

# **Compilation of NGO Interventions GEF Council Meetings**

**May, 2003**

## **Q&A with GEF CEO and Chairman, Mr. Mohamed El-Ashry** **GEF-NGO Consultation, May 13, 2003**

On behalf of the NGOs and indigenous peoples organizations, we wanted to express our gratitude, Mr. El-Ashry. You have provided leadership in creating a world class policy for participation and public involvement.

The GEF NGO network with whom you are meeting today is one of the results of these efforts.

For the past years, the GEF has been THE only financial mechanism – international body that truly involved civil society in its decision-making process as well as in its projects – a model that should be replicated in other international bodies.

There are many examples of NGO involvement in the GEF. We would like to mention only some of these achievements:

1. Counting with an NGO coordinator within the GEF Secretariat, assisting and enabling more NGOs to get involved with the GEF.
2. This GEF-NGO consultations, which gives us the opportunity to express and dialogue with the GEF Secretariat and the IAs on our concerns
3. Various Working Groups, in which NGOs have been invited to participate, resulting in the MSP initiative through the MSP Working group.

But you did not push for public participation just to hear praise! You wanted us to play the role of a critical observer who provides constructive criticism.

So living up to this expectation, we would like to share some of our concerns with you. On the whole, we feel that GEF has generally good policies and instruments, however, implementation looks much more bleak. We would like to mention specifically three issues:

1. **Medium Sized Projects (MSPs):** an important instrument for NGO participation, caught in a web of bureaucratic hurdles;
2. **Access to relevant GEF information by local groups:** good intentions don't always reach the grass roots;
3. **Small Grants Programme (SGP):** we very much value this program, and we hope it will expand and again gather momentum after a period of slow pace.

My colleagues will follow-up with some concrete recommendations on these concerns.

**Concrete Recommendations include:**

1. **Medium Sized Projects (MSPs)**

On behalf of the NGO Network, my comment and question relate to the reform of the Medium Size Project process. As you have promised and committed with us at the Assembly meeting, we strongly urge that the process to implement the MSP evaluation recommendations, which was conducted few years ago, to start before you leave and to be continued by your successor to ensure improved effectiveness, timeliness, and results of the MSPs.

The MSP program was intended to be an expedited mechanism with simplified project preparation and approval procedures for NGOs and other organizations to access GEF funds for smaller size projects. Many of our organizations that are present here have actively involved with you for the establishment of the MSP.

However, as the GEF's MSP Evaluation stated, the MSP project cycle has been anything but expedited. It generally takes at least two years to complete, and it often takes between three and four years from the time of concept submission and flow of funds, which is not acceptable. The evaluation noted that the "project review process needs to be completely overhauled."

In addition to the long processing time, the complex procurement and contracting rules and practices of some of the GEF IAs are generally inappropriate for NGO executed projects. Such IA procedures, therefore, fail to facilitate GEF-NGO collaboration and make it needlessly difficult and expensive for NGOs to serve as executing entities.

NGOs remain seriously concerned about the multiple obstacles to accessing and implementing MSPs. We have some key recommendations on a new, more flexible and efficient ways of implementing MSP projects, while still maintaining strong oversight and accountability.

- A one-stop MSP approval process, as opposed to the current two-layer (IA and GEF) mechanism which lengthens the approval process and often results in conflicting technical feedback.

Some ideas for implementing a "one-stop" approach include:

- Review, approval, and supervision of implementation by a designated NGO consortium.
- Designation of a single IA or EA under expanded opportunities to process all MSPs;
- Direct NGO submittal of proposals to and approval by the GEF Secretariat. (This would require the addition of staff to the GEF Secretariat, which could be funded by the savings achieved from not having to pay IA fees.)
- Decentralized project appraisal process at the country/regional level by learning from GEF Small Grants Programme and other best practices.

