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Summary of the 68th Meeting of the Global Environment Facility Council: 16-20 December 2024

“Our planet’s vital signs are flashing red,” declared the Global Environment Facility’s (GEF) CEO and Chairperson, Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, on the first day of the 68th session of the GEF Council, the Facility’s governing body. “We need to work urgently to avert the collapse of the global ecological systems that maintain life on Earth. The decisions we take over the next 12-18 months are critical.”

With the stage thus set, the 68th Council began work on steps needed to reform the GEF Partnership – the 186 countries, Secretariat, 18 Implementing Agencies, as well as civil society organizations (CSOs), Indigenous Peoples, and the private sector that participate in the GEF – and prepare for the next and ninth GEF Trust Fund replenishment (GEF-9), covering the period 2026-2030, which will determine the GEF’s contribution toward achieving the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The 68th Council’s decisions included launching the 18-month negotiation process for GEF-9 in January 2025. During the week, top officials from multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) that the GEF serves reminded the Council of the messages from the recent biodiversity, climate, and desertification Conferences of the Parties (COPs) regarding their conventions’ resource needs through 2030, as well as from civil society representatives and others. This promoted spirited Council debates about the levels of ambition, reform, and innovation that GEF-9 must reflect at a particularly challenging time in the world.

With some of these needs and challenges front-of-mind, the 68th Council undertook improving the delivery of benefits to recipient countries, particularly least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS). Among other actions, the Council launched a process of policy and procedural reform to streamline the GEF project cycle and get money into recipients’ hands sooner.

In addition, the Council agreed to consider another expansion of the ranks of GEF Implementing Agencies, but this time with specific objectives in mind, for example, seeking actors with expertise and experience in underserved regions, and agencies with a track record in engaging civil society and the private sector. Members also decided forthcoming Council sessions would consider options, including set-asides and incentives,

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to encourage greater balance in the distribution of projects and resources among GEF Implementing Agencies and to further engage multilateral development banks (MDBs) that attract substantial cofinancing and the private sector.

The nearly USD 700 million Work Program approved by the 68th Council focused heavily on chemicals and waste at a time when the GEF hopes to prove to the multilateral community that it has the capacity to serve as the financial mechanism for a global plastics treaty being negotiated and that it could play a significant role in realizing the vision of the Global Framework on Chemicals adopted in 2023. The chemicals and waste component of the latest Work Program includes initiatives focused on agrochemicals, tourism, and the elimination of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). The Work Program activities also include the establishment of a global Chemicals and Wastes Financing Partnership Facility to be housed within the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and specifically designed to address the global funding gap for sound chemicals and waste management.

The 32 members of the GEF Council, representing 186 countries, met virtually from 16-20 December 2024, with the active participation of representatives of CSOs, Indigenous Peoples, and youth.

A Brief History of the GEF

Originating with a 1989 proposal by France to formulate financing responses to mounting concerns over global environmental problems, the GEF was established as a pilot program in 1991 through arrangements between three “implementing agencies,” the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Bank, with the latter also housing and administering the GEF. Its purpose was to provide concessionary and additional funding of incremental costs for achieving global environmental benefits, with an initial endowment of around USD 1 billion. The GEF was restructured through the adoption of a new GEF Instrument in March 1994 in response to developing countries’ calls for democratic decision making. This was done in order to replace the World Bank’s weighted voting system based on the share of the Bank’s capital stock held by each member country. With this restructuring, the GEF became a separate institution, housed in but not administered by the World Bank. The GEF operates as a key mechanism for global environmental funding, with its Implementing Agencies now numbering 18.

The GEF’s organizational structure includes:

- an Assembly that meets every four years;
- a Council that meets semi-annually;
- a Secretariat;
- a Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), established in 1995, which provides independent advice to the GEF and assistance in the delivery of Council Members’ responsibilities; and
- an Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), created in 2003, which supports the improvement of accountability and learning in GEF strategies and operations through its evaluations.

The organization’s main decision-making body is the GEF Council, which includes both donor and recipient countries and is responsible for developing, adopting, and evaluating the GEF’s operational policies and programs. It comprises 32 appointed Council Members, each representing a different constituency of countries which are, in general, regional groupings of either donor or recipient countries.

The GEF Assembly is the main guiding structure for the GEF. It comprises representatives of all 186 member countries and has convened seven times between 1998 and 2024. The Assembly provides a forum for discussion leading up to regular negotiations on funding replenishment and is responsible for reviewing and ratifying the Council’s recommendations.

The replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund every four years is funded by donor countries—40 donors over the span of eight replenishments. Since 1991, the GEF Trust Fund has been replenished with USD 2.75 billion (GEF-1), USD 3 billion (GEF-2), USD 3.13 billion (GEF-3), USD 3.13 billion (GEF-4), USD 4.34 billion (GEF-5), USD 4.43 billion (GEF-6), and USD 4.1 billion (GEF-7). In June 2022, the GEF Council endorsed GEF-8, totaling more than USD 5 billion, for the period 2022-2026 (with an extra year due to the pandemic). GEF-8 is over 30% higher than GEF-7.

In addition to the Trust Fund, the GEF also administers the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF), the Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund (NPIF), and the Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency Trust Fund (CBIT).

The GEF also serves as a financial mechanism for several MEAs, including the: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD); Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs); and Minamata Convention on Mercury. The GEF’s focal areas also include sustainable forest management and international waters, among others. Funding from the Facility is channeled to recipient countries through the 18 GEF Implementing Agencies.

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

Report of the 68th GEF Council Meeting

Council Secretary Noemi Hernández Rodríguez Borjas opened the meeting on Monday.

In his opening remarks, GEF CEO, Chairperson, and Council Co-Chair Carlos Manuel Rodríguez cautioned that the [Planetary Health Check 2024](#) found that “the planet’s vital signs are flashing red.” He reviewed the fractious debates of the most recent CBD, UNFCCC, and UNCCD COPs and in the negotiations for a global plastics treaty. With this as context, Rodríguez observed that the 68th Council is meeting at an inflection point for the GEF Partnership, and that the decisions the Partnership makes over the next 12-18 months, including those regarding GEF-9, are critical for the future of countries. He said the GEF Monitoring Report 2024 shows the GEF has



GEF CEO, Chairperson, and Council Co-Chair **Carlos Manuel Rodríguez**

delivered on environmental benefits while improving on delivery metrics but emphasized the GEF can and will do better. Rodríguez expressed the GEF's commitment to reforms aimed at achieving greater collaboration, more efficiency, and improved impact.

Dawda Badjie (The Gambia), GEF Council Co-Chair for 2024, proposed raising the GEF's profile by:

- engaging with the highest national authorities to explain the GEF's work;
- supporting Council Members in addressing the GEF's national operational-level agenda; and
- addressing the difficulties of ensuring that GEF Implementing Agencies work within the context of national priorities.

Hernández introduced the provisional agenda ([GEF/C.68/02](#)). A Council Member requested an exchange of views on the GEF Secretariat's report regarding staff views on GEF-9 under "Other Business." Hernández added that the Council must elect a Co-Chair for 2025. The agenda was approved.

The GEF Monitoring Report 2024

On Monday, Co-Chair Badjie opened this agenda item. Cyril Blet, GEF Secretariat, introduced the GEF Monitoring Report 2024 ([GEF/C.68/03](#)) as a learning tool for assessing the results, performance, and risk of GEF investments in projects and programs and in operational performance. He summarized key findings, including:



Council Co-Chair **Dawda Badjie Banjul**, The Gambia

- significant results across five environmental benefit areas, with some indicators, such as greenhouse gas (GHG) and POPs emissions, already substantially exceeding their GEF-8 benchmarks;
- time from concept to first disbursements halved from GEF-6 to GEF-8, with mostly steady on-the-ground progress in disbursement; and
- progress in improving projects previously rated as unsatisfactory with respect to the materialization of expected cofinancing.

Blet highlighted a new section presenting the first risk profile of GEF projects under implementation along the three dimensions of context, innovation, and execution. This section found that risk remains lower than stated risk appetite levels on average, except in LDCs and in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

In the ensuing discussion, Council Members generally welcomed the report and its findings.

The GEF CSO Network urged:

- empowering local CSOs as primary implementers, with streamlined funding mechanisms and reduced reliance on intermediaries;
- institutionalizing inclusivity and gender-responsive strategies;
- integrating community-based monitoring and citizen science;
- streamlining the project startup process; and
- improving accountability and transparency through accessible monitoring systems.

One Member urged active participation of countries in defining outputs to be achieved when designing projects, in order to ensure the relevance and achievability of intended results. He stressed monitoring social risks of government policies under consideration and "fluid communications" between all levels at every stage.

A Member stressed the importance of mid-term reviews (MTRs) and greater operational efficiency. Another lamented that only half of MTRs are submitted on time. One Member recommended ex-post evaluations of projects and programs. A Member lamented that recent Work Programs have had insufficient climate change funding.

Another expressed concern regarding recent longer start-up times, financial closure of projects, and low rates of material cofinancing. One noted that not all Implementing Agencies report on cofinancing. Several Members suggested greater GEF efforts to tap MDBs for increased cofinancing of GEF projects and programs.

One Member asked the Secretariat to engage earlier on cofinancing in regions not yet meeting cofinancing thresholds. On private cofinancing, she underscored engaging investment from small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

A Member welcomed the GEF's gender focus, but requested clarification on how women entrepreneurs are supported. Another called for articulating principles for inclusive gender-responsive action for locally-led adaptation.

One Member requested closer monitoring of Implementing Agencies' performance. Another recommended increased reporting regarding the engagement of Operational Focal Points (OFPs).



Noemi Hernández Rodríguez Borjas, Council Secretary

A Member expressed appreciation for the private sector's efforts to mobilize resources, while others called for catalyzing even more private sector engagement. Noting that private sector funding increased after the GEF adopted its current [Private Sector Engagement Strategy](#), two Members urged considering how the Strategy might further stimulate such funding.

Several Members bemoaned the continuing concentration of resources among a few GEF Implementing Agencies and urged GEF-9 negotiations to tackle this concern.

A Member asked about tracking risk assessment and mitigation, especially in the FCS context. Another Member requested greater disclosure of negative developments regarding the proactivity index, the indicator in the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework (RMF) that gauges the progress of projects.

