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Summary of the 69th Meeting of the GEF Council: 2-6 June 2025

From chemical and water pollution to climate change and biodiversity loss, a wide range of environmental challenges are placing the Earth under severe stress. These challenges require urgent action and, although key success factors include country ownership, stakeholder engagement, and well-designed interventions, an indisputable requirement for addressing global environmental challenges is access to finance. The primary function of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is to provide funding to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to support them in their efforts towards meeting international environmental goals. Through its “family” of trust funds, the GEF supports initiatives that address these challenges and promote sustainable development and environmental resilience. The Council for each trust fund is responsible for approving funding for projects and programs, reviewing evaluations of performance, and adopting budgets and programming directions.

In back-to-back meetings, the Councils of the GEF Trust Fund, Least Developed Countries Fund/Special Climate Change Fund (LDCF/SCCF), and Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF) convened from 2-6 June 2025. The three Councils approved Work Programs that total USD 256.13 million and are expected to mobilize over USD 3 billion in co-financing. The Work Programs include 21 projects and programs that will address environmental challenges related to: biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, and chemicals and waste. The approved projects and programs will also support transboundary cooperation in shared marine and freshwater ecosystems through the International Waters Focal Area.

The GEF Trust Fund Work Program amounts to USD 190.9 million and comprises 12 projects and two programs that will take place in 35 countries, 17 of which are least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS). Included in the newly adopted Work Program is the Global Elimination of Mercury in Non-Ferrous Metals Initiative (GEMINI) program, through which the GEF Trust Fund will support the goals of the Minamata Convention on Mercury using a multi-faceted strategy that combines policy reform, financial support, technical assistance, and knowledge sharing. The Elimination of Mercury-Added Skin Lightening Products in Africa project will support countries to scale up efforts to eliminate mercury from skin creams, targeting physical and online sales channels. The



Council Members during the opening of the meeting

Work Program also includes a Science-based Management of Biodiversity and Natural Resources project in Madagascar, which will introduce an outcome payment bond – the “Lemur” bond – to leverage capital markets to fund biodiversity conservation.

In addition, Council Members considered the Progress Report on the Implementation of the GEF Policy on Communication and Visibility, which highlights progress made in raising awareness about the GEF and its role in addressing global environmental challenges. During the discussion of this agenda item, GEF CEO, Chairperson, and Council Co-Chair Carlos Manuel Rodríguez emphasized the need to effectively communicate to both recipient and donor countries about the GEF’s work and the real impact it is making on the ground.

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The LDCF Work Program, adopted by the LDCF/SCCF Council, amounts to USD 39.55 million and includes national projects in Madagascar, Solomon Islands, and Uganda, as well as a regional program covering Chad and Mali. The projects and program will address climate change adaptation priorities in these five LDCs, including one LDC-SIDS (Solomon Islands).

In his remarks to the Council, Evans Njewa, LDC Group Chair, highlighted that the projects focus on innovation and whole-of-society approaches, but expressed concern about the gap between funding demand and supply, noting that seven technically-cleared proposals had to be deferred due to a lack of resources.

The second-ever GBFF Work Program amounts to USD 25.68 million and includes provisions to ensure that 30% of the funding will support efforts by Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs). The Program includes national projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Peru, and a regional project covering Cameroon, the Central African Republic, and the Republic of the Congo. These projects support commitments under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) and will promote sustainable biodiversity management and community wellbeing.

The Council also accepted the offer made by the Government of Uzbekistan to host the 8th GEF Assembly and 71st Council meeting, which will take place in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, during the week that begins on 31 May 2026.

At the conclusion of the five-day meeting, Council Members were generally pleased with the progress and evaluations of the programs and projects that are underway for the eighth replenishment period for the GEF Trust Fund (GEF-8). However, the June 2025 Council meetings took place in the shadow of the recently commenced negotiations for the ninth replenishment period, which many expect will be challenging due to shifting geopolitics and donor priorities. The negotiations are expected to conclude prior to the 8th GEF Assembly.

The Council meetings took place from 2-6 June 2025 in Washington DC, US. The meetings were preceded by an online consultation among civil society organizations (CSOs) and the GEF Council on 29 May 2025. In addition to representatives from Council Member countries, Implementing Agencies, and conventions for which the GEF serves as a financial mechanism, representatives from the GEF CSO Network, the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG), women, youth, and other civil society constituencies participated in the Councils' deliberations.

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, 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 change replaced 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 constituency of countries that, in general, aligns with 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 meets at the Ministerial level to review GEF policies, operations, and membership, and to consider amendments to the GEF Instrument.

The GEF is funded by donor countries, which commit money every four years through the GEF replenishment process. Since its creation in 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), USD 4.1 billion (GEF-7), and USD 5.33 billion (GEF-8).

The GEF administers the LDCF, SCCF, and GBFF. It also serves as a financial mechanism for several multilateral environmental agreements (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; Minamata Convention on Mercury; and Agreement under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement). In addition, the GEF's work focuses on sustainable forest management and international waters, among others. Funding from the Facility is channeled to recipient countries through 18 GEF Agencies.

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

GEF Consultation with Civil Society: Prior to the 69th Meeting of the GEF Council, over 200 participants gathered online for a discussion on the theme [Operationalizing the GEF Whole of Society Approach: Enhancing engagement and support to Civil Society in GEF-9](#). In addition to addressing the process leading towards GEF-9, participants discussed lessons learned and opportunities for mainstreaming whole-of-society and community-based approaches in GEF programming and implementation.

Report of the 69th Meeting of the GEF Council

GEF Council Secretary Noemi Hernández Rodríguez Borjas opened the 69th GEF Council Meeting on Monday, 2 June. In his opening remarks, GEF CEO, Chairperson, and Council Co-Chair Carlos Manuel Rodríguez stressed that progress on the intertwined and urgent challenges addressed by the GEF will be essential for achieving global objectives by 2030. He noted the need to understand the GEF's role in narrowing the financial gap and looked forward to discussions on the partnership with UNDP's [BIOFIN](#) initiative, through which the GEF is helping countries develop Biodiversity Finance Plans.

Rodríguez reported that GEF-8 is on track to achieve its targets, noting that, among other achievements, countries have accessed 75% of the resources, co-financing has exceeded agreed targets, and the time to obtain CEO endorsement has been reduced by six months. He called attention to current political challenges that are impacting aid, as well as the need to drive policy coherence and a whole-of-society approach across all levels of actors. He stressed the need to strengthen GEF focal points in their work with focal points from MEAs.

GEF Council Co-Chair for 2025, Richard Bontjer, Council Member from Australia, who represents the constituency of Australia, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea, noted the GEF's growing role in supporting Indigenous Peoples. He underscored efforts to make the GEF more accessible and streamlined, embrace innovation, and engage more with recipient countries at all levels.



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



Noemi Hernández Rodríguez Borja, GEF Council Secretary

GEF CEO, Chairperson, and Council Co-Chair Rodríguez introduced the provisional agenda ([GEF/C.69/01-Rev.2](#)). Council Members proposed adding the following items to the “other business” section: host for the next GEF Assembly; dates for the next meetings of the GEF Council; and welcoming two countries to the East Asia constituency. The agenda was adopted with these additions.

Work Program for the GEF Trust Fund

Fred Boltz, GEF Secretariat, presented the Sixth Work Program for the GEF Trust Fund ([GEF/C.69/02](#)). He explained that the Work Program comprises 14 projects and programs, amounts to USD 190.9 million, and is expected to mobilize USD 2.6 billion in co-financing. If approved, he reported it will bring total programming for the GEF-8 cycle to 75%.

Boltz highlighted that the Work Program covers all five focal areas, with resources to be allocated as follows: USD 55.6 million for Biodiversity, Climate Change and Land Degradation; USD 94.6 million for Chemicals and Waste; and USD 25.8 million for International Waters. He added that USD 9 million will go to the Non-Grant Instrument and USD 10 million to the Small Grants Programme (SGP).

Boltz called attention to: the “GEMINI” global program to eliminate mercury in non-ferrous metals in Chile, India, Mexico, Peru, South Africa, and Zambia; the regional project on transboundary cooperation and capacities for the management of the marine biodiversity of the Southwest Atlantic large marine ecosystems; and the “Lemur bond” multi-trust fund and multi-focal area project in Madagascar that aims to leverage capital markets as a source of funding for biodiversity conservation.

In the subsequent discussion, Council Members expressed support for the proposed Work Program, welcoming the distribution across focal areas and geographic regions. Several welcomed specific initiatives, including the GEMINI global program and the Africa regional program to eliminate mercury-added skin lightening products, and looked forward to their implementation. Council Members also highlighted GEF initiatives on pollution, climate protection, protection of international waters, innovative finance, and gender responsiveness.



Claude Gascon, GEF Secretariat

Some Members welcomed the high co-financing ratio but called for a clear and transparent methodology for calculating this ratio. The GEF CSO Network called for estimated environmental benefits of projects to better match the scale of resources allocated. They also highlighted that some project descriptions do not sufficiently elaborate on the stakeholder consultations undertaken.

Many Council Members expressed concern with the concentration of resources in certain Implementing Agencies and urged the GEF to diversify resource allocation among them. One Council Member expressed concern about projects being planned in a country that is not eligible for official development assistance. The GEF CSO Network called on more recipient countries to become donors.

An additional concern voiced by a Council Member related to the earmarking of GEF-8 resources for implementation of the Paris Agreement. A concern about the time available to allocate the remaining 25% of resources in GEF-8 was also raised, given that only one year is left in the cycle. One Member called for increased financing for the Pacific region.