- Replace the requirement for Operational Focal Point endorsement with a country-driven, strategic MSP planning process to prioritize GEF investments at the country level.
- Substitution of the incremental cost analysis with an assessment that confirms global environmental benefits, absence of duplication, and adequate co-financing;
- Focus on outcomes, with flexibility on design and implementation arrangements for achieving the outcomes;
- Maintain flexibility with the co-financing requirement of the MSPs by providing strong and equal recognition to the in-kind contribution of the communities and NGOs.

We are prepared to work closely with the GEF Secretariat to implement the MSP Evaluation recommendations. Some of the international NGOs present here have shared with you after the Assembly meeting about our readiness to provide constructive and practical suggestions for the design of innovative and streamlined NGO collaborative procedures based on international best practices and also to provide the necessary administrative capacity for ensuring effective program design and implementation.

If appropriate, we also suggest development of a pilot program to test bold new ways of processing MSPs as suggested above. Such a pilot program could allow the GEF Council to allocate a specific amount of funding (perhaps \$20-\$30 million) for a trial period of 2-3 years, after which the new approach(es) would be tested and evaluated.

Finally, as a practical next step to further explore options for MSP process reform, we suggest that a task force be established within the GEF, including representatives of the IAs, NGOs, and others, within the next month and come up with mutually agreed recommendations before the next council meeting.

## **2. Information access by local civil society on GEF projects and policies differs greatly between countries**

Mr. Chairman, as you have pointed out, transparency and good access to information are an important pre-condition for effective participation.

GEF has made very good efforts in this field: e.g. the GEF Country Dialogue Workshops. However, these are one time events and need to be followed up for a sustained impact.

Another good example are some GEF Focal Points that have created mechanisms to reach out to civil society, eg. by creating a committee (Poland) . However, these are still isolated best practice efforts, which need to be become general practice.

Hence our question to you is:

What has been GEF's experience with the practical implementation of its very good participation policy and principles, specifically with including civil society in client countries?

Also, we would like to hear your feed back on some specific suggestions our group has elaborated:

**Recommendations:**

- Regular follow up to Country Dialogue Workshops: it should become regular practice for the GEF FP to meet at least once a year with a broad spectrum of concerned civil society organizations to update on GEF developments at the level of general policies. We envision this to be a 'light weight' event with modest costs, however with enough funding to ensure participation of a broad spectrum of civil society.
- **Enrich country relevant information content of GEF internet:** GEF FP should be made responsible for checking the accuracy of GEF pipeline information w/r to their specific country to ensure a maximum degree of accuracy of the information which is available on the GEF website. **Also, we suggest you consider the possibility of creating a country specific space on the GEF website, which the GEF FP could use for updates on implementation status, upcoming projects, and other information relevant to stakeholders in the specific country (as well as others).**

Let my colleague elaborate on suggestions for:

An enhanced role for regional NGO coordinator in the dissemination of GEF relevant information. To translate the GEF Policy on public participation, the regional office of the implementing agency should encourage dialogue between and amongst NGOS, Governments and other inter- agency organizations through regional workshops where sharing of information about GEF is conducted. The roles of the Regional Focal Point (RFP) and Central Focal Point (CFP) is a significant one in the process of information sharing and coordination of action at country level. Financial support should be given to purchasing toolkits for RFPs and the CFP to enable them carry out their responsibilities in an effective manner. The GEF process through the Small Grant Program is a top-down approach aimed at reaching out to the grassroots communities but without the bottom-up approach instigated by NGOS at various levels, successful implementation of the SGP projects is still too faraway... Information and benefit sharing at country level needs to be better managed and coordinated through the establishment of effective and functional linkages/mechanisms between the GEF top-down approach and the bottom-up community approach through civil society organizations..It is also noted that some regions receive more attention than others in terms of actual GEF funding..The reason behind this varies from region to region..In some cases it is a question of lack of absorption capacity at community level while in others it is lack of awareness and relevant information about GEF. As well, it has been pointed out that high logistical costs in some regions prevents the IAs to implement projects.