Blet welcomed the feedback, particularly comments stressing minimizing delays in starting projects. He noted over 75% of projects reach disbursement within 18 months of CEO endorsement (which signifies that the CEO has approved a project for financing), with further improvement efforts underway.

Blet also stressed:

- making the Monitoring Report more results-oriented;
- making MTRs more timely;
- the Secretariat's intention to use 100% of the GEF-8 allotment for climate projects;



Cyril Blet, GEF Secretariat

- the catalytic nature of private investment for impactful results;
- private sector cofinancing of 8%, double the amount in the prior GEF cycle;
- the decreased concentration of the combined share of UNDP, UNEP, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), and UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Work Program resources from 69% to 63%;
- IEO consideration of ex-post evaluations; and
- challenges in detailed reporting on cofinancing as this is not always specifically required.

Decision: In its Decision 43/2024, the Council welcomes the report and continued implementation of the GEF-8 RMF and GEF Risk Appetite.

Work Program for the GEF Trust Fund

On Monday, Rodríguez opened this agenda item. Claude Gascon, GEF Secretariat, presented the report on the Work Program for the GEF Trust Fund ([GEF/C.68/04/Rev.02](#)). He noted it requests USD 508.4 million in project financing for 31 projects and programs and USD 46.2 million in associated Implementing Agency fees, for a total Work Program of USD 564.3 million, accounting for 11% of the entire GEF-8 resource allocation. He highlighted the Work Program's strengthened support for: CSOs; expanding innovation and social inclusion; upscaling successful approaches; and integration of several multi-focal areas and multi-trust fund projects.

Gascon reported that USD 253.4 million will be allocated for chemicals and waste, USD 159 million for biodiversity, climate change and land degradation, and USD 46 million for international waters, as well as USD 39.9 million or Non-Grant Instruments (NGIs). He said the program covers 133 of 144 GEF recipient countries, including 45 LDCs and 37 SIDS. Gascon stressed that each dollar the GEF provides is expected to be matched by USD 8.17 in cofinancing provided by other sources, amounting to a total of USD 4.15 billion.

In the ensuing discussion, Council Members welcomed the proposed Work Program. Many praised its emphasis on chemicals and waste, bringing GEF-8 programming in this focal area up to speed. Several asked if the GEF envisions a role for itself under any future global plastics treaty that might be adopted. One Member lamented the relatively low amount of climate financing in the Work Program.

Many welcomed the strong participation of LDCs and SIDS in the Work Program. Several praised the expected cofinancing ratio. Others lauded the innovative NGIs included in the Work Program.

One Member welcomed multi-focal area projects, as well as the contributions of GEF-8 programming and this Work Program, to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) targets.

Another Member emphasized that Work Programs should emphasize synergies between climate change, biodiversity, and land degradation focal areas.

The concern most raised by Council Members was that over 60% of Work Program resources is concentrated in just four UN agencies, namely FAO, UNDP, UNEP, and UNIDO. Many called

for greater diversification in future Work Programs and more involvement by the MDBs.

The GEF CSO Network urged ensuring that Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) and CSOs are actively engaged in more of GEF-8's portfolio.

The Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG) welcomed the Program's second phase of the [Inclusive Conservation Initiative](#) (ICI) and praised the ICI's role in: strengthening IPLC institutions; increasing direct funding flows; and enhancing the recognition of IPLCs' stewardship of territories, ecosystems, natural resources, and biodiversity.

One Member expressed support for the ICI and requested more information on relevant underlying processes, including how Indigenous Peoples are expected to be involved in the design of the Initiative.

A Member requested reflecting in the written record of the meeting that in light of its policies related to development projects, his country opposes a Council decision that supports projects in China, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.

In response, Gascon stated:

- the Work Program covers all five Focal Areas; strategically advances use of the NGI, furthers greater support for CSOs including through the Small Grants Programme (SGP), and advances GEF integration with several multi-focal areas and multi-trust fund efforts;
- some environmental benefit indicators are highly advanced because of GEF-8's integrated approach, such as a protected area protecting biodiversity, avoiding GHG emissions, and reducing land degradation;
- the Secretariat will strive to ensure that LDCs and SIDS use the GEF-8 resources earmarked for them, noting they already use 80% of their System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) allocation;
- comments on ICI engagement with country ownership must be acknowledged;
- the Work Program's "innovations window" funds medium-sized projects;
- climate change programming is lagging; and
- the concentration of resources in UNDP is expected to be lower; however, since countries choose Implementing



Victoria Schreitter, Council Member, Austria

Agencies for projects themselves, the Secretariat has limited influence over by how much. He suggested GEF-9 negotiations consider incentives and tools to address Agency concentration.

Decision: In its Decision 44/2024, the Council approves the Work Program comprising 31 projects and programs, subject to comments made during the Council meeting and additional comments that may be submitted in writing to the Secretariat by 17 January 2025.

Total resources approved in this Work Program amount to USD 564.3 million, including GEF project financing and Agency fees. The Work Program comprises Project Identification Forms (PIFs) and Program Framework Documents (PFDs) as follows: eight with a global focus; six with a regional focus; and 27 with a national focus.

Regarding the PIFs and PFDs approved as part of the Work Program, the Council finds that each of these PIFs and PFDs is, or would be, consistent with the GEF Instrument and GEF policies and procedures. The Council also finds that the PEFs and PFDs may be endorsed by the CEO for final approval, provided that PFDs fully incorporate and address the Council's and the STAP reviewer's comments on the Work Program, and that the CEO confirms that the project continues to be consistent with the Instrument and GEF policies and procedures.

With respect to any PIF approved in the Work Program, the PFD will be posted on the GEF website for information following endorsement by the CEO. If there are major changes to the project objectives or scope since PIF approval, the PFD shall be posted on the website for Council review for four weeks prior to endorsement by the CEO.

Streamlining the GEF Project Cycle

On Tuesday, Co-Chair Rodriguez introduced this agenda item. Jonathan Caldicott presented the document, Streamlining the GEF Project Cycle: Report from the Working Group on the Streamlining Process (GEF/C.68/05), explaining it summarizes the work of the Council's Working Group on Streamlining and next steps towards identifying and considering further options to streamline the GEF project cycle.



Jonas Volden Weltan, Council Member, Norway (center)

Caldicott outlined proposed actions for the GEF Secretariat, including on: moving to a one-step approval process; streamlining templates and reviews; enhancing and enforcing service standards; implementing GEF Portal enhancements; employing a risk-based approach; addressing non-project cycle policy issues; monitoring; cofinancing; cancellation; dual implementation and execution; and guidance on countries affected by fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV).

He also highlighted proposed Agency implementation actions, including: participating actively in preparation and supervision; engaging regularly and effectively with OFPs; and ensuring strong institutional arrangements for implementation.

Caldicott outlined actions OFPs should undertake, including engaging effectively in project development and oversight and in portfolio management. He concluded by outlining the next steps on implementing this proposal.

Several Working Group members spoke. One emphasized the GEF's readiness to change its operations. Another highlighted the group's concrete proposals to accelerate the project cycle.

In the ensuing discussion, most Council Members welcomed the thrust of the proposals. Some questioned the proposed implementation timetable and process and whether all the tradeoffs involved are well understood. Various Members and the GEF CSO Network urged reflecting on how to improve efficiency without compromising transparency.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, on behalf of the 18 GEF Implementing Agencies, requested that the Secretariat draft news rules, procedures, and guidance in collaboration with the Agencies and encourage collaboration between Agencies to: avoid competition; program resources efficiently; and benefit from Agencies' different comparative advantages.

Several Members queried how the different proposed actions are interrelated, requesting Secretariat documentation of the linkages. One Member recommended differentiating between technical changes, which the Secretariat, Implementing Agencies, and OFPs might make themselves, policy changes that require Council decisions, and areas where there is flexibility for testing new ideas.



Alexis Franke, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development



Jonathan Caldicott, GEF Secretariat

Several Members objected to the Group's proposal to approve some streamlining measures through written Council approval procedure rather than discussing them in person at the next Council meeting in June 2025. A few Members suggested adding to the decision a Council session review of their effectiveness, although some cautioned that data on implementation impacts might not yet be available.

Several Members urged reporting on cofinancing in different categories to clarify donors' contributions. Some asked whether the streamlining process would eliminate the requirement for signed letters specifying commitments on cofinancing. One Member called for reevaluating different forms of cofinance, especially regarding activities that are not specifically part of a GEF project, given the need to align with the best practices of other institutions and for keeping executing entity fiduciary roles segregated from implementing entities' roles.

Several Members supported harmonizing GEF and GBFF data sets and procedures, while others cautioned that their portfolios differ, and lessons learned in GBFF's one-step procedure may not be applicable. The World Bank added that the GBFF "has not yet been fully tested."

Noting trade-offs associated with each proposed action, a Member queried whether measures to mitigate them are sufficient, calling for quantitative data on the magnitude of the impacts of trade-offs and phasing in implementation of streamlining measures chronologically. Another Member proposed listing streamlining actions in order of priority.

The GEF CSO Network cautioned against inadvertently reducing opportunities for civil society engagement in conceiving and formulating projects or producing lower stakeholder engagement across the GEF's portfolio. He also cautioned that high cofinancing targets and requirements can hinder civil society execution.

Another Member urged that the four-month period for project approval commences when the Secretariat shares the CEO endorsement and suggested that Portal enhancement include disclosure of contractors to facilitate tracing and tracking. One Member recommended that GEF Portal enhancement improve ease of use and accessibility for OFPs, Implementing



Stephanie Bouziges-Eschmann, Alternate Council Member, France



Anil Das, Council Member, India

Agencies, and the Secretariat. She queried progress in mapping harmonization across the climate and environment funds.

Another Member objected to omitting circulation of medium-sized projects to the Council as this is a minimal part of the whole project cycle and Council Members have the right to express positions.

IPAG called for: incorporating co-design and implementation by IPLCs; including representative Indigenous Peoples' institutions; and clarifying operational requirements and capacity needs.