Additional issues raised by Council Members included:

- the need for GEF-9 to maintain blended financing and support riskier projects in order to scale up financing;
- addressing the low involvement of multilateral development banks (MDBs), especially given they have the scale to expand finance;
- the value of the Work Program's microfinance initiatives, particularly the emphasis on prioritizing youth, women, and Indigenous Peoples;
- the need to promote gender equality, strengthen access to finance for women, and focus on capacity building;
- questions regarding the extent to which the Work Program benefits and engages with IPLCs; and
- concern about the lack of new projects or programs under the Innovation Work Program.

In response, Boltz highlighted that:

- the Secretariat is working to increase blended finance and participation of the private sector;
- the GEF intends to increase information sharing and targeted capacity building for focal points for GEF-9;

- GEF-9 policy directions address the definition of co-financing; and
- selection of the Implementing Agency is the prerogative of recipient countries.

Claude Gascon, GEF Secretariat, underlined that the Work Program contains benefits for IPLCs, including through specific microfinancing projects that put IPLCs as primary beneficiaries. He said outcome payment bonds are a new area for the GEF and noted the GEF's interest in taking a "guided approach" on this matter, to ensure returns go where conservation is being done.

Decision: In its Decision 04/2025, the Council approves the Work Program comprising 14 projects and programs, subject to comments made during the Council meeting and additional comments that may be submitted in writing to the Secretariat by 3 July 2025.

Total GEF resources approved in this Work Program amount to USD 190.9 million, including GEF project financing and Agency fees.

GEF Business Plan and Corporate Budget for FY26

Peter Lallas, GEF Secretariat, presented the GEF Business Plan and Corporate Budget for FY26 ([GEF/C.69/03](#)). He noted the budget reflects efficiencies and savings, and that its increase over the previous budget is below the level of inflation. Among other features of the budget, he highlighted that it does not include any new full-time equivalent positions (FTEs) and said negotiations with the World Bank on costs for office space and cost recovery concluded on favorable terms for the GEF budget.

During the discussion, Council Members thanked the Secretariat for its cost-conscious budget and appreciated the positive conclusion of the negotiations with the World Bank. Council Members asked about the increase in funding for STAP, called for a report on greening efforts for the office space to be delivered to the 71st Council meeting, and said the number and trends of FTEs should be reported regularly. Council Members supported funding for communication and visibility, noting taxpayers must be informed about the impact of the GEF's work, and called for funding support for focal points.

The GEF CSO Network supported planned work with women, youth, and IPLCs, and emphasized these groups should be included in decision making.



Faizal Parish, Chair, GEF CSO Network



Peter Lallas, GEF Secretariat

Responding to comments, Lallas highlighted that the Secretariat had convened events to evaluate how to green the office space and expressed willingness to submit a paper on these efforts. He said the GEF employs approximately 85 FTEs.

In response to a question about the increased budget line for the Trustee, the World Bank explained this budget provides for participation in three replenishment meetings, while FY25 only budgeted for involvement in one.

Decision: In Decision 05/2025, the Council takes note of the business plan and approves an FY26 corporate budget from the GEF Trust Fund of USD 45.306 million, comprised of: USD 36.069 million for the GEF Secretariat; USD 1.7 million for the GEF Secretariat for the Special Initiative to fund the Organization of the Eighth GEF Assembly; USD 3.140 million for STAP; and USD 4.397 million for the Trustee. Budgets for the Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund of USD 22,200, and Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT) from the CBIT Trust Fund of USD 0.310 million were also approved. Finally, the Council requests the Secretariat, in consultation with STAP and the Trustee, to present a combined FY27 corporate budget and business plan for discussion at its June 2026 meeting.

GEF-8 Midterm Review on Performance of Full Flexibility

Naiying Peng, GEF Secretariat, presented the document ([GEF/C.69/04](#)). She outlined that, as of the mid-point of GEF-8 in June 2024, full flexibility had been used but with a limited aggregate impact. She stated 23% of eligible countries have programmed their System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) resources for flexible use, with a net flow of USD 66 million, which represents only 3% of total STAR allocations. Peng emphasized the importance of full flexibility for SIDS, LDCs, and countries with smaller STAR allocations, and its significance in improving coherence and integration while reducing fragmentation in the country portfolio landscape.

Many Council Members expressed satisfaction with the full flexibility modality. The GEF CSO Network acknowledged its minimal aggregate impact but noted its use is likely to increase by the end of GEF-8. They highlighted that full flexibility

has helped enhance the level of resources allocated to land degradation.

Council Members also: stressed that full flexibility has helped strengthen country ownership, reduced transaction costs, and created space for innovation. They supported strengthening and retaining this modality in GEF-9, and called for a periodic review of the modality to continue to assess its effectiveness.

Responding to comments, Peng noted the landscape is continuing to evolve, and the GEF will continue to monitor the use of full flexibility. She outlined plans for a more comprehensive analysis.

Decision: In its Decision 06/2025, the Council welcomes the report and requests the GEF Secretariat to continue monitoring the use of full flexibility in GEF-8.

Progress Report on the Implementation of the GEF Policy on Communication and Visibility

Robert Bisset, GEF Secretariat, introduced the document ([GEF/C.69/Info.08](#)), highlighting progress made in raising awareness about the GEF's work and emphasizing the need to strengthen implementation of the Policy.

He said the GEF is finalizing new policy guidelines for GEF-9, covering four main areas: actions taken to disseminate the Policy; application and areas of progress made; compliance guidelines; and additional steps for GEF-9.

Bisset highlighted that strategic, aligned, and collaborative communication across the GEF Partnership is critical for implementing the Policy and promoting GEF activities. He noted that GEF Implementing Agencies play a vital role in this regard and mentioned the need for all GEF Agencies to have a global communications focal point. He highlighted that the GEF will continue to collaborate closely with Implementing Agencies and other partners at the global and regional levels, as well as increase support for strategic political communications at the country level.

GEF CEO, Chairperson, and Council Co-Chair Rodríguez noted that communications must tell the story of what the GEF does with respect to both the Global South and the Global North. Emphasizing that communications activities and staff are included in each project, he said plans are underway to create networks that will link these communications staff to the GEF



Naiying Peng, GEF Secretariat

Secretariat. He added that the Secretariat will engage with Council Members for communications within their own countries.

Council Members supported the effort to raise the GEF's visibility in both donor and recipient countries. They suggested developing communications that link projects with the global agreements they contribute to and increasing budget allocations for communications in projects.

IPAG called for additional training for IPLCs on video production and podcasting. The GEF CSO Network proposed that visibility efforts should highlight the importance of the whole-of-society approach and the role that women, youth, and IPLCs can play. They suggested including guidance to support CSOs in outreach and using new media tools to reach broader audiences.

Strengthening the GEF Partnership: Options for Agency Expansion

Jonathan Caldicott, GEF Secretariat, presented the document ([GEF/C.69/05-Rev.1](#)). He reviewed several options for adding a limited number of additional Implementing Agencies to the GEF Partnership, on the basis of an analysis of Implementing Agency regional coverage, particularly for LDCs and SIDS.

Caldicott outlined a proposal containing two pathways for adding two to three additional Implementing Agencies:

- A standard process expected to last around 10-16 months, that comprises: screening of potential Agencies; targeted invitations for expressions of interest; an independent panel assessment; Council approval; and legal and operational arrangements with the Trustee; and
- A fast-track process expected to last 8-12 months, with an expedited assessment stage for entities that are already accredited by both the Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund.

He highlighted that the timeline would depend on GEF-9 negotiations, but added that a gap analysis can commence immediately after this Council meeting.

In the ensuing discussion, Council Members welcomed the options for agency expansion. Several Members raised concerns about Agency concentration and urged encouraging recipient countries to work with agencies other than traditional ones.

Some Members questioned the rationale for limiting the number of new Agencies to three. Some also emphasized that



Jonathan Caldicott, GEF Secretariat



Ben Green, Council Member, UK

new agencies should engage with IPLCs and encouraged deeper involvement from existing Agencies, with IPAG proposing that Indigenous Peoples be included as part of the expansion. Another Member emphasized the importance of engaging with the private sector, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and underscored that stakeholder engagement should remain a top priority.

Council Members also: supported direct access for developing countries, including the recognition of local institutions accredited by other climate funds; emphasized that new agencies should address gaps beyond the climate focal area and be able to collaborate with both public and non-public sectors; and highlighted the administrative challenge in handling more agencies and complex accreditation processes.

Responding to comments, Caldicott said the GEF will look at what can be done beyond SIDS and LDCs, for example, in enhancing civil society engagement. Concerning the question of direct access, he explained the GEF's limitations regarding the actual legal structure and operational arrangements.

Decision: In its Decision 07/2025, the Council decides to: request the Secretariat to prepare for the adoption of a targeted expansion approach in GEF-9, to potentially add up to three additional agencies, with a focus on LDCs and SIDS; agree on the minimum eligibility criteria for Stage 1 of the expansion process; and request the Secretariat to conduct a gap analysis of fiduciary standards, environmental and social safeguards, gender mainstreaming policies, and stakeholder engagement across the GEF, Green Climate Fund, and Adaptation Fund to assess the feasibility of a fast-track approach.

Based on the findings, the Secretariat is asked to propose expansion procedures for consideration at the 71st Council Meeting in June 2026.

Relations with Conventions and Other International Institutions

On Tuesday, 3 June, GEF CEO, Chairperson and Council Co-Chair Rodríguez opened the conversation with representatives from MEAs by welcoming the leaders to a talk-show style format he called "Executive Secretaries Series: Season 1." Rodríguez first asked each representative to discuss the outcomes from their



(L-R): **Ivonne Higuero**, Secretary-General, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); **Rolph Payet**, Executive Secretary, Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions; **Carlos Manuel Rodríguez**, CEO and Chairperson, GEF; **Monika Stankiewicz**, Executive Secretary, Minamata Convention on Mercury; and **Yibin Xiang**, CBD Secretariat

recent sessions of conferences of the parties (COPs) that are relevant to the GEF-9 discussions.