Finally, we suggest a more rigorous review of participation aspects during project review by GEF Sec: this may serve as an incentive to IA and countries to plan for participation during project preparation (PDF-B), in the project design (budget, and design, e.g. is funding provided to ensure consultations at local and national level). In addition, the annual Program Implementation Review could serve as an useful vehicle for reviewing the participation experience of IA, e.g. by providing best practice examples and identifying areas for improvement.

3. Small Grant Program.

We hope that pace of implementation will pick up again: We welcome the appointment of new head for the SGP. Our concern is that the approval process stopped awaiting appointment of new head of SGP.

Finally: We entrust once more to you to follow up on the points we discussed here, specifically:

- To get from this Council Meeting a specific commitment to a time-bound process to dramatically improve the MSP process;
- Pass on to your successor the message: Broad participation fundamental to achieve the GEF objectives. While during your leadership a good policy has been put in place, it falls on your successor to ensure that a good policy is followed up with an even better implementation.

## ▪ **GEF Business Plan FY04-06**

### **General**

On behalf of the NGO Network, I will start by sharing comments on the general issues related to the Business Plan, followed by comments related to the Biodiversity focal area. My colleagues presented here will then follow with key comments and recommendations for each of the other focal area as well as the cross-cutting issue that are stated on the Business Plan.

In general, we welcome the strategical planning process that has been taken under the new Business Plan, which clarifies strategical priorities of the GEF for the next 3 years. We understand the increasing competition to the scarce GEF resources and the need to clarify GEF priorities, which were actually already in place but were not clearly shared with the wider audience. This has often caused unnecessary confusion on the GEF's priority areas and eligibility criteria among the NGO community that has less access to updated information at the country and field levels.

We also want to share two general concerns related to the strategical priorities. The first is related to the dissemination process to make aware of these strategical priorities to the wider stakeholders, particularly to the NGOs and the community groups at the country level. The strategical priorities presented in the business plan are rather complex and they are not easy to understand, particularly for the NGOs and community groups. In order to ensure truly country-driven projects, the GEFSEC and the IAs would require improved communication and information dissemination strategy to reach the stakeholders at the country level.

To ensure this process, we consider that the GEFSEC and IAs staff, including the country level staff, should have strong common understanding on the strategical priorities so that they will not come with a contradicting messages to the NGOs and other proposers on what kind of project can and can not fall under each of the strategical priority. These types of contradicting messages between the GEFSEC and IAs were commonly observed in the past and we would like to see clear improvement with the introduction of the strategical priorities.

Moreover, in addition to the current Country Dialog Workshop, we suggest a country-level workshop or forum for the NGOs to learn about the new GEF strategical priorities and have a good understanding on the issues and enable collaboration with the government and IAs to come up with truly “country driven” project proposals under the strategical priorities.

As a second suggestion, we also would like to suggest that these strategical priorities would not drastically change after this business plan period and ensure certain continuity

to have concrete results. We also need to take in consideration the long time and process that requires to develop a GEF project and this requires long term planning and strategical priority setting. For example, we do not want to see a project been rejected after 3 years of investment for its development, because of the change in the strategical priorities.

### **On the Biodiversity Focal Area**

#### ***1) The GEF should move towards a science-based framework for prioritizing allocation of GEF resources as a means to enhance performance and results.***

Although significant, the limited amount of GEF resources available for biodiversity conservation requires that the GEF prioritize its funding allocation towards the world's most threatened and globally significant biodiversity sites, ecosystems and land/seascapes -- those that require the most urgent actions. Such prioritization schemes include priority ecoregions, world heritage sites, and biodiversity hotspots. We suggest that the CBD and the GEF use these most recent science-based approaches to update its "global priority list" in order to make better-informed decisions on funding allocations that maximize conservation impacts. Comparing the coverage of GEF investments to such global priority lists is also an important way to measure GEF's performance. Such a science-based framework could form an important basis for "performance based-allocation" within the biodiversity focal area.