In response, Caldicott said:

- in line with existing GEF rules and procedures, the GEF will consult and collaborate with the Agencies in drafting policy amendments;
- any changes to policies and guidelines will first be circulated to OFPs and Agencies, then to Council Members two weeks prior to action, after which Members can request discussions at a Council session if desired;
- no changes are planned for offering information on medium-sized projects in the public domain, following the existing stakeholder engagement policy and requirements, and screening for environmental and social safeguards;
- consultation with the Agencies in drafting policy amendments will continue to follow rules and procedures, along with offering information on medium-sized projects in the public domain and screening for environmental and social safeguards;
- no changes are being proposed on monitoring of Agency adherence to GEF policies;
- signed cofinancing letters will still be required for parallel cofinancing where different project components are to be separately financed by the GEF and its partners;
- predicting the magnitude of some trade-offs' impacts will be difficult;
- omitting the requirement for a four-week circulation of project proposals to the Council will save time;
- approval letters will be trackable through the Portal;
- the GBFF one-step approach has been successful so far, and the move to one-step approval for the GEF portfolio will be

- phased, with Agency minimum standards and project-level standards clarified, and tools available for internal screening;
- whether a country uses a steering committee for projects will remain the recipient country's choice;
- the enhanced GEF Portal will allow for the measurement of new data on the time taken at each step in the project cycle; and
- options for improvements will be considered during the rollout of streamlining measures, in preparation for a GEF-9 policy package.

The Council decided to return to this agenda item later after conducting consultations on amending the proposed decision language.

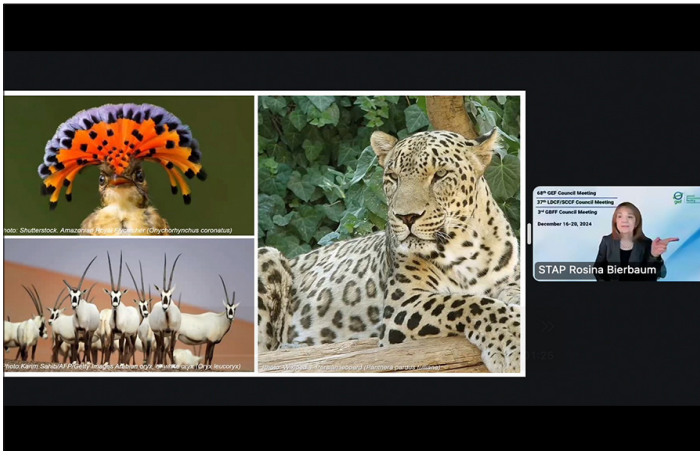
On Thursday, CEO Rodriguez reintroduced this agenda item. Caldicott presented a revised version of the document ([GEF/C.68/05/Rev.01](#)), clarifying actions that can be taken without policy amendments and deleting language on CEO endorsement prior to receiving the cofinancing letter.

Several Council Members expressed support for the revised version. One Member stressed that some of the cofinancing elements pertain to other discussions. Another welcomed actions to be taken in stages regarding future policy revisions. Some Members expressed support while lamenting that language on harmonization was not stronger.

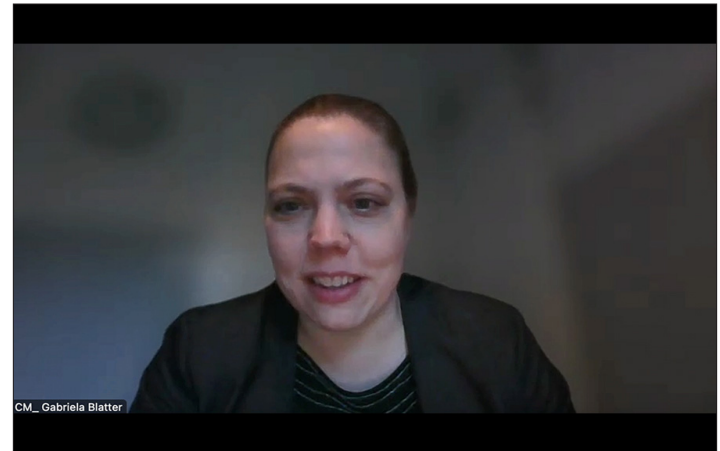
The GEF CSO Network regretted the omission of several proposed changes, including reviews of the SGP. Caldicott, in response, said the GEF Secretariat will continue to provide such reviews.

Decision: In its Decision 45/2024, the Council decides to:

- welcome the report and the progress made by the GEF to date in streamlining its operations;
- request the Secretariat and Agencies to work with OFPs to continue to streamline the project cycle and present any required policy amendments for consideration by the 69th Council;
- request the Secretariat to undertake further analysis and elaboration of options for consideration as part of the preparation for GEF-9 negotiations; and
- request the Secretariat to report on implementation of the measures at the 70th Council.



A slide from the presentation of **Rosina Bierbaum**, STAP Chair



Gabriela Blatter, Council Member, Switzerland

Report of the STAP Chair

On Wednesday, Rosina Bierbaum, STAP Chair, presented the Report of the STAP Chair ([GEF/STAP/C.68/Inf.01](#)). She emphasized new science, including the World Meteorological Organization's [State of the Climate 2024](#), which shows that climate change exacerbates weather disasters and makes the hydrological cycle more erratic. She noted the [Lancet's report on climate change's impact on health](#) states that extreme heat is increasing faster than predicted by climate models and heatwave hotspots are outpacing the models.

Bierbaum also highlighted: new findings showing that land-based sinks are reaching a breaking point, caused by feedback loops from past warming and an unprecedented rate of land degradation. She cited the WWF's [Living Planet Report](#) and the [Global Tree Assessment](#) showing extreme biodiversity declines. Bierbaum presented some encouraging findings as well, including from: the ["Protected Planet 2024"](#) GBF 30 x 30 target progress review and the [World Bank's "Rising to the Challenge" report](#) on success stories and strategies for achieving climate adaptation and resilience.

She briefly summarized findings from STAP reports on [community-based approaches](#) and [clarifying risks in GEF projects](#).

Bierbaum summarized the STAP's Initial Perspective on GEF-9 ([GEF/STAP/C.68/Inf.02](#)), highlighting seven recommendations:

- build a GEF theory of change to drive portfolio-wide investment;
- invest in innovation and manage risk;
- support policy coherence;
- enable civil society, by *inter alia*, strengthening their role within project design, participation, monitoring and evaluation, providing capacity building for strengthening these roles, and working with them to address gaps in existing GEF multi-stakeholder initiatives;
- work to influence market transformation;
- revisit the GEF results framework; and
- foster early, adaptive learning and networked knowledge management.

One Council Member expressed explicit support for the STAP's first five recommendations.

Another Member cautioned that the STAP's GEF-9 document "critically underrepresents" the risks and constraints countries face that hinder action, including lack of structural coherence. She said that recognizing developing countries' fiscal constraints would strengthen policy to foster systemic transformation. She also stated that acknowledging the high cost of capital would enhance the GEF's ability to drive innovative financial mechanisms and unlock financial flows. With others, she bemoaned the imbalance in pushing recipient countries to bring in the private sector without acknowledging the systemic elements that constrain this and that also impede other financing. She called for revising the document to integrate the systemic challenges into the GEF framework.

The GEF CSO Network called for:

- imparting CSOs with essential local knowledge, stake, and interest in long-term sustainability, with the GEF providing guidelines and practical support for capacity-building programs and long-term funding mechanisms;
- integrating citizen science and community monitoring; and
- clarifying, piloting, and innovating with respect to roles for global CSOs.

A Member underscored the importance of ensuring that GEF investments align with global frameworks, including the GBF and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

One Member said the STAP report both invigorated and depressed him, calling it an excellent starting point to frame GEF-9 discussions but, with others, urging that additional information sources also contribute to framing GEF-9.

A Member urged exploration on better integrating indigenous science and traditional knowledge and, with others, commended STAP's recommendation on risk analysis. Another stressed STAP's guidance for ensuring local communities' meaningful participation.

Another Member highlighted the private sector as key to large-scale transformation through blended finance, stressing that GEF investments must align environmental logic with financial return. She queried additional tools for leveraging transformational change and urged coherence across sectors.



Faizal Parish, Chair of the GEF CSO Network

Bierbaum responded that the GEF-9 perspectives document is advisory and provides input on science and technology. She noted that financing is not within the STAP's expertise. She underscored increased funding for IPLCs and called policy coherence a "raging issue we all must consider for GEF-9." She noted the report focused on areas where the STAP believes the GEF can have the greatest influence according to its mandate, such as capacity building for countries to be able to design projects, given the GEF can do little about systemic issues such as the debt burden. She posited that capturing co-benefits might make it possible to simplify reporting across MEAs and, thus, show the GEF's added value. She emphasized calculating the additionality of cofinancing and enhancing countries' capacity to participate in cofinancing.

IEO Semi Annual Evaluation Report

On Tuesday, Council Co-Chair Badgie opened this agenda item. Geeta Batra, Director, IEO, presented the Report ([GEF/E/C.68/Inf.01](#)), explaining it provides an update on ongoing IEO evaluations and knowledge management activities over the period June-November 2024 and on reports due to be issued and/or presented to the Council in 2025. She noted the forthcoming release of the Annual Performance Report 2025, which will feature in-depth analyses of broader adoption, quality at entry, post-completion sustainability, and activity cycle efficiency, alongside a study on behavior change.

Batra highlighted other evaluations expected in 2025, including on:

- GEF support to nature-based solutions;
- socioeconomic co-benefits of GEF interventions;
- GEF interventions in international waters;
- partnership dynamics and competitive advantage of the GEF;
- the LDCF and SCCF; and
- the GBFF.

Batra said the IEO will also complete in 2025 the Eighth Comprehensive Evaluation (OPS8) of the GEF, whose findings will inform the negotiations on GEF-9. She said the finalized OPS8 will be presented at the December 2025 Council meeting.

Batra highlighted the GEF Partnership Monitoring and Evaluation Conference organized in Rome with the cooperation of FAO. She said this was the first such conference across the GEF Partnership in three decades.

Several Council Members welcomed the report, the improved IEO website, and social media efforts. Several looked forward to the findings on nature-based solutions and socioeconomic co-benefits. In response to one Member's query, Batra said the report on GEF Partnership dynamics will be presented to the Council in June 2025 and will feature as part of OPS8.

The GEF CSO Network urged:

- creating formal mechanisms for the inclusion of CSOs in evaluations;
- training in participatory evaluation techniques by the IEO; and
- incorporating self-assessment systems and citizen science into IEO evaluations.

Evaluation of GEF Interventions in the Chemicals and Waste Focal Area and Management Response

On Tuesday, Co-Chair Badgie opened this agenda item. Batra presented the IEO's document ([GEF/E/C.68/01-Rev.01](#)), which she said presents a comprehensive evaluation of the relevance, performance, and effectiveness of GEF support in the chemicals and waste focal area. She underscored the GEF's role in supporting the Stockholm and Minamata Conventions. Batra lamented decreased a focus on single-chemical projects, leading to challenges managing legacy chemicals.