Executive Secretary of the BRS Conventions Rolph Payet emphasized that the May BRS COPs demonstrated that multilateralism is strong and active, and the Conventions are operating at a global level, with significant impacts on supply chains, SMEs, and other national-level actors. He highlighted that five MEA Executive Secretaries gathered at the BRS COPs and discussed interlinkages among them.

Louise Baker, UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Secretariat, noted the possibility of leveraging financing pledges to address drought, which were announced during COP 16. She highlighted that UNCCD COP 17 in 2026 will focus on rangelands, livestock, and their social and economic benefits, among other topics.

UNFCCC Executive Secretary Simon Stiell agreed with Payet that “multilateralism is still alive,” although he noted “difficult headwinds” during COP 29, with finance negotiations being the most contentious in Baku. He said the Standing Committee on Finance is examining lessons from the achievement of the USD 100 billion goal to inform efforts to deliver USD 300 billion and scale up to USD 1.3 trillion. He highlighted the value of coordination among funding mechanisms and outlined expectations for UNFCCC COP 30 in November 2025 in Brazil, including finalizing the Global Goal on Adaptation and its indicators and reviewing parties’ third Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Yibin Xiang, CBD Secretariat, said CBD COP 16 will be remembered for the high-level pledging conference orchestrated by the GEF team for the GBFF. He noted that COP 16.2 delivered a monitoring framework that will be used by both the CBD and the GEF.

Minamata Convention Executive Secretary Monika Stankiewicz highlighted that the GEF Secretariat has insight into multiple MEAs, which she said is unique among funding mechanisms. She underscored the value of GEF programming and engagement with countries in support of the 2025 phase-out of certain uses of mercury.

Vladimir Jares, Director, UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, reported on the status of ratifications for the BBNJ Agreement, with 28 submitted to date and more expected to be announced during the UN Ocean Conference, taking place in Nice, France. He noted the importance of the first COP to determine the Agreement’s trajectory.

Ivonne Higuero, CITES Secretary-General, explained that although CITES is not served by the GEF, it still benefits from GEF-funded projects. She mentioned the GEF Global Wildlife Program, which contains elements relevant to CITES implementation, and called for GEF-9 to focus on integration and projects with co-benefits for multiple multilateral agreements.

In response to a question about lessons from GEF-8 and improvements they would like to see in GEF-9, Payet highlighted that the Global Elimination Programme for Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) combines USD 43.8 million in GEF grant funding with USD 163 million in partner co-financing. Urging GEF-9 to focus on strategic planning to stimulate private sector investment, he noted the PCB programme addresses multiple problems by eliminating dangerous chemicals and facilitating the clean energy transition.

Baker identified an action-oriented approach in GEF-8 and called for GEF-9 to target the most vulnerable, ensure a balanced representation of drought and land issues in thematic allocations, continue supporting innovative financing mechanisms,

particularly blended finance, and support a more programmatic approach to enabling activities.

Jares highlighted the GEF's support to the BBNJ Agreement ratification process and stressed that GEF-9 should continue to enhance the GEF's teamwork.

Stankiewicz highlighted the projects in the Work Program approved by the 69th Council Meeting to address mercury pollution. She pointed to GEF-9 as critical for the Minamata Convention, noting key 2032 deadlines.

Xiang identified GEF-8's proactive approach in anticipating issues and providing solutions in advance, and called for the GEF to focus on financing plans for National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.

Higuero urged the GEF to work with governments and the private sector to ensure protected areas are not just "paper parks." She also called for collaboration with sectors, such as agriculture, infrastructure, and transport, to integrate species conservation into the broader economic landscape.

In the subsequent discussion, several Council Members welcomed the GEF's cooperation with conventions and other international institutions and urged the GEF to continue reinforcing synergies and coherence. Council Members also called for more guidance from MEAs to the GEF, and greater participation of IPLCs in the convention processes. They highlighted the value of the GEF's perspective across MEAs and suggested mapping the integration of MEAs from COP decisions to implementation on the ground.

Council Members also highlighted the importance of bringing in the private sector for more long-term results; praised the GEF's efforts to consider drought as a global challenge, especially while fostering international cooperation with southern African countries; welcomed the GEF's initiatives on chemicals and waste; highlighted the GEF's important role in supporting a future convention on plastic pollution; noted the large impact of addressing land degradation; and stressed the importance of exploring cooperation with CITES.

The GEF CSO Network highlighted UNFCCC and UNCCD COP decisions to ensure that Indigenous Peoples can engage meaningfully in their programs and stressed the importance



Maria Leichner, CSO Network

of transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in GEF governance.

In concluding remarks, Baker noted the value of large-scale, multisectoral restoration programs. She said the UNCCD is exploring options to use technology to streamline reporting.

Xiang explained that, while Conventions provide guidance to the financial mechanism, it would be useful to receive feedback from the GEF on the issued guidance, including when there are challenges in operationalizing it.

Stankiewicz said the KMGBF lacks indicators for chemicals and looked forward to collaborating on KMGBF Target 7 (Reduce pollution to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity). Higuero noted the need for sustainable financing mechanisms, especially in cases such as CITES.

Jares stressed that the BBNJ's current needs are to ratify the Agreement and plan for implementation. Payet looked forward to engaging on KMGBF Target 7 as well as other targets. He also noted that the BRS Conventions have a mandate to take biodiversity and climate change co-benefits into account.

Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat, said the Secretariat is considering how to incorporate monitoring and tracking in the GEF-9 results framework. She explained that MEA secretariats review projects to ensure they align with their mandates, and that the GEF will attend the next round of plastics negotiations.

Decision: In its Decision 08/2025, the Council requests the GEF network to continue to work with recipient countries to reflect their guidance and national priorities in their GEF programming and activities.

GEF Investments and Resource Mobilization: The Case of the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN)

Onno van den Heuvel, Head of the Biodiversity Finance Portfolio, UNDP, described BIOFIN's work in supporting countries in developing and implementing strategies for biodiversity finance. He explained that the Initiative works by: undertaking baseline measurements to help countries identify and quantify their biodiversity finance needs and analyze existing expenditures; and then identifying opportunities to mobilize additional resources to close the financial gap.



Yoko Yamoto, Council Member, Japan



Onno van den Heuvel, Head of the Biodiversity Finance Portfolio, UNDP

Van den Heuvel further highlighted GEF support for the design and implementation of biodiversity finance plans in 91 countries. He provided examples of some of BIOFIN's success stories, including raising USD 150 million in Zambia through corporate green bonds, greening the agriculture credit system in Colombia, and providing green credits for SMEs in Ecuador.

In the ensuing discussion, several Council Members praised BIOFIN's contributions in addressing the challenges of financing biodiversity and supported the GEF in continuing to work with BIOFIN. Council Members also: stressed the need to fundraise and mobilize resources from all sectors, including the private sector; suggested BIOFIN could serve as a model to address plastic pollution; inquired how BIOFIN's innovative solutions could be scaled up; and stressed the opportunity for GEF-9 to close the biodiversity finance gap.

Responding to comments, Van den Heuvel recognized the need for BIOFIN to provide more guidance, in a more systemic way, to ensure "no synergies remain unexplored with the GEF" and highlighted the need to use a "portfolio approach" and enhance coordination with stakeholders. He also acknowledged the need to increase the visibility of GEF support for BIOFIN and requested guidance on how to improve it in the future.

GEF IEO's Annual Performance Report 2025

Richard Bontjer, GEF Council Co-Chair for 2025, opened the discussion on the IEO's Annual Performance Report 2025 ([GEF/E/C.69/01](#)). Geeta Batra, Director, IEO, highlighted key findings in the report, including that sustainability ratings for GEF projects have shown improvement over time, with country context being a key factor in these ratings. She said behavior change is important for achieving sustainability and reported that 50% of completed and active projects incorporated explicit behavior change. In addition, she noted: 62% of projects had interventions sustained, mainstreamed, replicated, or scaled up at the end of the project; 63% of completed GEF-6 projects fully met or exceeded co-financing objectives; and terminal evaluations are available for 89% of projects from GEF-5 onwards. She highlighted the report's recommendation that terminal evaluations be submitted in a timely manner.

During the discussion, Council Members requested additional information on why planned co-financing has not materialized and why some Implementing Agencies have been slow in submitting terminal evaluations. Council Members highlighted the value of the data provided by the IEO for GEF-9 programming decisions and emphasized the need to evaluate the complementarity and synergies with climate funds. They also encouraged the IEO to consider how to tell the story of quality examples of projects on the ground; noted limited co-financing commitments for projects in Africa; and encouraged embedding behavior change into project designs.

The GEF CSO Network emphasized the critical role of stakeholder engagement in project implementation, and suggested prioritizing long-term partnerships with actors at the local level.

Batra responded that the quality of co-financing is the most important aspect, while establishing realistic expectations for co-financing is also important. She highlighted that the GEF has 30 years of data to support work within other climate funds to evaluate lessons for how to implement climate projects. Bontjer noted the interlinkages between risk appetite and satisfactory ratings, the latter of which might decrease if risk appetite increases.

Decision: The Council takes note of the IEO Annual Performance Report 2025 and encourages Agencies to complete and submit terminal evaluations within the timeline specified in the terminal evaluation guidelines.