In this regard, we also urge the GEF Council to increase financial support for targeted research on the state of biodiversity in key regions and countries. The fight to save the world's biological heritage will only succeed if we improve our scientific knowledge base regarding global biodiversity. In particular, better scientific data will be needed in order to monitor the state of global biodiversity, and by extension, the impact of the GEF is having in conserving it. Our organizations could provide input on the most pressing data gaps for this purpose.

#### ***2) We are pleased with the draft Business Plan's recognition that protected areas are "the cornerstones of conservation" and that the allocation of resources for protected areas will continue to be prioritized.***

We are pleased that the FY04-06 Business Plan states that protected areas are "the cornerstones of conservation." We are concerned, however, that the financial allocation for protected areas between FY04 and FY05 (\$90 million) represents a decrease in both nominal and real terms, compared to average funding of \$96 million per year during 1991-2001.<sup>1</sup> We believe GEF's focus on protected areas is appropriate and important for the following reasons:

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<sup>1</sup> According to the C.21/Inf. 11 (*Strategic Business Planning: Direction and Targets*), the GEF spent US\$960 million on protected areas between 1991-2001, an average of \$96 million per year.



- When planned, managed, and funded adequately and appropriately, they are critical and highly effective mechanisms for conservation;
- The GEF fills a crucial niche in funding protected areas that other international financial institutions are not been able to do effectively; and
- Protected area coverage is not yet sufficient. (Only 7.4% of the area of the world's 37 most important wilderness areas are protected under IUCN categories I-IV.).

We also support the GEF's inclusion of *Catalyzing the Sustainability of Protected Areas* as a strategic priority that will receive significant funding. The GEF should build on previous support of innovative financing mechanisms by tapping an even broader range of financial resources, including communities, indigenous groups, and the private sector, to provide sustainable financing for protected areas. The GEF should continue to support financial mechanisms that will cover "core management costs" of protected areas.

**3) *We welcome the GEF's plan to strengthen its work on mainstreaming biodiversity concerns in productive landscapes and sectors. We recommend that the GEF involve NGOs and others with significant experience in this field in developing a clear framework for ensuring that such projects deliver real biodiversity benefits.***

We believe this new strategic priority offers an important means for the GEF to catalyze the integration of biodiversity conservation into the global development agenda, especially poverty alleviation initiatives, and thereby preserve broad-scale ecosystem functionality, something that requires conservation efforts beyond protected area management. In this regard, the GEF should increase its support for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use on both public and private lands outside protected areas, taking into consideration the full matrix of land uses at the ecoregional scale in order to maintain connectivity between critical habitats and preserve large-scale ecological and evolutionary processes.

Effective mainstreaming, however, is a challenge. The GEF will need a rigorous framework for determining whether a given mainstreaming project will generate global biodiversity benefits and for determining the level of incremental finance necessary to leverage those benefits. Our organizations have significant experience with mainstreaming biodiversity into productive sectors. We recommend that the GEF Secretariat hold a symposium with NGOs with significant experience in this field to develop a framework for ensuring that its mainstreaming projects deliver real biodiversity results.

We would also like to emphasize the important role of the civil society organizations and NGOs for building greater political will and capacity for mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into productive sectors. We urge the GEF to support technical assistance, targeted research, and capacity building efforts to improve enabling environments, achieve needed policy reforms, build necessary market incentives, and generate adherence to best practices.

Moreover, in order to ensure efficient resource use, we would like to see the GEF IAs and bilateral donors commit higher levels of their own resources for biodiversity conservation to their projects, particularly in the mainstreaming area.

### **On the Persistent Organic Pollutants Focal Area**

We fully support the strategic priority identified under the POPs Focal Area. We believe that NGOs are particularly well equipped to assist with achieving the objectives of this focal area. NGOs have traditionally been strong and effective in awareness building, education and outreach. Other areas where NGOs could assist include identification testing and implementation of alternatives to POPs, information management and communication, as well as innovative technologies and capacity building. We would encourage the substantive involvement of NGOs to assist with this focal area.

