme is administered by UNDP, and that he did not know the details raised by the NGOs.

Andras Krolopp raised the issue of 10 countries joining the European Union, asking about the GEF's position regarding this.

Mr. El-Ashry said the GEF did not have an answer to that yet.

Ismid Hadad questioned about ceilings of funding for biodiversity hot spots, as the case of Indonesia.

The CEO answered that the GEF does not have ceilings per country, but does by focal areas, according to the new Business Plan.

In his closing remarks, Mr. El-Ashry mentioned that constrains on MSPs are still an issue to be solved, but that substantive proposals are important. He invited NGOs to bring good proposals.

The next item on the agenda was the **GEF Business Plan**. Ramesh Ramankutty introduced the issue explaining that the concept of strategic priorities was introduced in May 2002 Council meeting. In the document presented to this Council meeting, there are four pillars:

1. Strategic Business Planning, to direct resources towards enhancing impacts on the ground;
2. Strengthening Country Ownership and Enhancing Country Performance;
3. Building on the Partnership and Performance of the GEF Agencies; and
4. Maintaining Institutional Effectiveness.

Along with Business Plan, there is a document about Targets and Directions. Capacity building has been identified as a cross-cutting strategic priority. Performance targets has been established for each operational program and strategic priorities.

² See Compilation of NGO interventions

³ See Compilation of NGO interventions

Ken King complemented the presentation for the GEF Secretariat adding that the Business Plan will be discussed in more detail in November 2003.

Yoko Watanabe, Konrad von Ritter and Joth Singh made the interventions on behalf of the NGOs.⁴ Also, Djimingue Nanasta presented a concern on the climate change focal area, as the new Business Plan is more oriented to adaptation, instead of promoting mitigation measures too.

Mr. King stressed that the GEF has a proposal to continue with the CDW.

Frank Pinto (UNDP-GEF Unit) mentioned that in the CDWs, they will disseminate the new guidelines as they want to inform as fast as possible the new strategic priorities through sub-regional workshops and through training all UNDP officers.

The issue of **Medium Sized Projects** (MSPs) followed, with a discussion lead by Ken King on behalf of the GEF Secretariat. Mr. King said that in November 2003, a new project cycle will be presented to the Council, which will also affect MSPs. He also informed that Mrs. Lilly Halle at the GEF Secretariat is in charge of reviewing project proposals.

NGO interventions were presented by Ismid Hadad.⁵ Also, as a pilot phase, it was suggested that a fast track approach to be considered for MSPs under \$300,000.

German Rocha, from Instituto Biodiversidad (Colombia) presented a case study on their experience with a MSP. This NGO requested a PDF-A to prepare a MSP proposal. For this PDF-A, Instituto Biodiversidad got a co-financing of US\$ 150,000, which was all invested, and after struggling for two years with the Colombian focal point and the World Bank as IA, such small GEF financing was not granted.

Mr. King responded, saying that the GEF cannot avoid the rules, but they have to find a way of making the rules work more efficiently. This also applies to the approval procedures. Regarding government endorsements, Mr. King said this is how the GEF does business.

Mr. Ahmed Djoghla (UNEP-GEF Unit) presented the experience with MSPs, pointing out the amount of projects approved, emphasizing the number of NGO projects.

Mr. Rohit Khanna (World Bank-GEF Unit) explained that project proposers can send their proposals directly to the World Bank. Endorsement letters are still a problem, and a solution has to be found to streamline that. The new strategic priorities will improve the communications with World Bank offices. We could always improve. Also, Mr. Khanna stressed that it should be taken into consideration that 1 million dollar grant to an NGO in 2 years is very good.

⁴ See Compilation of NGO interventions

⁵ See Compilation of NGO interventions

Mr. Frank Pinto (UNDP-GEF Unit) said that MSPs are not expedited, and that a way to make them expedited should be sought. Many proponents go directly for \$ 1 million, but others request \$ 200.000 / 300.000, and have to go through the same procedures. Mr. Pinto supported the idea of exploring a fast track approach for MSPs under \$300.000. He also mentioned that 8 workshops are being organized in different regions to improve how to deal with MSPs.

Mr. King responded to the comments by saying that a review will be done to see the different levels of funding for MSPs and how to expedite the procedures. He welcomed UNDP's proposal. Regarding the role of Focal Points, the GEF should also review the issue, as is raised repeatedly.

The issue on **Co-financing** followed, also presented by Ken King on behalf of the GEF Secretariat. He explained that the paper presented to Council includes 4 fundamental issues, specially for full sized projects:

1. Consistency in reporting
2. Monitoring of cofinancing
3. Adequacy of cofinancing levels
4. Stability of commitment

Mr. King also mentioned that there are not fixed levels of co-financing, as a result of comments made by the Council. The Secretariat is preparing a data base to review how co-financing works. Regarding co-financing for MSPs, important issues are: a) it gives the GEF an indication of the level of commitment of all stakeholders involved in the project; b) it ensures the financial basis of how the GEF's contribution is outlined, and c) the leverage of funding, to catalyze the GEF funding. Co-financing is not only cash, but also in-kind contributions. The in-kind contributions have to be well documented, as a co-financing commitment. There are lessons learnt from the SGP that could be applied to the MSPs.