Evaluation of International Waters Focal Area, Socioeconomic Co-Benefits of GEF Funded Interventions, and Management Responses

International Waters Focal Area Evaluation and Management Responses: Mitsuaki Hirai, GEF IEO, presented the Evaluation of the International Waters Focal Area ([GEF/E/C.69/02](#)). He highlighted the Focal Area's successes, including that approximately 86% of recent projects received a satisfactory rating for outcomes and 73% for sustainability, both of which are higher than GEF averages. He also outlined challenges, such as the difficulty in balancing time efficiency with adequate stakeholder engagement and country ownership of projects.

He said the IEO's recommendations include calling on the GEF to:



Geeta Batra, Director, GEF IEO, and Mitsuaki Hirai, GEF IEO



Andrew Hume, GEF Secretariat



Fabrizio Felloni, GEF IEO

- continue assessing new international waters projects to ensure the core mandate of transboundary cooperation remains central to all investments;
- support stakeholder training on innovative financing models and promote the development of comprehensive sustainability plans early in the project cycle; and
- establish guidance for Agencies and national partners to enhance monitoring of the effectiveness of transboundary cooperation arrangements and relevant socioeconomic co-benefits.

Andrew Hume, GEF Secretariat, presented the Management Response ([GEF/C.69/07](#)), highlighting, *inter alia*, that the Secretariat has started taking steps to provide stakeholder training on innovative financing and will increase attention to blended finance and capacity building in the GEF-9 cycle.

GEF CEO, Chairperson, and Council Co-Chair Rodríguez highlighted the GEF's approval of USD 15.6 million for the "Beyond 30x30: Ensuring Resilience in the Eastern Tropical Pacific through Greater Cross-Border Cooperation" initiative, which aims to improve the resilience of the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor. He also emphasized the need to increase the visibility of this funded project.

Evaluation of Socioeconomic Co-Benefits of GEF-Funded Interventions and Management Response: Fabrizio Felloni, GEF IEO, presented the Evaluation of Socioeconomic Co-Benefits of GEF-Funded Interventions ([GEF/E/C.69/03](#)). He highlighted achievements, including a positive correlation between the presence of GEF-funded projects and positive co-benefits beyond environmental benefits, with the most common being improvements in human and social capital. He also identified economic co-benefits, including increased agricultural productivity and diversified income sources.

Felloni highlighted challenges, including limited exchanges between GEF-funded projects within the same country and with other projects.

He noted the IEO's recommendations include calls for the GEF Secretariat to:

- set clear standards requiring project proposals to explicitly set out expected co-benefits within the project's theory of change;

- empower and require the country operational focal points to convene regular exchanges with GEF Agencies, Executing Agencies, and other partners; and
- provide guidance on co-benefit indicators and methods to Agencies and Partners, and track and report on the follow-up done by projects and Agencies.

Caldicott presented the Management Response ([GEF/C.69/08](#)), noting the Evaluation aligns with GEF's long-term vision for a "Healthy Planet, Healthy People," and reinforces the GEF's whole-of-society engagement in pursuit of global environmental outcomes, ensuring that people are the center of action.

He stressed the GEF will refine the review process for GEF-9, continue to require certification, and ensure potential negative impacts are mitigated. He noted the GEF will further empower operational focal points (OFPs), including through training initiatives, and equipping OFPs to align with the GEF's broader focus on a whole-of-government approach. Finally, he highlighted the need to strengthen the tracking of socioeconomic co-benefits during project implementation and upon completion, making them more visible, and exploring the potential use of innovative tools, such as geospatial analyses linked to population data.

Evaluation of GEF Support for Nature-Based Solutions and Management Response: Geeta Batra, Director, GEF IEO, introduced the Evaluation of the GEF Support for Nature-based Solutions (NbS) ([GEF/E/C.69/04](#)), noting it was the first evaluation to use geospatial analyses. The Evaluation was presented in a video showing on-the-ground examples of NbS-aligned GEF-funded projects.

Batra introduced the evaluation's recommendations calling for the GEF to:

- develop NbS-specific guidance for integration, tracking, and adaptive management;
- scale private sector engagement through blended finance for NbS;
- support countries in implementing NbS through inclusive capacity-building efforts, with a strong emphasis on fostering policy coherence; and
- strengthen the evidence base on cost-effectiveness and co-benefits of NbS approaches, including by enhancing the integration of Indigenous and local knowledge systems.



Jurgis Sapijanskas, GEF Secretariat

Jurgis Sapijanskas, GEF Secretariat, presented the Management Response ([GEF/ C.69/09](#)), noting NbS are crucial to the GEF’s mission of delivering global environmental benefits through synergistic, multi-objective investments. He welcomed the recommendations, stating they align with GEF actions, and underlined NbS as a “cross-cutting priority.” He emphasized the Secretariat will incorporate guidance on NbS within GEF-9 and the importance of scaling private sector engagement through blended finance for NbS.

Discussion of Evaluations and Responses: During a discussion of the three IEO evaluations and Management Responses, Council Members supported the recommendations made. Several Council Members noted, in particular, the recommendations to enhance monitoring of social-economic benefits and include guidance on NbS in the GEF-9 cycle.

Council Members also said GEF financing programs for transboundary water management should comply with multilateral and other agreements between countries; suggested conducting midterm reviews to enhance frameworks for scaling up; highlighted the importance of monitoring socio-economic benefits and called for developing specific guidance on monitoring them; and inquired how the GEF will enhance the integration of Indigenous and local knowledge systems.

The GEF CSO Network highlighted: the critical role of international waters investments; the importance of tracking progress and fostering innovation; the importance of prioritizing a participatory monitoring approach; and the need to create more entry points for youth participation. The Network suggested including climate education to improve project sustainability, and called for more participatory methods and documenting more Indigenous knowledge.

Council Members noted the need for continuous training and rebuilding institutional memory given the high turnover in focal points, and welcomed efforts to build national capacities and provide training on innovative financing models. They suggested considering ecosystems when delivering water programs, developing partnerships with the private sector, pursuing gender mainstreaming, and incorporating sustainability in project design. They noted long-term sustainability is a challenge for NbS projects and suggested considering “nature-negative results” drivers alongside nature-positive influences.

IPAG emphasized the importance of using disaggregated data in future evaluations and recognizing ancestral waters.

The Secretariat encouraged conducting cost-effective assessments for NbS projects when possible and noted that participatory monitoring brings value to the evaluation framework. The Secretariat emphasized the positive examples of engaging with the private sector in the International Waters Focal Area, such as through using fishery certificates.

Batra underlined the forthcoming evaluation on the inclusion of marginalized groups will address some of the concerns raised by the IPAG.

Decisions: Decisions for these three Evaluations and Management Responses were adopted as drafted. In the Council’s Decision 09/2025, on International Waters, Decision 10/2025, on Socioeconomic Co-Benefits, and Decision 11/2025, on GEF Support for NbS, the Council takes note of the related evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.

FY26 Work Program and Budget of the Independent Evaluation Office

Batra introduced the FY26 Work Program and Budget of the Independent Evaluation Office ([GEF/E/C.69/05](#)) and the GEF Management Action Record 2025 ([GEF/E/C.69/Inf.01](#)). On the Management Action Record, she presented the assessment of progress in implementing action plans to address the IEO’s recommendations, outlining, for instance, that management has fully addressed 95% of the IEO’s recommendations and partially addressed the remaining 5%.

Batra also presented the IEO budget for FY26, noting the budget is 11% lower than in the FY25 budget.

In the ensuing discussion, one Council Member called for the GEF Secretariat to include time frames for implementing IEO recommendations. Another suggested the content of IEO evaluations should be included in GEF-9 negotiations and urged the IEO to ensure ongoing evaluations adhere to GEF-9’s timeframe. The GEF CSO Network highlighted that the ongoing SGP Evaluation will generate additional lessons that can be used to improve the SGP in the coming years. They called for doubling SGP resources, stressing the program’s importance to civil society.



(L-R): Geeta Batra, Jeneen Reyes Garcia, and Neeraj Negi, GEF IEO



Rebecca Niezen, Canada

Decision: In its Decision 12/2025, the Council acknowledges the progress made by the GEF IEO in the reporting period, and approves the annual IEO budget for FY26 for a total of USD 7.891 million, which includes the 11% indirect overhead charge in accordance with the decision made by the GEF Council at its 64th Session in June 2023.

Draft Amendments to the Memorandum of Understanding between the UNFCCC COP and the GEF Council

Filippo Berardi, GEF Secretariat, presented the document ([GEF/C.69/10](#)), noting that UNFCCC COP 29 decided to request the modification of the MoU for GEF Council approval, changing how often the COP communicates policy guidance to the GEF.

During the discussion, several Council Members supported the proposed modification, noting expected efficiencies, while others expressed concern that the amendment might weaken institutional communications. Council Members also stressed the need to assess the implications of the changes and emphasized the importance of clearly defined responsibilities, accountability, and transparency. Berardi informed Council Members that the adjustments pertain to the guidance provided from the COP to the GEF and said the reporting and information provision would remain transparent.

Decision: In its Decision 13/2025, the Council: approves the draft amendments, as reflected in the Amended Memorandum of Understanding between the COP to the UNFCCC and the GEF Council; and requests the GEF Secretariat to transmit its approval to the COP.

Report of the Chairperson of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP)

In her report to the GEF ([GEF/STAP/C.69/Inf.01](#)), STAP Chair Rosina Bierbaum reviewed new science, recent STAP activities, key messages from recent STAP reports, and STAP's observations on the GEF Work Program.

On new science, Bierbaum noted that the WMO's [State of the Global Climate 2024](#) found ocean temperatures have reached record levels, sea-level rise reached a record high in 2024, and rising atmospheric CO₂ concentrations are leading to cascading effects and high-impact events. She reviewed other climate

research findings, including that Venezuela has just become the second nation to lose all its glaciers, clownfish are shrinking to cope with increasing heat waves, and, in 2024, forest fires were the biggest cause of tropical forest loss for the first time ever. She also noted research highlighting that plastic pollution is not just a waste management issue, but requires a lifecycle and integrated approach linking climate change, biodiversity, and natural resource management.