## **▪ Terms of Reference for an Independent Monitoring and Evaluation Unit and the Monitoring and Evaluation Work Plan for FY03-06**

The GEF/c.21/12 document “**Terms of Reference for Monitoring and Evaluation Unit**” contain some of the comments of the NGO’s and Countries Representatives during the last Council Meeting in October 2002, we want to emphasize the following advances and positive confirmations and in addition to offer some recommendations:

### **Independency**

- “The independent character of the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit to safeguard the own functions of its work.”
- “ The mandate of which the Monitoring & Evaluation Unit directly reports the Council.”

Both dispositions are very encouraging but we must indicate that the procedure of recommendation for the renovation of the contract for the Director of M&E, by the CEO-Chairman, must be defined previously, in a clearly and transparent way, because it can become as a mechanism that can attempts against the independence of this Unit. We asked for its clear definition.

### **Lessons Learned**

- “ A formal feed-back loop from evaluations findings should ensure more systematic use of lessons in subsequent activities.”
- “ Enhanced procedures to disseminate lessons learned.”

These possibilities open the opportunity to improve and to strengthen the capacity of the GEF to learn of their own experience of work and to question itself, asking about the validity of the programs and projects; of the utility of its methods, of the profit of glided in quantity and quality.

It makes possible to take into account the lessons learned, to value the successes and failures in its management and to put on time in corrective practices.

These elements will allow the GEF to become a reflexive institution and therefore, with more impact their surroundings.

So, we request that those mechanisms and practices could be assumed and operated by the GEF.

### **Partnership**

- “ A good partnership approach to M&E by all GEF entities. Both the GEF coordination units and the evaluation divisions of the Implementing and Executing Agencies should be engaged in enhancing systems for measurements of results, the implementation of reviews and studies and in sharing expediencies and lessons within the GEF.”

It is obvious that the own GEF cannot in an individual way reach their aims and objectives. The joint operation with Implement Agencies in the M&E subject, will strengthen either the GEF or their partners.

But its not clear the level and form of participation in these joint operations, of the organized civil society and the indigenous peoples. For these reason, we request to integrate these groups in the M&E work of the GEF.

Additionally, and considering the proposed cross-cutting evaluations of the programs and policies, it worries to us that neither it is not mentioned and nor it defines the role of the organizations of the civil society and indigenous peoples. It's necessary to define it.

### **Result Measurements**

We considered positive the advance in the definition of the mechanisms to measure the performance of the GEF, establishing:

“ Policies and procedures of M&E;  
Improving the Plans of M&E;  
Establishing minimum standards of M&E and  
Defining programs indicators.”

As far as the program indicators as it is proposed, they are better for measuring the performance than the impact. For that reason we request that according to the practice of M&E of the GEF, they could included progressively and in all level, the impact indicators that altogether with the performance indicators, can measure the immediate impacts of the projects and programs of the GEF, as well the impact of these on the general process of the sustainable development.

## **Participating Countries Roles**

It is positive the inclusion and definition of the countries roles activities in M&E of the GEF. Although it is defined that the local and international NGOs and also the communitarian groups will be involved directly in the M&E processes, exist a lack of definition of the mechanisms for this participation.

On the GEF/c.21/13 document **“Monitoring and Evaluation Work Plan for FY03-06”** we want to highlight the following advances and positive confirmation, and also to make some recommendations:

It is satisfactory to verify that the GEF has been improving their M&E. Work Plan. Thus their 2003-2006 M&E Work Plan surpasses in quality to the previous one and its consistent with a well defined structure.

The subject of the improvement of the measurement of the performance does not let call the attention, that although contains positive elements, needs the possibility of advancing in the establishment of indicators to measure the state of the biodiversity and the ecosystems. To demonstrate clear biodiversity conservation results, the GEF should move towards a M&E framework that is more closely linked to the global biodiversity conservation priorities and includes measurements of the actual state of biodiversity and ecosystems. The current set of targets and indicators do not achieve this as they focus too much on countries, individual projects an protected areas. The indicators need to be based on the actual state of biodiversity and ecosystems.

Additionally it is required to complement the indicators of performance with indicators of immediate impact, in order to verify the impact of the actions of the GEF.