Silke Heuser, GEF IEO, presented on outcomes and sustainability, recalling the private sector's critical role in catalyzing transformational change. She acknowledged the role of technological innovation and strong legislative frameworks.

Heuser noted challenges with inconsistent enforcement which affects the sustainability of outcomes. Such challenges include: resistance from SMEs and smaller suppliers; unused imported machinery; lack of mercury import bans; and weak policy enforcement.

Batra summarized the IEO's four recommendations:

- strengthen the focus on policy and regulatory reforms, awareness raising, and communication within chemicals and waste projects and programs;
- strengthen regulatory frameworks and further engagement with the broader private sector, including SMEs, to enhance project sustainability in chemicals and waste projects and programs;



Geeta Batra, Director, GEF IEO



Laura Rajaniemi, Alternate Council Member, Finland

- ensure that investments in autoclaves, laboratory equipment, and other machinery for chemicals and waste management, associated with indigenous or imported technologies, are fully utilized; and
- integrate health co-benefit indicators into project designs and design and monitoring frameworks.

Anil Sookdeo, GEF Secretariat, introduced the management response ([GEF/C.68/07](#)), said the Secretariat agreed with all four recommendations. On strengthening the GEF's focus on comprehensive policy and regulatory reforms, he noted several ongoing and upcoming GEF programs are already incorporating these elements. On strengthening regulatory practices, Sookdeo highlighted agreement on regulatory frameworks and private sector engagement for promoting sustainable practices in the chemicals and waste sector.

A Council Member welcomed the evaluation, especially on private sector integration. The CSO Network commended progress but said gaps remain, especially in vulnerable communities.

A Member asked about integrating measurement of health co-benefits. Another queried the reasons for low achievement of elimination, reduction, and avoidance of POPs and mercury, requesting suggestions for improvements that could also be applied to other focal areas. Rather than extended producer responsibility, she recommended considering more effective regulatory approaches, direct intervention, and the reduction of harmful substances during manufacture.

Batra said World Health Organization (WHO) and national health data can complement other indicators but suggested collecting it in a few projects rather than developing numerous new indicators.

For the Secretariat, Sookdeo pointed out that wastewater is not part of this focal area but is receiving attention in the GEF's Financing Agrochemical Reduction and Management Programme Plus (FARM Plus). He noted GEF consultations with the WHO and International Labour Organization on communicating on worker safety.

Several Members cautioned against allowing the GEF's new sector-wide approach to decrease work on PCBs and other legacy

chemicals, asking for greater focus on their phaseout and further guidance to countries for accessing finance on these.

A Member asked how the Secretariat will align its work with the Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC). One sought further information on capacity building and institutional strengthening, including more use of existing UN structures, national and regional policies, and legislative measures. Others called for GEF support for the GFC and any plastics treaty that might be adopted.

Sookdeo said the shift to the sectoral approach was to attract private sector engagement but confirmed continuing support on legacy chemicals. He noted that periodic updates to Stockholm Convention national implementation plans are required when new POPs are listed under the Convention. Sookdeo said support to the GFC is planned for GEF-9.

GEF CEO and Chairperson Rodríguez noted the possibility of the GEF serving as the financial mechanism for the proposed plastics treaty, and said he could make the case that the GEF is the logical choice. He acknowledged that many of that treaty's negotiators are not enthusiastic, suggesting this may stem from a lack of understanding about all the GEF already does in a cost effective manner regarding waste.

Decision: In its Decision 46/2024, the Council takes note of the related evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.

Evaluation of GEF Programs in Pacific Small Island Developing States and Management Response

On Tuesday, Co-Chair Badgie opened this agenda item. Batra presented the IEO document ([GEF/E/C.68/02](#)), which she said presents an in-depth evaluation of three major GEF programs in Pacific SIDS and their corresponding 19 child projects. She also mentioned examining the GEF's priorities in addressing environmental efforts in Pacific SIDS, their vulnerabilities, and the expanding range of programs.

Batra reported significant progress in the GEF's programmatic approaches since the last SIDS evaluation but some persisting challenges, such as project delays, limited institutional capacity,



Tsuyoshi Hyokai, Council Member, Japan

and difficulties in achieving long-term sustainability. She summarized the IEO's three recommendations:

- enhance coordination and collaboration to maximize development impact and resource efficiency;
- strengthen program effectiveness by further improving the alignment and operational delivery between Pacific SIDS parent programs and their associated child projects; and
- prioritize robust institutional capacity development to ensure program success and enduring impact.

Asha Bobb-Semple, GEF Secretariat, introduced the management response ([GEF/C.68/06](#)), noting full Secretariat agreement with the first two IEO recommendations and partial agreement with the third. She explained the Secretariat's agreement on:

- focused capacity building in project management, environmental governance, and technical skills, supported by systematic performance monitoring;
- emphasizing practical training that addresses immediate implementation needs while building long-term institutional resilience; and
- exploring opportunities for the GEF to accredit regional organizations, thereby increasing the pool of qualified Implementing Agencies in the region.

Bobb-Semple stated the Secretariat's partial agreement with the IEO recommendations to:

- establish realistic objectives aligned with local institutional capabilities; and
- leverage existing governance structures, traditional knowledge, and community engagement to ensure sustained project benefits.

She noted limited Secretariat influence on these questions because programs are driven by countries and their operation and implementation occurs within the context of national cultural norms.

The GEF CSO Network asked how traditional knowledge will be systematically integrated into programs in the Pacific SIDS, and how the GEF will ensure that capacity-building efforts reach local institutions adequately.

Several Council Members urged consideration of Pacific regional organizations for accreditation as GEF Implementing Agencies, suggesting that this issue be taken up during the GEF-9 replenishment negotiations.

Several Members emphasized the importance of enhanced access to GEF funding for Pacific SIDS.

One Member underscored that project sustainability remains an issue, noting weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation. Another suggested greater engagement with SIDS for improved project outcomes.

Bobb-Semple noted willingness to build on the Country Engagement Strategy for improved outcomes. CEO Rodriguez highlighted limited capacity for maximizing GEF resources, including absence of current Implementing Agencies with sufficient regional capacity. Sonja Sabita Teelucksingh, GEF Secretariat, confirmed the Secretariat does not take a passive approach to the capacity issue in the Pacific SIDSs.



CM_Hongxia Li
Hongxia Li, Council Member, China

Decision: In its Decision 47/2024, the Council takes note of the related evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.

Evaluation of Components of the GEF's Results Based Management System and Management Response

On Tuesday, Co-Chair Badgie opened this agenda item. Neeraj Negi, GEF IEO, presented the document ([GEF/E/C.68/03](#)), explaining that it evaluates the GEF Portal, portfolio efficiency, core indicators system, self-evaluations, and the reporting of project results and process indicators. He reported that the IEO found improvements to core indicators and stated that the GEF's RBM indicators are generally effective for tracking the operational performance of the GEF Partnership. He noted the report's four recommendations call on the GEF to:

- review its metrics for portfolio effectiveness and efficiency to ensure they remain relevant and aligned with ongoing reforms;
- enhance its results measurement framework to be able to track and report on systemic and transformative changes;
- prioritize developing user-friendly functionalities and features for the GEF Portal; and
- explicitly address FCV contexts by developing targeted guidance for monitoring and evaluation practices in such contexts and ensuring that relevant indicators are incorporated into project design.



CM_Gisella Berardi
Gisella Berardi, Council Member, Italy

Jonathan Caldicott, GEF Secretariat, introduced the management response ([GEF/C.68/08](#)). He said the Secretariat fully agrees with the last three recommendations, but only partially agrees with the one regarding metrics, while noting that metrics reform will be considered in the context of the GEF-9 replenishment.

In their comments, Council Members welcomed the evaluation and response. One urged that: the GEF work with sustainability-related results on a systemic level; give medium-sized projects more attention; and maintain flexibility in FCV results.

The CSO Network called for ensuring future adaptability to the GEF's changing situation, through:

- indicators reflecting local stakeholders' knowledge and experience;
- further enhancement of the Portal to provide more information, including FCV-related, to broader civil society; and
- indicators on systemic transformation to capture long-term impacts on social cohesion, environmental resilience, and livelihoods.

One Council Member asked the IEO to suggest measures the Secretariat could introduce to ensure more candid reporting, more complete reporting on core indicators, and improved reporting and monitoring.

In response, the IEO said actual results are presented in the Annual Performance Report and verified by IEO field visits, noting field verification will increase in GEF-9. To incentivize candid reporting, he recommended that the CEO and Secretariat support the IEO in establishing a culture to share lessons projects that "did not achieve the expected outcomes" and offer awards for projects that did not succeed but were well evaluated.

On the IEO's first recommendation, Caldicott responded that the IEO's recommended evaluation methodology would be used to complement the Secretariat's current system. He added that the Secretariat:

- is developing a policy package for GEF-9, including consideration of various options;
- relies on a mix of different indicators, including qualitative ones, because no one indicator can capture true performance; and
- reviews the quality and accuracy of the results of MTRs regularly.

He stressed capacity enhancement and regular engagement with Agencies on portfolio quality issues.

Decision: In its Decision 48/2024, the Council takes note of the related evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.

Relations with Conventions and Other International Institutions

On Wednesday, Co-Chair Rodríguez opened this agenda item by introducing the Secretariat's report on Relations with the Conventions and Other International Institutions ([GEF/C.68/09/Rev.1](#)) and inviting officials from MEAs to address the Council.