Bierbaum reviewed recent consultations with Indigenous Peoples to inform a STAP information note on strengthening GEF support for Indigenous Peoples, as well as training Implementing Agencies to develop systems-based theory of change and clarify risks.

Recent STAP reports, she explained, include a collaboration between STAP and the IEO in support of the GEF's vision on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning. She highlighted the following takeaways: learning is strategic and necessary, including for lessons and failures; theories of change must be a tool and process to support monitoring and learning over time, given that lasting environmental outcomes may only appear after midterm reviews or later; and scaling learning is essential for transformation. A report on reinforcing Indigenous rights and control of Free, Prior and Informed Consent processes and protocols highlights that the incorporation of culturally sensitive safeguards improves project performance and fit-for-purpose finance can enable Indigenous Peoples to move from vision to implementation. She also discussed a review of source-to-sea approaches in the GEF, which reveals the value of holistic management in order to improve the overall outcomes for the system.

On the Work Program, Bierbaum reported STAP's observation that there is a good trend in systems thinking and good initial theories of change in projects. She said areas of improvement include: differentiating between the project design risk and residual risk; imagining interactions among drivers for possible futures and the project; and more robust knowledge management and learning.

She highlighted future STAP work possibilities include: a review of science and tools to guide the design of transformative projects; community cohesion foundations of resilience;



Rosina Bierbaum, STAP Chair



Dawda Badgie, Council Member, The Gambia

addressing barriers to transformative changes in chemicals and waste; cooperative management of shared water resources; continued consultations with the GEF on blended finance; leveraging emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence; and additional trainings on future narratives, risk, and theories of change.

In the subsequent discussion, Council Members suggested that STAP consider researching freshwater estuaries, the impact of plastic waste recycling, and lead in spices.

IPAG supported the STAP's recommendation to adopt a variety of approaches to support Indigenous Peoples and suggested dedicated direct funding, such as through the Inclusive Conservation Initiative and others. The GEF CSO Network urged strengthening the SGP, noting the need to expand access to direct, long-term, and flexible finance to empower Indigenous Peoples and civil society to implement action on the ground. Several Council Members underscored the importance of blended finance.

Council Members also lamented that while 50% of projects identify Indigenous Peoples as primary project beneficiaries, only 15% of projects involve them in project design and governance; underlined the need for local ownership and agency for achieving long-term impact; and called for the STAP's role to be reviewed in GEF-9 to ensure the Panel's reports remain relevant.



Laura Rajaniemi, Council Member, Finland

A Council Member highlighted the need for the GEF to work with all local communities and not privilege some over others. Another Council Member expressed support for the use of science-based information and looked forward to effectively using STAP in GEF-9.

Responding to the comments, Bierbaum acknowledged the importance of long-term adaptive learning and flexibility.

Gascon emphasized that the source-to-sea concept is the backbone of GEF-8's Clean and Healthy Ocean Integrated Program and features prominently in the GEF-9 International Waters strategy. Regarding Indigenous Peoples, he said a strong case will be made for increasing funding through the Inclusive Conservation Initiative, Fonseca Leadership Program, or SGP.

Policy Amendments to Streamline the GEF Project Cycle

Jonathan Caldicott, GEF Secretariat, introduced the document ([GEF/C.69/12](#)), noting these changes aim to, *inter alia*, strengthen the quality of project development and implementation, enhance reporting mechanisms, and bring clarity to the criteria for dual implementation and execution roles.

Council Members welcomed the amendments and highlighted they are essential for improving time and cost efficiency, noting these efforts should continue throughout GEF-9. However, several Council Members raised concerns regarding how these changes will impact transparency and participation, especially in countries with limited resources.

Council Members also expressed concerns about conflicts of interest in Agencies carrying out implementation and execution roles. While some Council Members supported the dual role of Agencies in specific instances, particularly in countries with limited resources, others underscored that it should be maintained as an exception rather than a default modality. Many insisted on the importance of local executing agencies for ownership and capacity building.

One Council Member suggested including new exceptions based on a "cost-benefit analysis," as it may be more advantageous for the Implementing Agency to also assume the role of execution, especially in developing countries, reducing execution timelines and avoiding costs.

Another Member highlighted the integrity risk in Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations, called for more efforts to manage this risk, and suggested introducing a transition period, including a pilot phase, for gradual adaptation to the new changes.

The GEF CSO Network welcomed the amendments and urged consultations with CSOs regarding time extensions. They encouraged making Project Implementation Reports public to allow for proper review and feedback, and raised concern that the streamlining measures would reduce CSO and IPLC engagement in GEF projects and programs.

Responding to Member's comments, Caldicott underlined that:

- regarding the dual implementation and execution roles, the objective is to increase certainty about the exceptions criteria, but case-by-case reviews will be maintained, and guidelines on the application of the exceptions will be prepared and shared with all stakeholders; and
- the 8-12-week deadline will not be an automatic cancellation, but rather a notification and further extending that period is a possibility.

Decision: In its Decision 16/2025, the Council approves the proposed amendments to the Project and Program Cycle Policy (OP/PL/01), the Project Cancellation Policy (OP/PL/02), the Policy on Minimum Fiduciary Standards (GA/PL/02), the Fee Policy for GEF Partner Agencies (FI/PL/03), and the Policy on Monitoring (GEF/C.56/03/Rev.01). The updated policies will be effective from 1 July 2025, and will remain in effect until amended or superseded by the Council.

Other Business

As agreed when the agenda was adopted on 2 June, Council Members considered three items under the agenda item for “other business.”

Change of Constituency: The Council Member from the East Asia constituency informed the Council that the constituency had welcomed Indonesia and the Philippines to join them. The Council Member from the Pacific Island constituency noted that her constituency looked forward to continued collaboration with these two countries which had previously been in their constituency.

Decision: In its Decision 17/2025, the Council welcomes the decision of the Constituency of Cambodia, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam to include Indonesia and the Philippines in their constituency.

Offer of the Government of Uzbekistan to Host the Eighth GEF Assembly: Abdulkhakimov Aziz Abdulkaxarovich, Minister of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change, Uzbekistan, announced his government’s offer to host the eighth GEF Assembly in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. He reviewed key elements of Uzbekistan’s national environmental policy, including the State Program for Implementation of the Strategy “Uzbekistan 2030” and its goal of achieving a green energy share of 54%. He reported that the country has a well-developed tourism infrastructure and has recently hosted meetings of the UNCCD and the Convention on Migratory Species. He underscore the aim to enhance regional cooperation through



The GEF Council accepted the offer presented by Abdulkhakimov Aziz Abdulkaxarovich, Minister of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change, Uzbekistan, to host the eighth meeting of the GEF Assembly in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

GEF-9. Council Members adopted a decision on this invitation by unanimous applause.

Decision: In its Decision 18/2025, the Council accepts the offer of the Government of Uzbekistan to host the Eighth GEF Assembly and the 71st GEF Council Meeting during the week commencing 31 May 2026 in Samarkand.

Dates for the 71st and 72nd Council Meetings: The Council agreed to convene the 71st meeting the week of 31 May 2026, back-to-back with the Eighth GEF Assembly, and to hold the 72nd Council meeting during the week of 14 December 2026.

Decision: In its Decision 19/2025, the Council decides to hold its 71st meeting back-to-back with the Eighth GEF Assembly the week commencing 31 May 2026 in Uzbekistan in a hybrid format; and the 72nd meeting the week of 14 December 2026 in a virtual modality.

Closing of GEF Council Meeting

GEF CEO, Chairperson, and Council Co-Chair Carlos Manuel Rodríguez closed the 69th GEF Council meeting at 3:07 pm on Wednesday, 4 June 2025.

Report of the LDCF/SCCF Meeting

GEF CEO, Chairperson, and Council Co-Chair Carlos Manuel Rodríguez opened the 38th LDCF/SCCF Council Meeting on Wednesday, 4 June 2025, and thanked Council Members for their commitment to these two funds. He noted LDCs and SIDS are the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change and face the greatest challenges, but highlighted that they are building their resilience with nature-positive solutions. He said GEF funding is catalytic and strategic and is linking adaptation to energy access, gender equality, and early warning systems.

Evans Njewa, Chair of the LDC Group, highlighted that the projects in the Work Program focus on innovation and whole-of-society approaches, including job creation and support to fragile and conflict-affected areas. He expressed deep concern with the gap between the demand and supply of LDCF/SCCF funding, stating that seven technically cleared proposals are not in the Work Program because there were not enough funds. He said the LDC Group is committed to ensuring a GEF-9 strategy that provides agile, targeted, grant-based support to LDCs and SIDS, and encouraged Council Members to reaffirm their commitment to the LDCF and SCCF as “life lines” for LDCs and SIDS.

Co-Chair of the GEF Council for 2025, Richard Bontjer, said the GEF Partnership needs to scale up its work on adaptation through coordinated action and highlighted the whole-of-society approach of the projects in the Work Program.



LDC Group Chair **Evans Njewa** at the 38th LDCF/SCCF Council Meeting

Rodríguez invited the LDCF/SCCF Council to consider the draft agenda ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.38/01](#)), which was adopted as drafted.