Also is positive the importance that its assigned to the establishment of Baselines for the projects, because it favors to measure outcomes and specific measurable goals and indicators.

Another positive consideration is the increase of funds for Capacity Building. We believe capacity building to help countries measure biodiversity outcomes will be particularly important. This is relevant in the context of the CBD reporting requirements and the Millennium Development Goals. The organized civil society offers its supports and field experiences for the development of this component of work plan.

The new cross cutting studies also, are a positive advance to develop interest subjects, also another innovating subject is the new modality of M&E Country Portfolio Reviews, that offers a good opportunity to measure the performance of the actions of the GEF at country level. We request that the inclusion for the participation of the NGOs and the indigenous peoples in these reviews will be real and effective.

Also, we have to emphasize the improvement of the mechanisms of feed-back, that are essential tools for the advantage of the learned lessons and for the implementation of the recommendations that are derived from the evaluations. The other positive mechanism is the establishment of the knowledge management systems as a form to organize and to systematize the actions of the GEF.

We recommend to clarify the role of the NGOs and indigenous peoples within this system.

Finally, we want to indicate that the proposed allocation of resources for the M&E Work Plan is adequate and its scheme is appropriate.

## ▪ **Co-financing**

We are very pleased that the GEF is in the process of providing clearer definitions for the reporting, recording and tracking of co-financing.

We have some concerns with respect to the content of the document on co-financing presented to Council. These concerns follow:

- There appears to be some inconsistencies with the document on the issue of the timing of securing funds and whether these funds will be recognized as co-financing. For example, paragraph 14(c) states that “Resources that are not committed as part of the essential financing package at the outset but which are mobilized subsequently are not included as co finance. This is not consistent with language used earlier in paragraph 14 that “in some cases part of the cofinancing may actually be mobilized subsequently”. It is also inconsistent with paragraph 26 (b) which states that the implementing agency “would also estimate the cofinancing by source that would be mobilized subsequently”. We ask for clarification on this issue. We recommend that the GEF accept as co-financing resources identified at the time of project approval as well as those mobilized during implementation. We would welcome the introduction of phased GEF payments tied to mobilization of co-financing once a project is underway, as might be the intent of the last sentence of paragraph 26(b).
- We are unclear to the statement in the document which states that in-kind resources be dedicated “uniquely” to the GEF project. We ask for clarification on this issue. In the case of manpower, individual NGO staff operates on several issues and hope that uniquely committed to GEF does not imply that the staff position committed as in-kind contribution will have to be working entirely on the GEF activity.
- We disagree with the statement in paragraph 23 that in-kind contributions will be valued as “the lesser of the cost and market value”. Volunteer time contributed should be counted as cofinancing and valued at the market value of the cost of labour contributed.
- The report recognizes that some countries have less opportunities to raise co-financing, but does not make a recommendation with respect to an accommodation for this situation with respect to the need to secure cofinancing.

## ▪ **Operation of the LDC Trust Fund for Climate Change**

### **On Origins of LDC Fund**

In November 2001, the Marrakech Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Framework Convention on Climate Change established three new funds: a Least Developed Country (LDC) Fund and a Special Climate Change fund were adopted under the Convention while an Adaptation Fund was established under the Kyoto Protocol.

It was decided that the LDCs should be assisted in preparing their national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs) to address urgent and immediate needs and concerns related to the adaptation the adverse effects of climate change. The preparation of the NAPAs is the first prioritized activity under this fund.

Due to the general perception of the urgency to help LDCs tackle their high vulnerability to climate change, initial guidelines for the operationalisation of this LDC fund were provided and a LDC Expert Group established as an advisory body. The GEF, as the entity operating the financial mechanism of the UNFCCC, was requested to place this new fund under its wings and to provide support to LDCs for the preparation of the NAPAs in anticipation of the contributions to the fund.

### **On progress in operationalizing the LDC Fund**

From its formulation at COP 6 to its adoption at COP 7 and its operation, the LDC Fund is probably one of the financial instruments that have been operationalized very quickly.