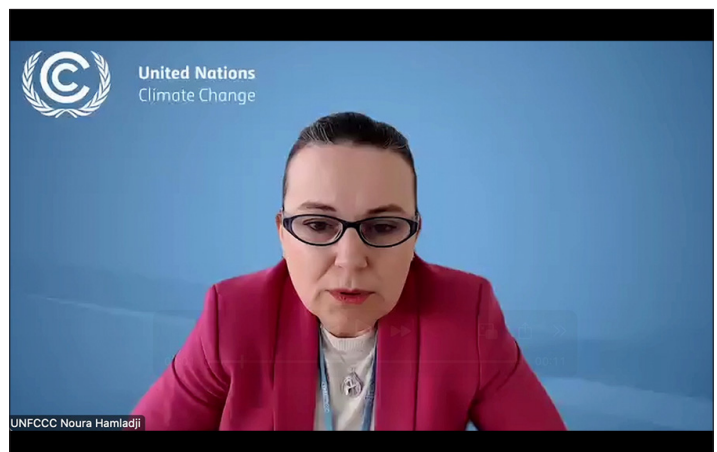


Astrid Shomaker, Executive Secretary, CBD

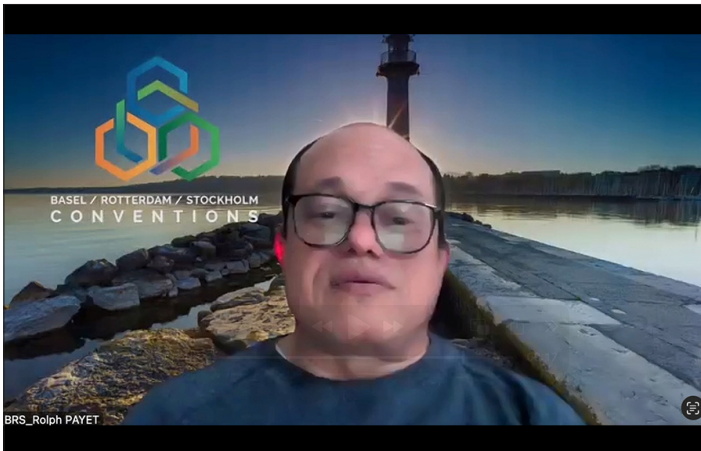
Astrid Shomaker, Executive Secretary, CBD, offered an update on CBD COP 16. She noted USD 161 million in new financial pledges to the GBFF but that more financial contributions are needed. She highlighted the new global Cali Fund, which will be funded by payments from the private sector for use of digital sequence information on genetic resources, and a new subsidiary body giving voice to IPLCs through relevant programs of work. She noted, however, that the COP was unable to conclude decisions on its financial mechanism, resource mobilization, or planning, monitoring, reporting, and review mechanisms, so these issues will be tackled at the resumed COP in Rome, Italy, in February 2025.

Noura Hamladji, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNFCCC, noted COP 29 was coined "the finance COP." She underscored decisions on adaptation goals and calling for the scale of finance to reach USD 1.3 trillion in investment by 2035. She said COP 29 made the Loss and Damage Fund fully operational, characterizing this as a significant step forward. She added that countries reaffirmed commitments to mainstream gender considerations, and, on collaboration, coherence, and complementarity between the GEF and the Green Climate Fund (GCF), among others.

Stephen Mathias, Assistant Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, UN, provided updates on the Agreement under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas



Noura Hamladji, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNFCCC



Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary of the BRS Conventions

beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement). He stressed the importance of GEF support for BBNJ Agreement-enabling activities and swift ratifications. Mathias noted that arrangements for a GEF role in the Agreement will be addressed at the April 2025 Preparatory Commission meeting.

Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary, Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions Secretariat, reported that a recent assessment of funding needs under the Stockholm Convention for the period 2026–2030, coinciding with GEF-9, determined that USD 18.322 billion would be needed. He explained that GEF-9 needs to consider coverage of the following POPs:

- PCBs;
- industrial POPs (HCBd, PFOS, PBDE);
- legacy pesticides, such as DDT;
- unintentionally produced POPs; and
- newly listed POPs, which will require Contracting Parties to update their National Implementation Plans (NIPs).

Payet noted GEF-9 should take into account the upcoming COP's 6th Review of the Convention's Financial Mechanism, whose findings highlight the importance of tailored support for countries facing application challenges, increased indicative funding for POPs, and integration of POP priorities into broader programs for co-benefits.

Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary, Minamata Convention, noted the Convention and some of the GEF Implementing Agencies are working rapidly to implement the enabling activity the 67th GEF Council approved for reviewing implementation of obligations under Convention Article 7 on artisanal and small-scale gold mining, a major source of mercury pollution. She also expressed appreciation for the Council's approval of the project to phase out mercury in Brazil's chlor-alkali industry.

Stankiewicz expressed concern that her convention's share of GEF-8 funds is still under 25% used and that mercury projects are not going forward quickly enough for GEF Council or CEO approval.

Houssan Bassiri, Executive Secretary, UNCCD, said the just-finished UNCCD COP16 adopted decisions on, *inter alia*:

- encouraging the GEF and the UNCCD's Global Mechanism to mobilize new and additional financial resources by further



Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary, Minamata Convention

collaborating with multilateral funds, including the GCF, the Adaptation Fund, and the Climate Investment Funds (CIF);

- inviting the GEF to strengthen its support for countries in programming land degradation focal area resources to combat desertification, land degradation, and drought; and
- establishing new caucuses for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and a SIDS forum.

He noted that the COP was unable to adopt a decision to negotiate a framework or a legally binding protocol for addressing drought worldwide. This issue will be taken up at COP 17 and GEF-9 negotiations should take that into account.

Bassiri also highlighted a study on financing for effective implementation that found USD 355 billion was needed annually between 2025 and 2030, with projected investments totaling USD 77 billion, leaving an annual shortfall of USD 278 billion.

A Council Member expressed hope that efforts to increase coherence and complementarity among climate funds will lead to a harmonization of best practice and reporting requirements and a reduced reporting burden on countries

Another Member asked the GEF to report to the next Council session on its implementation of efforts to increase coherence and complementarity among climate funds. She welcomed the Cali Fund as a step to support benefit sharing but suggested the GBFF might have been a better vessel for accessing private sector funding since it could then directly benefit from the GEF's experience and expertise. She cautioned, with some other Members, against fragmentation of the financial architecture serving MEAs.

Several Members thanked the MEA Secretariats for their efforts in increasing complementarity and coherence, including through fostering strong partnerships with, and synergies among, MEAs.

One Member said criticisms of the GEF heard at recent COPs were unfair and may reflect a lack of understanding of all that the GEF does. She urged countries to voice those criticisms at the Council so they can be addressed by the GEF. Another Member emphasized that the GEF's role as a financial mechanism for several MEAs is a strength, not a weakness.

One Member noted some support among negotiators for a global plastics treaty to designate the GEF as the financial



Annette Windmeisser, Council Member, Germany

mechanism and urged the GEF to continue educating negotiators on all it already does related to plastic pollution.

Responding to Member's comments, Shomaker:

- said the decision on the financial mechanism to be considered at the resumed COP includes provisions for capacity building;
- agreed on the importance of engaging civil society;
- suggested that criticism of the GEF often reflects confusion among negotiators about behaviors of GEF Implementing Agencies rather than the Secretariat, and the GEF should seek to understand the criticisms and dispel any misunderstandings; and
- cautioned that greater transparency must accompany moves toward a more integrated approach, to avoid further misunderstandings.

Payet suggested that many of the criticisms leveled at the GEF stem from convention focal points not being fully briefed and aware of all the GEF does in their countries in their issue areas. He noted the GEF might address this in its outreach efforts. He expressed appreciation for the GEF's work on promoting synergies and an integrated approach, noting chemicals and waste intersect with nearly every environmental issue.

One Member expressed hope that the GEF will be reconfirmed as the financial mechanism at the resumed CBD COP. Another Member noted some obligations on delivering global environment benefits are "silent and fragmented," putting developing countries in a difficult situation for fulfilling them, especially when additional sources of financing fail to be catalyzed.

Several Members supported one recipient country Member's call for the GEF to better balance its promotion of integrated approaches and serving the basic MEA implementation needs of developing countries. She also urged consideration of how to get Council Members "out in the field," by attending COPs and helping to educate negotiators on all that the GEF does.

IPAG highlighted IPLCs' contributions to addressing climate change, reiterating the need to integrate them into consultations and project implementation.

CEO Rodriguez noted that he often hears concerns about GEF operations and efficiency in MEA COPs when those concerns should be raised in "this very meeting."

Decision: In its Decision 49/2024, the Council welcomes the report and requests the GEF network to continue to work with recipient countries to reflect the guidance and national priorities in their GEF programming and activities.

Strength of the Partnership: Coverage by Agencies

On Thursday, Co-Chair Rodriguez opened this agenda item. Caldicott introduced the Secretariat's report (GEF/C.68/10), noting it responds to Decision 16/2023, which requests an update on GEF Implementing Agencies' geographical and thematic coverage, effectiveness, efficiency, and engagement, in preparation for GEF-9 replenishment negotiations.

He summarized positive findings showing:

- a slightly improved balance of allocations between Agencies;
- the Agencies' geographic reach covering 160 countries, including all 45 LDCs and 39 SIDS; and
- Agencies' unique experiences and priorities that increase their impact.

He said LDCs and SIDS need further attention, including:

- stronger regional support to address coverage gaps, more multiagency projects, and coverage of more focal areas; and
- improving SIDS' low performance on operational indicators in recent evaluations, which is associated with unique regional challenges.

In ensuing discussion, Council Members generally welcomed the report. There was some disagreement over whether to expand the partnership or prioritize incentivization of existing Agencies to diversify coverage and engagement.

One Member asked how to align targeted outreach with the Country Engagement Strategy and what measures could incentivize Agencies to work in the LDCs and SIDS regions.

A Member noted UNDP has the lowest performance in some areas, with a gap of almost 20% between it and the next lowest Agency in projects rated "satisfactory." He lamented UNDP's resource concentration both as a principle and based on its performance.



Yoko Yamoto, Alternate Council Member, Japan

The CSO Network expressed concern about differential levels of Agency engagement with civil society despite GEF guidelines. He recalled that six Agencies have channeled no funds through CSOs and some only 1-5%. He said CSO projects have declined in number for some Agencies. He supported possibly involving more agencies but requested further guidance to enhance existing GEF Implementing Agencies.

Another observed that increasing the number of Agencies is not a solution because many already have a very low allocation of funds. One Council Member noted that the GEF's success depends on its Agencies' performance. He supported exploring accreditation of specialized agencies and possibly empowering national and regional agencies, noting current Agencies' lack of diversification.

Another noted the current cohort of Agencies largely meets GEF requirements, cautioning that expansion would increase the complexity and difficulty of managing the GEF's portfolio and might not resolve the issue of concentration. He suggested instead tapping into the strengths and unused potential of existing Agencies, particularly the MDBs' and IFIs' ability to leverage cofinancing from the private sector. Numerous Members supported an incentive mechanism for diversification, taking account of different degrees of expertise in different focal areas.