Work Program for the LDCF and SCCF

Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat, introduced the Work Program ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.38/02](#)) and highlighted that it requests a total of USD 39.55 million to support national projects in Madagascar, Solomon Islands, and Uganda, and a regional program covering Chad and Mali. She said the Madagascar project is a multi-Trust Fund project that jointly programs the LDCF and GEF Trust Fund resources. Aoki clarified that the Work Program does not include SCCF projects, as the Secretariat did not receive any concept notes for SCCF support. She reported that although 11 projects and programs submitted for inclusion in the LDCF Work Program were technically cleared, seven had to be deferred due to resource constraints.

Olusola Ikuforiji, GEF Secretariat, added that the priority themes, intervention scales, and programming focus of the Work Program align with those in the GEF-8 LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy. Outlining expected results, she highlighted enhancing climate resilience for over three million beneficiaries, supporting the development of 16 policies and adaptation plans, building adaptation capacities for over two million people, and engaging 93 private sector enterprises.

During the discussion, Council Members expressed support for the Work Program and noted its strong integration of gender equality and focus on co-financing. A Council Member underlined the importance of funding window B, which focuses on strengthening technology transfer, innovation, and private sector engagement, and encouraged donors to strengthen this window so the SCCF can continue to meet its objectives during the remainder of GEF-8.

On the proposed projects, Council Members inquired about: the inclusion of the Uganda project, noting that STAP had raised major concerns about the project; how the high political and governance risk in the Sahel RESILAND Program in Chad and Mali will be addressed; how projects are selected and prioritized in the face of resource constraints; and which parts of the private sector are expected to purchase bonds for the Madagascar project.

Council Members also stressed the need for: resources to address environmental issues in LDCs and to foster long-term sustainability, noting that “environmental problems know no



Council Members during the session

boundaries”; and collaboration and coordination with other funds and clearly defining the areas of intervention.

The Secretariat clarified that, regarding the Uganda project, the Secretariat, STAP, and the Implementing Agency have considered the STAP’s concerns and how to address them. On the Sahel program and its risks, the Secretariat clarified that the sustainability and scaling up of the program will be enabled by the following: the World Bank is the Implementing Agency and has an existing operation in the Sahel region; the program is grounded in the implementation of Chad’s and Mali’s national strategies; the stakeholder engagement element of the program is active and robust; and the Pan-African Agency of the Great Green Wall Initiative, which is knowledgeable with respect to working in the region, will be actively engaged.

Regarding project selection, the Secretariat highlighted that criteria include the presence of a multi-trust fund initiative, resources accumulated by each country, and the urgency of support for co-financing. The Secretariat acknowledged the LDCF’s commitment to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and its intention to expand the network through meaningful partnerships.

The Secretariat said it is not possible to predict which investors will purchase the bonds, acknowledging political risks, and clarified that mechanisms are in place to pause programs if necessary.

LDC Group Chair Evans Njewa expressed gratitude to the LDCF, and reassured donors that the resources will be used respectfully and integrate gender inclusivity, youth, and a whole-of-society approach.

Decision: In its Decision LDCF.SCCF 1/2025, the Council approves the Work Program consisting of three projects and one program for the LDCF, subject to comments made during the Council meeting and additional comments that may be submitted in writing to the Secretariat by 3 July 2025. Total resources approved in this Work Program amount to USD 39.55 million from the LDCF, inclusive of GEF project financing and Agency fees.

FY26 Administrative Budget and Business Plan for the LDCF and SCCF

Juan Pablo Hoffmaister and Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat, introduced the document ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.38/03](#)) and reported that priorities in the business plan for FY26 include completing development of the GEF-9 programming strategy and implementing the Challenge Program for Adaptation Innovation.



Chizuru Aoki and Olusola Ikuforiji, GEF Secretariat

Hoffmaister said the requested budget – USD 6.5 million across both funds – is lower than the previous fiscal year’s budget.

During the discussion, Council Members supported the budget but called for clear budget presentations in the future, including the number of FTEs in the Secretariat. They asked about the possibility of combining these funds with other climate funds.

The GEF CSO Network called for a focus on learning and knowledge exchange, ensuring the participation of grassroots organizations, and tripling the funding allocated to the LDCF and SCCF, as agreed to at the Baku Climate Change Conference.

Responding, the Secretariat noted they are examining ways to align programming with other climate funds, with an emphasis on establishing and leveraging partnerships. They highlighted that no new FTEs would be added and said there is cost-sharing of staff within the GEF family of funds.

Decision: In Decision LDCF.SCCF 2/2025, the Council approves the proposed budget for the GEF Secretariat (USD 3,935,976), STAP (USD 140,000), and the Trustee (USD 607,000) from the LDCF, and GEF Secretariat (USD 1,241,027), STAP (USD 140,000), and Trustee (USD 151,000) from the SCCF.

FY24 Annual Monitoring Review of the LDCF and SCCF

On Thursday, 5 June, Tshewang Dorji, GEF Secretariat, presented the document ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.38/04](#)), underscoring that active SCCF and LDCF portfolios are progressing well, SCCF projects continued to demonstrate a very high level of performance, women in the private sector continue to be supported, and the overall risk rating level remained comparable to the previous fiscal year. He said key factors that helped the overall success of projects include: ownership and stakeholder engagement; early consultation with meaningful participation of local actors; engagement of micro, small and medium enterprises; and livelihood support especially for women.

Council Members welcomed the report and appreciated the high level of projects rated satisfactory for development objectives. Several Council Members called for more information regarding women’s engagement and IPLC participation.



Tshewang Dorji, GEF Secretariat



Renata Koch Alvarenga, CSO Network

Council Members also: asked about the reasons behind the lower ratings of LDCF projects in land managed for climate resilience and called for further reporting on successes and challenges; called for a solid risk analysis, additional information on adaptation and innovation, and increased engagement with the private sector; and suggested that the Secretariat consider including the disbursement rate as a key indicator in the annual monitoring review.

The GEF CSO Network stressed involvement with CSOs and IPLCs is essential and should be at the core of LDCF and SCCF action. They questioned whether the highly unsatisfactory project needs reformulation or if its funds should be reallocated to other projects.

Council Members also: highlighted the need to have performance indicators for Implementing Agencies and said accreditation should not be granted unconditionally; called on the Secretariat to share lessons learned about the non-satisfactory projects; and called for Agency de-concentration.

IPAG acknowledged LDCF and SCCF efforts to create space for Indigenous Peoples and encouraged including information on their engagement in the review, stressing its importance for learning, accountability, and truly transformative partnership actions.

Responding to comments, the Secretariat acknowledged the importance of capturing Indigenous Peoples’ contributions in reports, as well as information on the private sector and women’s and local community engagement, and committed to including this information in future reviews. The Secretariat also stressed they are working with Agencies to address implementation challenges.

The Secretariat noted: achievement ratings are lower for land management due mainly to the small sample size and project cancellations due to political instability; and disbursements are high as projects near completion, but there is potential to improve how disbursements are captured in future reports.

Decision: In its Decision LDCF.SCCF 3/2025, the Council welcomes the review and appreciates the progress made in reporting portfolio-level performance, results, and lessons learned under the LDCF and the SCCF. The Council welcomes the overall finding that the LDCF and SCCF portfolio under implementation in FY24 performed satisfactorily.



Jason Spensley and Ladu Lemi, GEF Secretariat

Progress Report on the LDCF and SCCF

Jason Spensley and Ladu Lemi, GEF Secretariat, introduced the document ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.38/05](#)). They reported that the projects since the LDCF's inception are collectively expected to have 77.76 million direct beneficiaries and to train 3.74 million people to identify, prioritize, implement, monitor, and/or evaluate adaptation strategies and measures. They also highlighted that 3,443 private sector companies are engaged and the projects address a range of sectors.

The Secretariat further reported that SCCF projects have had 9.53 million direct beneficiaries, with 271,688 people trained and 5.3 million hectares of land better managed to withstand the effects of climate change. During the discussion, the GEF CSO Network stressed that the voluntary nature of LDCF/SCCF replenishment hinders predictable, adequate, and sustainable financing, affecting both efficiency and transparency in program delivery. The GEF CSO Network called on the LDCF/SDDF Council to:

- develop and adopt replenishment modalities that guarantee adequate and sustainable financing, which will foster justice and center local communities;
- institutionalize a 20% minimum direct funding allocation within the portfolio for CSOs, women, youth, and IPLCs;
- encourage a fully open, inclusive budgeting process, where communities and CSOs can trace every dollar from pledge to project, influence priorities, and hold decision makers accountable;
- establish dedicated funding windows for climate-smart education initiatives, particularly those led by youth, women, and IPLCs, to build local capacity, raise awareness, and foster long-term resilience;
- establish thematic funding windows that explicitly target projects addressing overlapping forms of marginalization, including gender, age, and race, to overcome fragmentation; and
- develop new indicators that capture justice, agency, and resilience.

Council Members requested reporting on the funds' achievements on the ground at the conclusion of the projects. Several Council Members proposed that the UNFCCC designate a SIDS fund to be integrated into the SCCF. Council Members

also suggested: adopting a portfolio approach; organizing discussions about the future of the funds, noting in particular that the landscape has changed since the LDCF was established in 2002; and reporting on trends in the inclusion of women.

Responding to comments, the Secretariat highlighted the value of collaboration among multilateral funds, which they said involves both multilateral and bilateral collaboration. They noted these funds play a unique role in the ecosystem of climate finance, including piloting and engaging the private sector. The Secretariat further reported that seven of the 14 countries that had not yet submitted proposals have now done so and will be able to access GEF funding if it is provided.

Decision: In its Decision LDCF.SCCF 4/2025, the Council welcomes the progress report and takes note of the progress made under the LDCF and SCCF.