The GEF Council should be commended for having authorized the support to LDCs for the preparation of the NAPAs with anticipated funds from contributions. This has been done in accordance with the guidelines for the funding of the NAPAs through an expedited process.

### **On progress in resource mobilization**

Total funding requirements amount to US\$ 12 million for fiscal years 2003 and 2004. By end of March 2003, a total amount of US\$ 8.70 million was received while a total of US\$ 5.2 million pledges have to be cashed.

While no specific dates have been announced as to when the outstanding pledges will be cashed, the GEF Secretariat should be encouraged for the quick mobilization of resources under this fund.

With reference to the urgency to support LDCs in order to promptly cope with the adverse effects of climate change, the anticipation in mobilizing efforts around the implementation phase of the NAPAs is encouraged. In this regard, it is suggested that the GEF Secretariat should consider to explore other ways and means than voluntary contributions to the fund.

### **On Operations under the LDC Fund**

In line with the GEF's spirit to encourage large participation of stakeholders in the various stages of the preparation of NAPAs, the NGO community would like to play a vocal role to fully

participate in the preparation and implementation of the NAPAs. The four regional workshops planned in 2003 in order to advance the preparation of NAPAs should see the participation of stakeholders.

The NGO community supports the involvement of the civil society in the various stages of the preparation of NAPAs as stated in the “Operational Guidelines for Expedited Funding for the Preparation of NAPAs” issued by the GEF, and calls on the GEF Secretariat to ensure the effective and full participation of the civil society. There is a need to give a systematic approach to stakeholders involvement and consideration could be given to concrete mechanisms such as consultative committees involving civil society during preparation and implementation processes.

Since the issuance of the guidelines in April 2002, approval has been given to 8 NAPAs while 9 others are under advanced review as of end of March 2003. While positive note is taken of this situation, further action should be taken to encourage LDCs to apply for funding.

The Implementing Agencies have proposed a fee for project cycle management services equivalent to 11%, and the total corporate budget is estimated at 1.47 million. With reference to the position expressed by NGOs in October 2002 about the high fees paid to IAs the Council may want to consider adjusting these fees downward.

#### **Concluding remark**

The NGOs fully support the LDC Fund and applaud its rapid operationalization. Now it is time for concrete actions and the NAPA process should lead to concrete actions. The NGO community believe that their full participation in this process should be facilitated.

### **▪ Draft Operational Program on Sustainable Land Management**

1. We propose that necessary mechanisms for the provision of financial support of up to 250,000 U\$ be provided under the expedited procedures to assist developing countries meet their obligations under the convention for the preparation of National Reports and Action programmes.
2. That the MSP (Medium Size Programme) and SGP (Small Grant Programme) be made more flexible to enable grassroots, indigenous, community groups and NGOs to access in an expedited manner funds to deal with land degradation. We therefore propose that the SGP be able to support projects of up to 150,000 U\$ as has been recommended by OPS II in special cases. We therefore request the understanding and indulgence of the implementing agencies namely UNDP and UNEP.
3. We propose that STAP undertakes studies on the impacts of land degradation on communities and populations affected and their rights. There is also the need for closer collaboration and co-operation between STAP and the committee on science and technology.

4. Finally, we request that the GEF/NGO network, the indigenous peoples, NGOs, Youth and civil society be fully involved in all activities and committees that will be set up in connection with land degradation. It is to be noted Mr Chairman, that almost 10 years has elapsed for this focal area to become eligible for GEF funding. So let action START now.

### ▪ **Small Grant Programme (SGP)**

The NGOs are very pleased about decisions made to expand the existing coverage of the SGP. We are also pleased to know that the significant lobby mounted at the GEF Assembly held in Beijing in 2002 was influential in the decision to expand the SGP. We again wish to highly praise the UNDP for the excellent work done in this area of GEF.