On behalf of the NGOs, Joth Singh made an intervention. ⁶

Mr. King responded that NGOs were right. The paper was reviewed but not corrected. Regarding the specific points raised by the NGO representative:

1. other stakeholders can join the project once it is started. That is why co-financing should be differentiated in: essential (to start the project) and complementary (during the execution of the project).
2. co-financing can not be accounted for twice. It should be specified how much co-financing the donor contributes.
3. regarding the market value: he agrees on the expressed concern, that in-kind contributions should be taken at market value.
4. adequate co-financing should be ensured, but should not be discriminatory for certain projects or countries.

⁶ See Compilation of NGO interventions

The next item discussed was the **Country Dialogue Workshops** (CDWs). Frank Pinto explained that in the Work Program submitted to Council, there is a proposal for a Phase II of the CDW. The proposal is aimed to help countries ensure that global environmental issues work; and to advise countries.

Mr. Pinto also mentioned that as there is some funds left over from Phase I, some 3-4 more workshops will be coordinated. They are also planning to coordinate sub-regional workshops, during January-June 2004 to return after to the country level.

On behalf of the NGO, Rex Horoi asked about the assessment of the performance of the CDW.

Mr. Pinto responded that there is an ongoing evaluation, which preliminary results were positive. At the next meeting in November, the results may be ready to be presented.

Another question was raised from the NGOs, by Rajen Awotar, who asked about the follow-up to the CDW.

Mr. Pinto responded that they were concerned about the follow-up. The funds were for the workshops, not for the follow-up. However, Focal Points as well as NGOs have raised the concern of the follow-up.

Mr. Ton Boon von Ochssee, coordinator of the CDW at the GEF Secretariat, added that the follow-up should be done on a country by country basis.

The following item presented was **Terms of Reference for an Independent Monitoring and Evaluation Unit and the Monitoring and Evaluation Work Plan for FY03-06.**

On behalf of the NGOs, Jesus Cisneros made an intervention.⁷

Mr. Jarle Harstad, Coordinator of the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit at the GEF Secretariat, responded to the points raised, as follows:

1. the appointment of the M&E director will be for a five year period. The Council will welcome recommendations from NGOs.
2. it is very important to receive input from the NGOs, as we are all based in DC, and only a few can travel to the field, to look at concerns at the local level.
3. for the Local Benefit Study, 2 civil society representatives were invited to take part of the team: 1 NGO and 1 Indigenous Peoples representative.
4. regarding the impact indicators, Mr. Harstad explained that the M&E team had been struggling with the indicators. We used some developed by the WWF-World Bank. We are developing indicators for sustainable use, and welcome NGO suggestions.
5. on the study on Private Sector, it was submitted to Council as an Information Document. Comments are welcomed.
6. the M&E team would also welcome feedback on knowledge management.
7. as for a wider outreach, the M&E unit does not have a budget for that purpose.

⁷ See Compilation of NGO interventions

Esther Camac, on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples, raised the issue regarding the benefits of local processes where indigenous consultants are involved, for those projects affecting Indigenous Peoples.

Clemencia Vela, on behalf of the NGOs, committed to circulate a summary of the discussions of the Local Benefit Study, inviting NGOs to send her comments, that will serve as input to the discussions of the team.

Both, Mrs. Camac and Mrs. Vela participated of the Local Benefit Study team.

Mr. Harstad responded by saying that the list of projects for the Local Benefit Study is still preliminary, and that they welcome more recommendations to be included in this study. Regarding the consultants, they give the same chance to all. To ensure participation in countries, governments and IAs in the countries should also be involved.

The **Draft Operational Programme on Sustainable Land Management** followed in the agenda. On behalf of the NGOs, Khadija Razavi and Rajen Awotar introduced the concept paper containing an overall overview, general comments and proposals.

The secretariat programme manager for this focal area, Andrea Kutter, heartily welcomed the contribution of the Network on this very important issue and promised to include the proposals submitted subject to the approval of the council. The paper was then circulated to Council members.⁸

The next item discussed was the **Small Grants Programme (SGP)**

Mr Delfin Ganapin, the new SGP Global Manager made the presentation on SGP. On behalf of the NGOs, Joth Singh⁹ presented the views and concerns of the network. Rajen Awotar Eastern Africa Region representative highlighted the following points on behalf of the region:

- (a) That the national co-ordinating committees include more NGOs and civil society reps unlike the present situation where it is noted that very few NGOs form part of the committees. To this, Delfin Ganapin replied that henceforth he will see to it that NGOs and civil society reps are in majority and in fact "own the process".
- (b) that the national co-ordinators adopt a more pro-NGO and civil society approach rather than promoting the interests of other groups e.g. academia, research groups etc.
- (c) that the national co-ordinators should go out of their offices to meet grassroots, civil society, indigenous and NGO groups and inform them of the programme.
- (d) that the national co-ordinators should organise regular information, awareness raising and capacity building for the benefits of grassroots, civil society and NGO groups.
- (e) that the national co-ordinators organise regular field days at the intention of the public, the media, NGOs about the various projects funded under the SGP.

⁸ See complete NGO paper on Annex 1

⁹ See Compilation of NGO interventions

- (f) that the national co-ordinators produce regular (quarterly) newsletters on the program and the various projects funded.
- (g) that more least developed countries be included in the programme.

To finalize the GEF-NGO Consultation, there was a discussion among NGOs and IAs on **Capacity Building**, where UNDP and UNEP presented their plans and programs on this issue.

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