Update on the Development of the GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change for the LDCF and SCCF and Operational Improvements July 2026 to June 2030

Rawlestone Moore, GEF Secretariat, presented the document on this agenda item ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.38/Inf.02](#)), highlighting progress in the development process, including: a series of informal consultations with various stakeholders, such as the GEF Technical Advisory Group; a meeting on the draft strategy held in Paris, France, in May 2025; and several informal consultations on themes, operational priorities, and resources-related issues, held with donor countries and the LDC Group, among others.

Moore summarized key points from the meetings, such as the need to: streamline themes and approaches while retaining strong country ownership; strengthen the SCCF to focus more on SIDS; and support private sector engagement and innovation beyond LDCs and SIDS. Reporting that informal consultations will continue, he said a revised strategy will be produced in March or April 2026.

During the discussion, the GEF CSO Network emphasized the need for stronger integration of civil society and local communities in developing the Strategy. They also called for the



Rawlestone Moore, GEF Secretariat



Gongqong Hoohlo, Council Member, Lesotho

Strategy to include a robust results framework with transparent monitoring, and simplified access to funding for local actions.

IEO Annual Report 2025 and Management Response

Geeta Batra presented the annual report ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.38/E/01](#)), explaining it covers the 33 climate change adaptation projects that have been completed since the last annual report in 2023, and draws on their terminal evaluations. She highlighted that the evaluation revealed strong performance overall, but sustainability remains a concern across the project portfolio. She reported that 88% of projects achieved outcome ratings within the satisfactory range. She said key success factors include gender considerations, community ownership, alignment with national priorities, and strong monitoring systems. She said barriers include institutional constraints, funding gaps and, for some projects, political instability. The report recommends that the GEF Partnership focus on identifying and addressing implementation-related barriers to scaling up adaptation efforts under the LDCF and SCCF through coordinated action.

Presenting the Management Response ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.38/06](#)), Jason Spensley and Olusola Ikuforiji said the Secretariat welcomes and agrees with the findings. They highlighted that the first draft of the GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change for the LDCF and SCCF for GEF-9 articulates pathways to addressing the sustainability and scaling up challenges by fostering resilient systems change, including by aligning programming with initiatives like International Development Association resources and MDB investment frameworks.

In the subsequent discussion, Council Members appreciated the report of a positive correlation between gender-responsive approaches and superior project outcomes. The GEF CSO Network called for the inclusion of all gender categories, as well as age-disaggregated information in future evaluations.

Council Members also: suggested measuring and comparing results to scientifically-defined targets; highlighted the importance of local community engagement and the inclusion of climate justice considerations; and noted that 55% of projects received lower ratings after the midterm review.

Responding to comments, Batra explained the lower ratings post-midterm review is likely due to project participants' optimism and higher ratings at the midterm review stage compared to their realism towards the end of the project. She urged a culture of honest reporting and allowing recognition that a project may not be doing well even at the midterm review stage. Batra reported that, under GEF-9, the IEO intends to undertake more ex-post measuring of sustainability across all portfolios.

On financial sustainability, the Secretariat highlighted some proposed GEF-9 programming elements to support this, including working with IFIs for larger catalyzing potential, working with MDBs and national development banks, collaborating with other funds, and incorporating stronger gender approaches.

Decision: In its Decision LDCF.SCCF 5/2025, the Council takes note of the evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.

FY26 Work Program and Budget for the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF under the LDCF and the SCCF

Geeta Batra introduced the document ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF/38/E/02](#)). She noted that FY26 will have a busy evaluation agenda, including the 2026 Annual Evaluation Report, the LDCF/SCCF Program Evaluation, and the Eighth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS8).

Council Members welcomed the IEO Work Program. The GEF CSO Network asked the IEO to clarify its work with CSOs, IPLCs, youth, and women in promoting a whole-of-society approach and sustainability. Several Council Members asked how OPS8 could integrate data on the turnover level of the OFPs.

Batra noted the IEO is looking for inclusion more broadly, especially in fragile situations, but said the IEO will examine the specific inclusion of CSOs, IPLCs, youth, and women more closely, as well as the turnover level of OFPs, to strengthen the partnership more broadly.

Decision: In its Decision LDCF.SCCF 6/2025, the Council approves the annual budget of USD 298,207 to carry out the Work Program for fiscal year 2026, to be distributed as follows: USD 171,324 from the LDCF and USD 126,883 from the SCCF.



Stephane Cieniewski, Council Member, France

Other Business

No other business was proposed.

Joint Summary and Closing of the GEF Council and LDCF/SCCF Council Meetings

On Thursday afternoon, 5 June 2025, Claude Gascon presented the GEF Fonseca Leadership Program, named in honor of Gustavo Fonseca, who “spent a career working in the translation of science to actions and politics,” and “shaped what the GEF is today.” He noted the Program has 11 partnerships with different universities and organizations around the world, and has funded over 170 fellows from all regions. Stressing the uniqueness of the Program that is “creating the next generation of conservation leaders,” he thanked the Council for their investment in the Program. Council Members then watched a video showcasing Fonseca fellows and their experience on the ground.

The GEF Council and LDCF/SCCF Council then conducted a paragraph-by-paragraph reading of the Co-Chairs Joint Summaries of the two Council meetings, and accepted them without amendment.

The Co-Chairs closed the meetings at 2:10 pm.

Report of the Fourth GBFF Council Meeting

GEF CEO, Chairperson, and Council Co-Chair Carlos Manuel Rodríguez opened the meeting on Friday, 6 June, and emphasized the importance of the Council’s work to ensure the GBFF contributes to the KMGBF’s objectives. He highlighted that the Work Program includes 40 projects in 41 countries and that the target to direct at least 20% of funding towards IPLCs has been exceeded, with 32% of funding directed towards IPLCs. He stressed the need for: a greater level of resource mobilization; an expanded base of non-sovereign partners; and exploring options that are aligned and coherent.

Co-Chair of the GEF Council for 2025, Richard Bontjer, recalled that environmental degradation and biodiversity loss are leading to adverse impacts and highlighted the GBFF’s role in achieving the targets of the KMGBF, which address these impacts. He noted the need for more alignment between the GEF



(L-R): Noemi Hernández Rodríguez Borjas, GEF Council Secretary, Co-Chair of the GEF Council for 2025 Richard Bontjer, Australia; and Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, GEF CEO and Chairperson

Trust Fund and the GBFF, and welcomed the presence of civil society observers.

Yibin Xiang, CBD Secretariat, said the CBD COP will be pleased that the target of 20% for IPLCs has been exceeded. He reviewed KMGBF target 19 (increase the level of financial resources from all sources), its connection to the GBFF, and its focus on mobilizing private sector funding.

GEF CEO, Chairperson, and Council Co-Chair Rodríguez invited the Council to adopt the agenda ([GEF/GBFF.04/01.Rev.1](#)).

IPLCs, women, and youth called for adding a discussion on how to create more structure and meaningful engagement of observers in the Council’s meetings.

Council Members said the agendas for the GEF, LDCF/SCCF, and GBFF Councils should be more compact and not extend over five days in the future. They stressed that the key issues are the adoption of the Work Program and the IEO evaluations, and called for documents to be distributed well in advance.

The agenda was adopted as presented.

Work Program for the GBFF

Benjamin Singer and Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat, presented the Work Program ([GEF/GBFF.04/02](#)), which comprises national projects in the DRC and Peru, and a regional project covering Cameroon, the Central African Republic, and the Republic of the Congo. The Work Program requests USD 25.68 million and is expected to mobilize USD 42.53 million in co-financing. The Secretariat noted the three projects allocate an average of 30% of the requested resources to support IPLCs.

Council Members welcomed the proposals and the progress being made by the GBFF, noting that progress was “both quantitative and qualitative.”

Members also expressed satisfaction with the gender-responsive focus of the Work Program, while calling for clearly-defined gender-disaggregated monitoring. Council Members: called for increased financing for Pacific SIDS and more focus on invasive alien species; highlighted the need for better geographic coverage of funding and for including a larger number of Caribbean SIDS; emphasized the importance of increasing co-financing, especially expanding private sector participation; and urged developed countries to “fulfil their co-responsibility to provide finance to developing countries.”

The Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) highlighted the importance of enabling observers to provide comments in advance of Council meetings, and urged the Secretariat to include consultations with observers in future work programs.



(L-R): Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, GEF CEO and Chairperson, with Chizuru Aoki and Benjamin Singer, GEF Secretariat

IPAG called for a more inclusive approach in GBFF projects, and urged more direct resources to be allocated to IPLCs and broader participation in decision-making processes.

Responding to the comments, the Secretariat noted progress has been made regarding private sector contributions and the GBFF will focus on mobilizing more resources from this sector. The Secretariat also stated: it plans to hold an informal session between Council Members and Observers before the next Council meeting to enhance dialogue and interaction between them; and the GBFF will continue to encourage countries to work with IFIs.

Decision: In its Decision GBFF 1/2025, the Council approves the Work Program comprising three projects, subject to comments made, prior and during the Council meeting and additional comments that may be submitted in writing to the Secretariat by 20 June 2025. The total GBFF resources approved in this Work Program amounted to USD 25.68 million, including GEF project financing and Agency fees.

Formative Evaluation of the GBFF and Management Response

Geeta Batra, IEO, presented the formative evaluation ([GEF/GBFF/E/C.04/01](#)) and noted it is “formative” due to the early development and implementation of the GBFF. Mentioning the GBFF portfolio comprises 40 projects in 41 different countries and four regions, she highlighted GBFF strengths, such as the target focus on KMGBF objectives, the value added through strategic alignment with the GEF, and the inclusive approach with IPLCs, SIDS, and LDCs.

Batra highlighted opportunities for the GBFF in its future work, including: diversification and expansion of the donor base; enhanced coherence between the GBFF and GEF Trust Fund; capturing overall contributions to the KMGBF; and expanding the monitoring and results framework to demonstrate the additional value of the GBFF. She said the IEO recommends clearly defining a coordination strategy with the GEF to avoid fragmentation, broadening resource mobilization, and clarifying project selection criteria and performance indicators.