We have some concerns and recommendations on the programme which are recorded below:

- There has been a long period (~ 1 year) of inactivity within the SGP in some countries with respect to approval of planning grants and new proposals. We understand that this was due to the transition between the resignation of the GEF Global Coordinator and filling this position. We believe that this has created a fair amount of frustration within some countries and wish that this situation be corrected as soon as possible. We are uncertain as to why this period of inactivity occurred since we believe that some mechanism should have been in place to cover the period.
- Some NGOs complain that there appears to be a lack of appropriate representation on the National Steering Committees set up to have oversight and approval powers with respect to GEF SGP projects. In some cases selective representation seems to prevail with insufficient representation by community groups and NGOs. We are therefore interested in the criteria for the identification and selection of steering committees members. We would wish the Global Coordinator to investigate this situation.
- With respect to the expansion of the SGP in terms of geographic coverage, we are interested in knowing the process for the selection of countries which would benefit from the expansion.
- We believe that local communities are still not sufficiently involved/benefiting from the SGP. This is particularly true for indigenous people. In part this is due to the limitation of these groups to formulate proposals which could be considered for funding. We recommend that non-traditional means of formulating/presenting proposals be considered. This could include video recording of the sites/areas of concern to present the required information which could then be considered directly by the SGP mechanism or translated into the traditional proposal form. Other means of presenting the information on concerns and possible proposals should also be considered, such as dance, song, music, etc.



- We are interested in the issue of the increased ceiling of the SGP in terms of the maximum amount of funds which can be assigned to a single project and seek information as to the status of this proposed increase. We fully endorse this increase.
- We are curious as to the opportunity for securing funds through the SGP for the preparation/translation of guidelines to access support through the SGP for community groups in recognition that there are many language barriers to communicating information on GEF to these grass-root groups.
- We are aware of positive collaboration between volunteer organizations such as the United Nations Volunteer programme (UNV) and the SGP. This collaboration has been very effective in assisting small NGOs and community groups in formulating proposals and managing SGP projects. We would encourage further partnerships in this regard particularly in view of the limited manpower currently available to assist with the management of the SGP.

Also, on behalf of the Eastern Africa Region, the following concerns were highlighted:

- (a) That the national co-coordinating 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.
- (b) that the national co-coordinators 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-coordinators 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-coordinators should organise regular information, awareness raising and capacity building for the benefits of grassroots, civil society and NGO groups.
- (e) that the national co-coordinators organise regular field days at the intention of the public, the media, NGOs about the various projects funded under the SGP.
- (f) that the national co-coordinators produce regular (quarterly) newsletters on the program and the various projects funded.
- (g) that more least developed countries be included in the programme.

## ▪ **Enhanced Performance and Results at the Country level**

We find this document very helpful in framing the discussion on this difficult issue. NGOs share the concern for an allocation of scarce GEF resources with a view to maximize the impact in terms of global environmental benefits. We also believe, that it is important to regularly monitor the performance of the GEF program and to learn from this experience.

As others have stated before: The GEF is unique, and different from other development finance organizations, in that it supports global benefits.

The primary selection criteria in the allocation of GEF resources should therefore be envisioned global benefits, and we support strengthening the scientific underpinnings on which such prioritization is based. General assessments of country performance, as used by some development organizations, are not appropriate criteria for allocating GEF funding.

When assessing the performance of the GEF portfolio in a specific country, the assessment should not only review the performance and capacity of entities in the governmental sector, but also in the civil society sector. Civil society organizations have demonstrated that they can be effective instruments for achieving GEF objectives, e.g. by implementing community level projects, creating public awareness, and holding governments accountable with regard to their environmental policies and performance.

Environmental work is a multi-sector effort. Should the performance and the capacity of one sector in a country be found inadequate for implementing GEF projects, GEF funding should continue to other sectors which have demonstrated a satisfactory performance and capacity.

We fully endorse the proposed expansion of capacity building measures to overcome institutional weaknesses which constrain a successful implementation of GEF funded activities.

We hope these points will be reflected in the deliberations of the Working Group which the GEF Secretariat plans to set up on this topic.

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