The Inter-American Development Bank, on behalf of the Implementing Agencies, expressed enthusiasm for collaborating to further shape and operationalize the measures proposed.

Noting that Eastern Europe and Central Asia are also underserved regions, one Member called for enhanced regional expertise of potential Agencies in the region and objected to specifying the characteristics of potential additional Agencies in the decision. She disagreed with the notion that CSOs need more coverage, given that three Agencies are nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) themselves. She requested clarification on why the current CSO and NGO Implementing Agencies do not fulfil expertise requirements.

Another Member bemoaned SIDS' long-standing performance inconsistency, noting decreasing disbursement to SIDS recently, despite the unique challenges of SIDS. She urged:

- targeted regional engagement;
- increased allocations for SIDS and the SGP;
- fast-tracking approval for SIDS-specific projects; and
- flexible cofinancing options, with lower cofinancing thresholds.

In response, Caldicott noted many questions must await the GEF-9 negotiations. He agreed on expanding tailored support to other regions. He noted identification of vertical funds as an area for harmonization, saying the Secretariat is exploring the GCF's accreditation machinery.

Noting that UNDP still commands 30% of the GEF's portfolio resources and MDBs collectively still only account for 10%, one Member welcomed considering options at the June 2025 Council meeting. He urged conducting intense due diligence on which agencies should be considered in the next round of Partnership expansion.

In response, Caldicott:

- promised that the Secretariat will develop ideas to present during GEF-9 talks;
- agreed that GEF should explore prompting greater use of existing Agencies, but cautioned that its current tools do not offer many levers to do so;
- agreed on the need to conduct due diligence about any candidates for Implementing Agency status but cautioned about the time needed to pursue this fully;
- welcomed the invitation to change the business model in GEF-9; and
- noted there is no "machinery" for accreditation per se.

Highlighting the most recent expansion, when eight Agencies were added, he noted the three-stage approach used, including an accreditation panel.

A Member proposed amending the decision to add a limited number of Agencies to operate in Central Asia. Another suggested adding Agencies to serve "underserved regions." A third suggested using the term "developing countries not adequately funded." A fourth said she could support reference to "LDCs" if there was no objection to also refer specifically to Eastern Europe and Central Asia.



Gmelina Ramirez, Inter-American Development Bank



Richard Bontjer, Council Member, Australia

Two Members reiterated that any expansion should be data driven, opining that the current decision fully reflects the data. Claude Gascon, GEF Secretariat, described possible scenarios for data-driven decision making for adding new Agencies during GEF-9.

Noting differences over the decision language, Rodríguez asked Caldicott to consult with Council Members on compromise language.

At the end of the day, Caldicott returned with a revised report and draft decision ([GEF/C.68/10/Rev.01](#)). Members supported the revision, although one requested an amendment changing “including for LDCs and SIDS” to “particularly for LDCs and SIDS.” The Council adopted the revised decision with the suggested additional amendment.

Decision: In its Decision 50/2024, the Council takes note of the document and decides to:

- request the Secretariat to develop options to add a limited number of additional agencies to the Partnership, to enhance regional expertise for LDCs and SIDS, and to strengthen engagement with CSOs, NGOs, and the private sector, for consideration by the Council at its 69th meeting; and
- request the Secretariat to develop additional options noted in the document, such as set-asides for Agency groups with greater engagement needs, the development of incentive mechanisms, and a targeted outreach program in alignment with the Country Engagement Strategy, for consideration by the Council at a future meeting.

Ninth Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund

On Wednesday, Co-Chair Rodríguez opened this agenda item. Janet Mwebi, GEF Trustee, introduced the document ([GEF/C.68/13](#)). She explained that it proposes initiating the process of the ninth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund now, with a view to concluding negotiations by April 2026. Mwebi said this could help ensure that GEF operations continue uninterrupted into GEF-9 when GEF-8 expires on 30 June 2026.

Several Members stressed the need to see the replenishment negotiations’ timetable and documentation as soon as possible.

The CSO Network called for the replenishment negotiations



Abigail Demopolos, Council Member, US



to be fully open and inclusive so that civil society and IPLCs can sit at the table. He also underscored the need for GEF-9 to scale up resources for the GEF, suggesting that the triple planetary crisis requires GEF-9 funding to triple that of GEF-8.

Several Members echoed the CSO Network’s calls for inclusivity and high ambition in the replenishment talks.

A Member called for GEF-9 negotiations to consider the optimal scale of funding, taking into account not only GEF Council deliberations, but also the [G20 Sustainable Finance Report](#) and ongoing treaty negotiations. Another Member urged those countries in a position to do so to scale up their contributions to the GEF. Other Members underscored increasing ambition in GEF-9, given negotiations underway in the CBD and on a global plastics treaty.

Some Members of recipient constituencies noted that past GEF replenishment negotiations have been donor-dominated, and urged that recipient countries, CSOs, and IPLCs be given an equal seat at the table.

A Member noted Azerbaijan’s interest in hosting a GEF-9 meeting or the next GEF Assembly.

Rodríguez noted that GEF replenishment talks have always been open and inclusive but, at the end of the day, final decisions are taken by donors because that is the nature of the process. He promised proposals to make the GEF-9 negotiations even more inclusive. Rodríguez noted a clearly defined plan for GEF-9 talks have already been prepared and will be shared shortly. He welcomed Azerbaijan’s interest in hosting a replenishment meeting or the Assembly.

Decision: In its Decision 52/2024, the Council requests the Trustee, in cooperation with the Secretariat, to initiate discussions on GEF-9.

Other Business

On Thursday, Co-Chair Rodríguez opened this agenda item. Council Secretary Hernández announced the nomination of Richard Bontjer (Australia) as Council Co-Chair for 2025. Members approved the nomination.

Decision: In its Decision 53/2024, the Council, recalling paragraph 18 of the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility as amended by the Seventh GEF Assembly, decides to appoint Richard Bontjer,

Council Member for the Constituency of Australia, New Zealand, and Republic of Korea as Co-Chair for the year 2025.

Report of the 37th LDCF/SCCF Council Meeting

On Thursday, Co-Chair Rodríguez opened the LDCF/SCCF Council meeting. He emphasized that the LDCF and SCCF remain undercapitalized, constraining the GEF's ability to deliver to LDCs and SIDS on climate change when and where it is needed most. Rodríguez urged donors to “step up,” since funds are needed for urgent action now to avoid leaving any LDC or SIDS behind.

He emphasized that the SCCF is working to align with MDB efforts on adaptation, as in the ADB's role with Pacific SIDS in the current proposed work program. Rodríguez also stressed efforts to work with the GCF, Adaptation Fund, and CIF to complement rather than compete, and maximize synergies among the funds to maximize impact.

LDC Group Chair Evans Davie Njewa welcomed the commitment at COP 29 to triple climate finance to developing countries by 2035, but stressed LDCs need adaptation funding now, not later. He lamented that some LDCF projects are not being approved due to funding constraints. He called on donors to pledge more to the Fund.

At the request of Bhutan, a Council Member noted that Bhutan graduated from LDC status at COP 29. He read paragraph 14 of the COP 29 decision on the GEF ([FCCC/CP/2024/L.11](#)), which calls on the GEF to continue providing funding through the LDCF until completion for projects already approved before the country graduated from LDC status. The decision also calls for the GEF to consider “developing further measures to help ensure a smooth transition for recently graduated” LDCs.

Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat, assured the Council that funding for Bhutan's previously approved LDCF project will continue until completion. She said the Secretariat will consider the further measures requested to propose something to the Council during GEF-8 or before GEF-9 negotiations conclude.



Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat

Rodríguez introduced the draft provisional agenda ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.37/01](#)). The agenda was adopted.

Work Program for the LDCF/SCCF

On Thursday, Co-Chair Rodríguez opened this agenda item and Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat, introduced the document ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.37/02](#)). She reported its request of USD 106.21 million in financing, amounting to 93.61 million for the LDCF and USD12.6 million for the SCCF, including Agency fees and project preparation grants, to support priority areas of the 2022-2026 GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change in 13 highly climate-vulnerable countries. She said this funding will support nine proposals under the LDCF—six national projects, one global project and two multi-country programs, and two proposals from the SCCF—one regional program encompassing three countries and one national project. She acknowledged strong coordination in the Work Program with the GCF and engagement of MDBs and the World Bank.

Fareeha Iqbal, GEF Secretariat, explained the subject foci and locations of the various projects proposed. She emphasized the LDCF and SCCF programs' increasing focus on gender equality, including on:

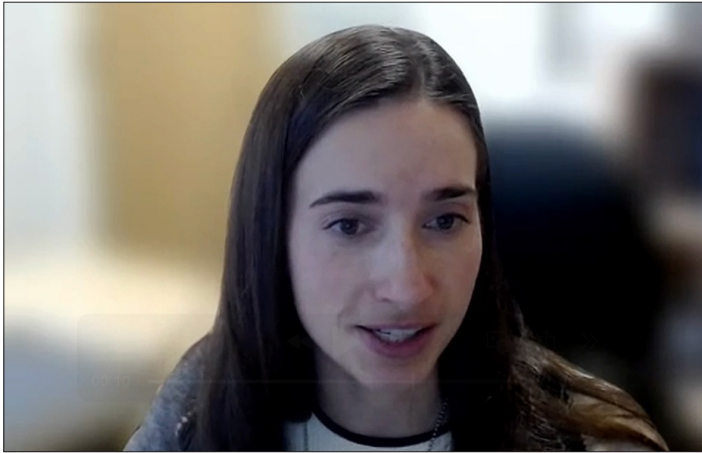
- women's participation in decision-making;
- enhanced livelihoods and finance;
- capacity building for women's organizations; and
- gender-responsive monitoring and results frameworks incorporating gender-sensitive indicators.

Iqbal stated that the expected results from this Work Program include improved resilience for over 3.8 million beneficiaries, of whom around 60% are women.

She presented the first risk profile for the LDCF/SCCF Work Programs, noting the LDCF has higher risk ratings than do other funds, possibly because it serves very environmentally and socially fragile countries, LDCs, and highly climate- and environmentally-vulnerable countries. She said Implementing Agencies will be asked to develop risk mitigation strategies for all the projects.



Fareeha Iqbal, GEF Secretariat



Tessa Ide, Alternate Council Member, US

In ensuing discussion, one Council Member commended the prioritization of adaptation and the emphasis on public-private partnerships and cofinancing.