Razan Nimir, GEF Secretariat, presented the Management Response ([GEF/GBFF.04/05](#)). She said the GEF agrees with the recommendations for a strategy to enhance coherence between the GEF and GBFF and to clarify project selection and performance indicators. On broadening resource mobilization, she noted that the inclusion of IFIs as direct financial contributors in the recommendation is not consistent with the guidance provided under CBD COP Decision 15/7.

During the discussion, some Council Members noted lack of agreement on the definition of “megadiverse” or on its use as a criterion for programming directions. They said it should not be referred to in the evaluation. Council Members stressed the need to increase the number of donors, particularly philanthropies, non-sovereign entities, and larger emerging countries. They suggested aligning the GBFF replenishment cycle with the GEF Trust Fund’s replenishment cycle.

Several Council Members asked about the difference between the GBFF project approval structure and the GEF Trust Fund structure. They called for identifying the GBFF’s added value,



Anil Das, India

and requested actionable feedback when proposals are not accepted.

A representative of philanthropic organizations noted the value of identifying the unique roles of the GEF and GBFF and highlighted that, together, they can ensure comprehensive implementation that builds synergies. The GYBN said the evaluation does not include input from Observers.

Responding to comments, Batra clarified the evaluation did not use “megadiverse” as a criterion and confirmed the evaluation’s use of the CBD COP guidance. She added that Observer groups were just being formed when the interviews for the evaluation took place, and that governance aspects were left to the next evaluation.

Decision: In its Decision GBFF 4/2025, the Council takes note of the evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.

Progress Report on the GBFF

Jurgis Sapjanskas and Sumeet Kaur, GEF Secretariat, presented the document ([GEF/GBFF.04/03](#)), which covers progress in programming, governance arrangements, and resource mobilization. They reported no change in the portfolio of projects since the third GBFF Council meeting in December 2024, but noted several projects have now moved toward approval, and two projects have been fully developed, technically cleared, and



Sumeet Kaur, GEF Secretariat



Co-Chair of the GBFF's Auxiliary Body **Sino Tohirzoda**, Tajikistan

circulated to the Council for review. They provided an update on ongoing and planned work related to: developing guidelines for tracking and reporting financial flows to IPLCs; developing a resource mobilization strategy, to be undertaken with support from the Advisory Group of Non-Sovereign Participants; enhancing the GBFF Results Framework; and requesting the Auxiliary Body to explore options to facilitate the achievement of the portfolio-level target that 25% of GBFF resources are to be allocated through IFIs that are GEF Agencies.

Sino Tohirzoda (Tajikistan), Co-Chair of the Auxiliary Body, expressed the Body's willingness to support the Council in exploring options for achieving the IFI target and welcomed guidance on how to best support the Council.

Benjamin Bélair, Province of Quebec, and member of the Advisory Group of Non-Sovereign Participants, expressed Quebec's willingness to facilitate the involvement of subnational governments in the GBFF. He expressed interest in participating in the development of guidelines for tracking and reporting financial flows to IPLCs.

In the subsequent discussion, Council Members: supported the proposed work on IFIs; supported requesting the Secretariat to develop a resource mobilization strategy that includes multi-annual pledges and a voluntary indicative scale of contributions; and urged broadening the donor base with new countries, the private sector, and philanthropies.

The GYBN called for integrating youth indicators, such as age-disaggregated data, into the GBFF results framework and urged inviting youth to participate in meetings of the Auxiliary Body and Advisory Group. A representative of philanthropic organizations suggested differentiating between benefit-sharing and different groups, such as youth, women, and IPLCs.

Responding to comments, the Secretariat clarified that the Advisory Group and Auxiliary Body are entitled to invite observers to their meetings and added that, under their Terms of Reference, the Auxiliary Body is mandated to provide advice and recommendations relating to implementation of the GBFF Programming Directions while the resource mobilization

strategy is a different issue. They added that the Council can task the Auxiliary Body with additional functions.

Following consultations, the Council agreed to note in the meeting highlights that the resource mobilization strategy is to include both public and private financing.

Decision: In its Decision GBFF 2/2025, the Council:

- requests the Secretariat to develop a resource mobilization strategy for the GBFF for consideration by the Council at its fifth meeting;
- requests the Advisory Group of Non-Sovereign Participants to engage in developing the strategy for the GBFF;
- requests the Secretariat to develop a proposal to enhance the GBFF Results Framework for consideration by the Council at its fifth meeting;
- requests the Auxiliary Body to discuss options to facilitate achievement of the portfolio-level target that 25% of GBFF resources are to be allocated through IFIs that are GEF Agencies; and
- requests the Secretariat to develop guidelines for the tracking and reporting of GBFF resources to support actions by IPLCs.

FY26 Administrative Budget and Business Plan for the GBFF

Sumeet Kaur, GEF Secretariat, introduced the document ([GEF/GBFF.04/04](#)), highlighting the GBFF was established in record time and that the first programming tranche was opened within six months, making USD 211 million available for recipient countries.

She said proposed activities for the GBFF FY26 include the launch of a second GBFF programming tranche. She noted the requested budget for the FY26 is 25.5% less than that of the FY25, reflecting cost-reduction measures adopted by the Secretariat.

Council Members welcomed the Administrative Budget and Business Plan. Some inquired about the impact of the reduction on the Secretariat's workload. A representative of philanthropic organizations emphasized the importance of maintaining a flexible contribution structure to enable philanthropies to participate mindfully and encouraged the Secretariat to continue deepening these engagements.

Responding to comments, the Secretariat clarified an increase in the IEO's budget due to the need to establish new methodologies for the evaluations. The Secretariat explained its reduction reflects a commitment to economize its operations, forgo recruitment, and hold more virtual meetings

Decision: In its Decision GBFF 3/2025, the Council approves the proposed FY26 budget for the GEF Secretariat (USD 2,675,351), STAP (USD 400,000), Trustee (USD 480,000), and IEO (USD 760,000).

Other Business

No other business was proposed.

Joint Summary of the GBFF Council and Closing of the GBFF Council Meeting

On Friday afternoon, 6 June 2025, Council Secretary Noemi Secretary Hernández Rodríguez Borjas invited the Council to review the Joint Summary of the GBFF Council Co-Chairs. No comments were offered and the summary was approved.

GEF CEO, Chairperson, and Council Co-Chair Carlos Manuel Rodríguez thanked the GEF Council Co-Chair for 2025, Richard Bontjer, Council Members, observers, and the Secretariat for their work. He noted that despite it being a complex year, the Council meetings demonstrated that the global community can agree on complex issues. He looked forward to what lies ahead for the GEF family of funds and closed the GBFF Council meeting at 3:19 pm.

Upcoming Meetings

62nd Sessions of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SB 62):

The SBSTA and SBI will meet for their regular intersessional gatherings, taking up a range of issues, including follow up from COP 29. **dates:** 16-26 June 2025 **location:** Bonn, Germany **www:** unfccc.int/sb62

Plastics Treaty INC-5.2: Delegates at INC-5 agreed to convene a resumed meeting of the fifth session to try to conclude negotiations on a treaty on plastics pollution. **dates:** 5-14 August 2025 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** unep.org/inc-plastic-pollution

BBNJ PrepCom II: The second substantive meeting of the Preparatory Commission for the Entry into Force of the BBNJ Agreement and the Convening of COP 1 to the Agreement will continue work on the cluster of issues agreed by the organizational session and initially discussed at PrepCom I. **dates:** 18-29 August 2025 **location:** New York, US **www:** www.un.org/bbnjagreement/en

Second Meeting for GEF-9: The second meeting for negotiations on the ninth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund are expected to take place in October. **dates:** 8-10 October 2025 **location:** Botswana **www:** www.thegef.org/events

CBD SBSTTA and Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j): The 27th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) and Other Provisions of the CBD Related to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities will take place in October 2025. **dates:** 20-30 October 2025 **location:** Panama City, Panama **www:** www.cbd.int/meetings

Minamata Convention on Mercury COP 6: The sixth meeting of the COP to the Minamata Convention on Mercury will review implementation of the Convention. **dates:** 3-7 November 2025 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** minamataconvention.org/en/meetings/cop6

UNFCCC COP 30: This event will include the 30th session of the COP to the UNFCCC, the 20th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, and the seventh meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties

to the Paris Agreement. The 63rd sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation will also meet. **dates:** 10-21 November 2025 **location:** Belem, Brazil **www:** unfccc.int/cop30

UNCCD CRIC23: The Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention for the UNCCD will review progress on the implementation of voluntary land degradation neutrality targets, and efforts to strengthen targeted capacity building, among other agenda items. **dates:** 1-5 December 2025 **location:** Panama City, Panama **www:** www.unccd.int/events/governing-bodies-meetings/unccd-cric23

70th Meeting of the GEF Council: The GEF Council will consider the Work Program among other agenda items. **dates:** week of 15 December 2025 **TBC** **location:** virtual **www:** www.thegef.org

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

Glossary

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSO	Civil society organization
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GBFF	Global Biodiversity Framework Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEF-8	Eighth replenishment period of the GEF
GYBN	Global Youth Biodiversity Network
IFI	International Financial Institution
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IPAG	Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group
IPLCs	Indigenous Peoples and local communities
KMGBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
LDCs	Least developed countries
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund
MEA	Multilateral environmental agreement
MDB	Multilateral development bank
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
OPF	Operational Focal Point
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
SGP	Small Grants Programme
SIDS	Small island developing States
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
STAP	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
STAR	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change