The CSO Network called for mobilizing more donor commitments to ensure all eligible projects receive support, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

A Member asked how the LDCF/SCCF risks compare to the GEF Risk Appetite. Another asked whether the LDCF risk assessment differs because it is more successful in managing risk or because it has a different assessment of risk than other funds.

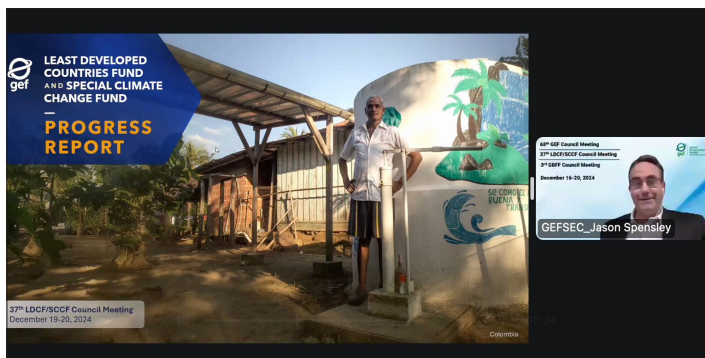
One Member noted that six LDCs have now utilized the entire USD 20 million available to them.

Aoki recognized risk appetite is substantial and confirmed an undertaking to track it to provide additional information and integrate mitigation measures in project design.

Iqbal noted that 60% of countries supported are from fragile and conflict-affected situations.

A Member was pleased to see that three countries are accessing funding for first time, demonstrating efforts to make funding more accessible. She underscored efforts to bring the private sector into the adaptation space. She acknowledged progress in balancing the distribution of resources and Agencies.

One Member welcomed participation of SMEs and the regional balance achieved. She commended prioritization of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and called for funding to also support National Biodiversity Action Plans (NBSAPs).



Jason Spensley, GEF Secretariat, presents during the 37th LDCF/SCCF Council Meeting.

Aoki emphasized that core indicators are captured in programming. She also noted efforts to identify risk and enable mitigation. She welcomed project concepts supporting NBSAPs as well as other plans. She underscored coordination with the GCF regarding NAP support.

Another Member noted the need for a holistic framework to address SIDS' needs and to increase the funding cap.

Decision: In its Decision LDCF.SCCF 9/2024/2024, the LDCF/SCCF Council approves the Work Program comprising seven projects and two programs for the LDCF, and one project and one program for the SCCF, subject to comments made during the Council meeting and additional comments that may be submitted in writing to the Secretariat by 18 January 2025.

Total resources approved in this Work Program amount to USD 92.05 million from the LDCF and USD 12.25 million from the SCCF, inclusive of GEF project financing and Agency fees. The Work Program comprises PIFs for two programs, five standalone full-size projects, and two multi-trust projects for the LDCF, and one program and one multi-trust project for the SCCF.

With respect to the PIFs approved as part of the Work Program, the Council finds that each of these PIFs (i) is, or would be, consistent with the Instrument and GEF policies and procedures, and (ii) may be endorsed by the CEO for final approval by the GEF Agency, provided that the FPDs fully incorporate and address the Council's and the STAP reviewer's comments on the Work Program, and that the CEO confirms that the project continues to be consistent with the Instrument and GEF policies and procedures.

With respect to any PIF approved in this Work Program, the FPD will be posted on the GEF website for information after endorsement by the CEO. If there are major changes to the project objectives or scope after PIF approval, the final project document shall be posted on the web for Council review for four weeks prior to CEO endorsement.

Progress Report on the LDCF/SCCF

On Thursday, Co-Chair Rodríguez opened this agenda item and Jason Spensley and Ladu Lemi, GEF Secretariat, presented the report ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.37/03/Rev.01](#)), which covers the period April-September 2024. Spensley highlighted that no new pledges had been received during that period, but USD 13.2 million in contributions had been received. He said that, as of September 30, 2024, 51 LDCs had accessed approximately USD12.20 million to support preparation of National Adaptation Programmes of Action. Additionally, LDCF support for formulating NAPs totaled USD 60.33 million as of 30 September 2024. Spensley noted, however, that since GEF-7, the LDCF has focused on NAP implementation rather than formulation, which is now supported by the GCF.

Spensley reported that new funding commitments and contributions made during this reporting period for the SCCF have focused primarily on SIDS' climate change adaptation priorities. He reported SCCF window B, focusing on technology transfer, innovation, and private sector engagement, remains under-resourced despite recent contributions. Spensley observed that it has demonstrated strong potential for impact and

engagement of non-traditional partners in the GEF, including private sector actors.

Lemi said the LDCF portfolio aims to reduce the vulnerability of an estimated 74.29 million people and better manage 14.06 million hectares of land to withstand the effects of climate change. He said the SCCF portfolio aims to reduce the vulnerability of an estimated 9.50 million people and better manage 5.28 million hectares of land to withstand the effects of climate change.

Spensley reported on the [Challenge Program for Adaptation Innovation](#) and its recent winners, noting the third round provided USD 20 million in support to 13 innovators.

The GEF CSO Network expressed appreciation for the focus on nature-based solutions and innovative financing, but lamented the underutilization of SCCF window B. One Member called for an analysis of why countries have not accessed this window to understand any barriers and discern how to overcome them.

A Member expressed appreciation for LDCF support to NAPs but lamented the lack of new pledges to the LDCF. Another underscored the importance of learning and knowledge sharing in the LDCF and SCCF.

One Member requested more information on how the LDCF and SCCF are coordinating with the GCF on the ground. He expressed satisfaction with the increased programming involving MDBs and IFIs and asked if this was the result of specific steps taken by the GEF. He suggested producing a note on lessons learned from the Challenge Program.

Responding to comments, Spensley:

- promised to present a note on lessons learned in the Challenge Program, hopefully at the next Council;
- suggested the increased MDB/IFI activity is the resulting of ongoing, proactive engagement by the Secretariat; and
- said coordination with the GCF is longstanding and now follows a long-term vision and joint action plan between the GEF and GCF secretariats.

Aoki added that a progress report on cooperation between the GEF, GCF, Adaptation Fund, and CIF would be presented to the June 2025 Council. She also noted efforts to explore helping LDCs link their LDCF projects with funding from the World Bank Group's International Development Association.

Decision: In its Decision LDCF.SCCF 10/2024, the LDCF/SCCF Council welcomes the report and takes note with appreciation the progress made under the LDCF and the SCCF.



Wampie Libon, Council Member, the Netherlands

Planning Note for Developing the GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change for the LDCF and SCCF

On Friday, CEO Rodriguez introduced this agenda item. Tshewang Dorji, GEF Secretariat, introduced the Planning Note ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.37/04](#)), stating that it provides space to develop programming strategy and operational improvements. He outlined the 18-month Programming Strategy development, including several meetings which will be held back-to-back with other GEF Trust Fund meetings. Dorji stated the expectation that this would result in the presentation of the Strategy to the 40th LDCF/SCCF Council for endorsement.

A Council Member welcomed the Note and timeline for meetings. He inquired about the engagement of actors that are relevant across the family of funds, and whether that would be limited to written comments or actual consultation. The CSO Network advised establishing a formal replenishment process to increase the intake of funds. Another Member stressed the importance of coordination across funds.

Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat, emphasized that negotiations for the LDCF and SSCF are different from replenishment negotiations. On operational improvements, she highlighted several scenarios for resource mobilization, from status quo to a replenishment and voluntary contributions model.

Decision: In its Decision LDCF.SCCF 11/2024, the LDCF/SCCF Council requests the Secretariat to initiate the development process of the Programming Strategy.

Other Business

Under Other Business, four donors announced pledges:

- GBP 10 million to the SCCF non-SIDS window, from the UK;
- EUR 2,269,680 from Wallonia, Belgium, to the LDCF;
- EUR 15 million to the LDCF and EUR 10 million to the SCCF from Germany; and
- SEK 130 million from Sweden.

Several recipient country Council Members and the CSO Network expressed appreciation for the contributions. The CSO Network called for a more structured approach for more reliable and predictable contributions, rather than relying on “so-called voluntary contributions,” to enable the proper planning and operation of the LDCF and SCCF.

Rodriguez noted that these Funds, combined with the GEF's STAR resources, bring substantial resources to LDCs and SIDS



Ben Green, Council Member, UK

for combatting land degradation, desertification, and drought. He thanked Wallonia for its cumulative contributions of over EUR 25 million since 2015 and said this, with a contribution from Quebec, constitute a precedent for subnational contributions.

Geeta Batra, GEF IEO, briefly updated the Council on the LDCF/SCCF's Annual Evaluation Report and Program Evaluation, noting these will be submitted for the June 2025 Council and feed into OPS8 in a special section on adaptation.

Report of the 3rd GBFF Council

On Friday, Co-Chair Rodríguez opened the GBFF Council meeting. He announced the GBFF is fully established and operational and is already programming in key countries.

Rodríguez said 96% of the resources of the first tranche, totaling almost USD 202 million, has been approved for 40 projects.

He noted the GBFF has inspired evolution and improvements in the GEF itself, including in the project cycle streamlining process. Cautioning that six years remain for meeting the 2030 GBF targets, Rodríguez nevertheless noted the GBFF's potential as a "growing story of success," calling on everyone to "continue writing it together."

Addressing the GBFF Council, Astrid Schomaker, Executive Secretary, CBD, hailed the GEF's achievements in setting up the GBFF "super fast," getting projects out quickly, acting like an innovation trailblazer, and quickly approaching portfolio targets. She expressed appreciation for all donors to the Fund and hoped even more contributions would be made in 2025 so the second programming tranche can be opened. She also expressed hope that the private sector and philanthropies can be persuaded to join in. She urged all Council members to engage their country's CBD negotiators about the GBFF's achievements so that they go to the February 2025 resumed COP in Rome fully informed.

Rodríguez, with several Members, echoed the plea to engage with CBD focal points on the GBFF's achievements ahead of the Rome meeting. Rodríguez also noted that he has engaged extensively with the private sector and philanthropies about the GBFF, with most expressing a wish to see the Fund operational and programming before they get onboard.

Saying the GBFF still lacks modalities to give representatives of IPLCs, women, and youth a significant voice in the Fund, the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) called on the Secretariat to take meaningful steps to include youth in its work.

Co-Chair Badgie introduced the provisional agenda ([GEF/GBFF.03/01](#)), which was adopted without amendment.

Progress on Programming for the GBFF

On Friday, Co-Chair Badgie opened this agenda item. Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat, introduced the document ([GEF/GBFF.03/03](#)). She noted the first programming tranche which opened USD 211 million for programming, highlighting how during three selection rounds, a total of 40 proposals were selected from 127, for a total of USD 201.6 million. She highlighted that during the third selection round 18 projects were selected, of which four were from SIDS and seven from LDCs. She noted that during the third round, 24% of funds were programmed through UNDP.

Jurgis Sapijanskas, GEF Secretariat, emphasized the balance of submissions, with the exception of Europe and Central Asia. He



Jurgis Sapijanskas, GEF Secretariat

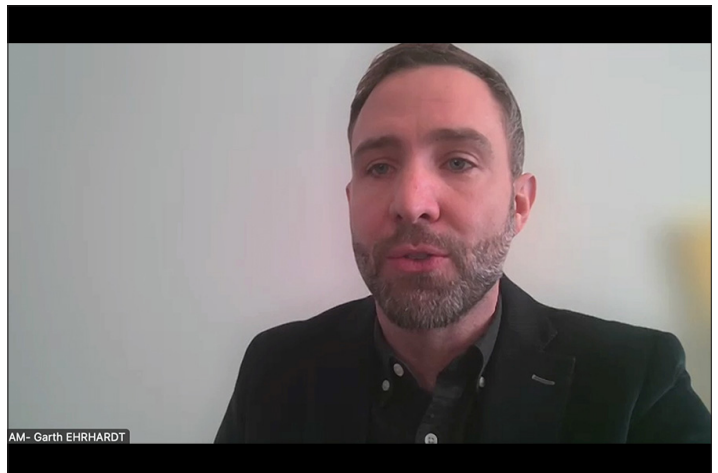
noted that UNDP requested 45% of funds allocated. He explained that the approved Project Preparation Grant requests from the three selection rounds target 36% of resources for SIDS and LDCs.

Sapijanskas highlighted that he expects most of the resource programming to go to Targets 1, 2, and 3 of the GBF. One Member welcomed the achievement of the 36% target for SIDS.

Noting that UNDP only has 25% of the GBFF resources, another Member suggested that perhaps the GBFF can be used to explore innovative ways to combat the longstanding concentration issue in the GEF.

One participant requested clarification at the June 2025 Council meeting on reasons for IFIs' low appetite for project submissions in the first round and more information on the GBFF's strategies to mobilize resources, especially through innovative mechanisms. Another noted the GBFF's current level of IFI programming is already higher than in the GEF portfolio, expressing hope of reaching the 25% target.

IPAG expressed appreciation for the efforts to make resources available to IPLCs for GBF implementation. Two Council Members asked for disaggregated data on IPLCs. A representative of philanthropic and conservation organizations stressed a human rights framework, governance, and knowledge ownership for IPLCs, calling for progress reports on this to facilitate decision making and coherence with CBD decisions. GYBN requested more information on the aspirational programming share of 20%



Garth Ehrhardt, Alternate Council Member, Canada



Emilie Wieben, Alternate Council Member, Denmark



Razan Nimir, GEF Secretariat

of the portfolio to support IPLC actions and on the criteria for youth to qualify for funding.

Several Members reiterated the importance of inviting the participation of the private sector and philanthropies. Noting Quebec's contribution to the GBFF, one Member urged outreach to other potential non-sovereign donors.

Several Members called for better communication from the Secretariat about the reasons projects are not approved.

One Member stressed that it was important to launch the second tranche as soon as possible, and urged countries in a position to do so to donate so this could happen. He added that at some point, perhaps during the GEF-9 negotiations, Council needs to discuss burden sharing between the GBFF and the GEF Trust Fund.

Responding to comments, Aoki:

- noted the Secretariat is working with countries toward meeting the portfolio level targets, including on IFI participation, and on striking a balance among Implementing Agencies;
- noted that support to IPLCs already exceeds the 20% target;
- emphasized efforts to direct more resources to SIDS and LDCs;
- encouraged non-sovereign contributors to contribute to the GBFF to make up the shortfall so the second tranche can move forward; and
- said the Secretariat will report on resource mobilization to the next GBFF Council.

Also responding to comments, Sapijanskas:

- emphasized that some projects were not selected because of resource availability;
- explained that data on financing flows to IPLCs is not currently disaggregated, but could be if project data requirements were changed— which would probably require a Council decision since it puts a greater monitoring and reporting burden on each project; and
- said the Secretariat hears “loud and clear” the complaint about better feedback on project proposals.

Decision: In its Decision GBFF 06/2024, the GBFF Council:

- welcomes the report by the Secretariat and takes note of the progress made in GBFF programming; and
- urges the relevant GEF Implementing Agencies to comply with the project cycle policy towards timely project development and implementation.

Progress Report on the Advisory Group(s) and Auxiliary Body

On Friday, Co-Chair Badgie opened this agenda item. Razan Nimir, GEF Secretariat, introduced the “Progress Report on the Advisory Group(s) and Auxiliary Body for the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund” ([GEF/GBFF.03/04](#)). She recalled that Decision GBFF 5/2024: adopted terms of reference (ToR) for the Advisory Group of Non-Sovereign Participants and the Auxiliary Body and requested the Secretariat to make provisions to establish the Advisory Group and the Auxiliary Body, and to report to the third GBFF Council on progress made on their establishment.

Nimir reviewed the comments received from Council constituencies on the composition of the Advisory Group and suggestions on the due diligence process for including non-contributing members. She then summarized the proposed modifications in the Group's ToR, noting:

- two new categories of additional non-contributing members, for which up to two persons may be selected for each category: sub-national or regional public institutions; and experts in resource mobilization for biodiversity and/or conservation finance;
- the Secretariat will assess the nominations, including information provided for due diligence, and present the recommended members for Council approval; and
- the first Advisory Group meeting may be organized prior to the fourth GBFF Council meeting in June 2025.

She also reported progress on the Auxiliary Body, noting 12 members have been selected. The Body held its first meeting, she explained, on 10 December 2024 and elected Co-Chairs.

The new Co-Chairs of the Auxiliary Body, Andrea Cruz Angón (Mexico) and Sino Tohirzoda (Tajikistan), addressed the Council, saying it now stands ready to advise the Council on any topic the Council requests.

Several Council Members supported expanding Advisory Group and agreed with the Secretariat about not duplicating existing bodies. A Member expressed his wish to see Advisory Group engage with CSOs. Another Member welcomed private sector participation in the Group.

A Member suggested the Group should have a manageable number of members. GYBN noted that the Advisory Group

should be open to observers, especially IPLCs. A Member suggested including non-contributing members in the Group.

Decision: In its Decision GBFF 07/2024, the GBFF Council approves the document and requests the Secretariat to:

- make provisions to implement the modifications to the ToR for the GBFF Advisory Group of Non-Sovereign Contributors; and
- report to the fourth GBFF Council on progress made on the Advisory Group and the Auxiliary Body.

Other Business

Batra reported on IEO work on a “formative evaluation” of the GBFF. She said, given the little evidence currently available on results, it focuses on strategies and processes, including complementarity and coherence, timeliness of flows into funds, and quality-at-entry of projects already approved. She said it will not feed into OPS8 but be presented to the Council in June 2025 and invited intersessional written comments.

Joint Summary of the GEF, LDCF/SCCF, and GBFF Council Co-Chairs and Closing of the GEF Council

On Friday, Council Secretary Hernández presented the joint summaries of the Co-Chairs of the 68th Council meeting, 37th meeting of the LDCF/SCCF Council, and third meeting of the GBFF Council paragraph by paragraph. The summaries were approved without amendment.

Rodríguez closed the Council by thanking everyone for their collaboration and consensus during the week’s meetings. Noting that 2025 will not be any easier than 2024, as the impacts of the planetary crisis will continue increasing and impacting those most vulnerable to their effects, he asked participants to imagine what could be achieved if there were more funding and requested everyone’s input on what the GEF needs to do to collectively to increase Members’ ambition and better serve the world.

The Co-Chairs closed the meeting at 11:34 a.m.

Upcoming Meetings

Second Resumed Session of the 2024 UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP 16): The resumed session of CBD COP 16, the 11th meeting of the COP serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and the fifth meeting of the COP serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization will meet to approve an integrated budget and consider draft decisions on: resource mobilization; the financial mechanism; and planning, monitoring, reporting, and review. **dates:** 25–27 February 2025 **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** www.cbd.int/

BBNJ Agreement Preparatory Commission: The Commission will meet to ensure the BBNJ Agreement is operational upon its entry into force. **dates:** 14-25 April 2025 (TBC) **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** www.un.org/bbnjagreement/en

Basel COP 17 Rotterdam COP12 and Stockholm COP12: The next Triple COP will address, *inter alia*, the listing of chemicals under the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, technical guidelines for the sound management of wastes under the Basel Convention, and technical and financial support for

implementation of the conventions. **dates:** 28 April - 9 May 2025 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** www.brsmeas.org/

UNFF20: The UN Forum on Forests will review progress in implementation of the UNSPF, progress in implementing mid-term review outcomes, UNFF20 inputs to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), and other international forest-related developments. **dates:** 5-9 May 2025 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** www.un.org/esa/forests/

69th meeting of the GEF Council: The Council, which meets twice annually, develops, adopts, and evaluates the operational policies and programs for GEF-financed activities. It also reviews and approves the work program (projects submitted for approval).

dates: 2-6 June 2025 **location:** Washington, DC, US **www:** www.thegef.org/events

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

Glossary

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CIF	Climate Investment Funds
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSO	Civil society organization
FCV	Fragile, conflict and violence-affected situations
GBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
GBFF	GBF Fund
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GYBN	Global Youth Biodiversity Network
ICI	Inclusive Conservation Initiative
IEO	GEF Independent Evaluation Office
IPAG	Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group
LDCs	Least developed countries
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund
MDB	Multilateral development bank
MEA	Multilateral environmental agreement
NGI	Mon-grant instrument
OFP	Operational Focal Point
PIF	Project Identification Form
PFD	Program Framework Document
POPs	persistent organic pollutants
RMF	Results Measurement Framework
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
SGP	Small Grants Programme
SIDS	Small island developing States
STAP	GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
STAR	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change