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## Summary of the 71st GEF Council Meeting and Eighth GEF Assembly: 31 May - 5 June 2026

“What we have seen here is not only a discussion about priorities, but a reminder of what is possible when the world comes together with shared purpose.” The closing remarks of Claude Gascon, Interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), reflected a shared feeling among GEF members and participants following the conclusion of a busy and successful week of deliberations that included meetings of the GEF Councils and GEF Assembly.

Many thought that holding the meetings in Samarkand, the “jewel of the silk road” and the “bridge between the East and the West,” was fitting. They noted the symbolism of convening in a place “where peoples, ideas, and commerce have converged over the centuries to solve the challenges of their times.”

The challenges of our times are of an existential magnitude. The triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution threatens the well-being and survival of all living species on Earth. A transformational change is essential and the need to prioritize planetary health and address environmental challenges that “know no borders and require collective action at an unprecedented scale” is more evident than ever before.

The GEF plays a catalytic role in the international environmental finance architecture toward this much-needed transition. Designated as the financial mechanism for several multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), it connects aspirational global environmental targets with concrete actions on the ground directed toward those that need them most.

In that respect, the successful conclusion of 18 months of negotiations for the ninth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund (GEF-9) “represents a renewed vote of confidence in multilateralism, in the GEF partnership, and in the importance of the global environment.” GEF-9, with initial pledges of USD 3.9 billion, encompasses a financing strategy, policy recommendations, and a resource allocation model that will guide the GEF’s work to this “final sprint toward 2030.” It also introduces structural reforms, making the GEF faster, simpler, and more accountable.

The strategic priorities of GEF-9 include:

- Integrated Programs targeting systemic transformations through holistic and nexus approaches;
- blended finance with an aspirational target of programming 25% of resources to mobilize private capital;

- support for vulnerable countries, with the goal of directing 35% of resources to least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS), and 20% to Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs); and
- whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches.

The latter highlights the pivotal role civil society organizations (CSOs), IPLCs, women, youth, and other stakeholders play in advancing global environmental goals. CSOs play a key role not only in delivering environmental outcomes on the ground, but also strengthening accountability, bridging the gap between policy and vulnerable communities, and ensuring GEF investments reach communities most affected by environmental degradation and climate risks.

Many participants during the meetings stressed that the prioritization of the private sector’s involvement is a necessity, while emphasizing that innovative and diversified funding approaches need to complement, not replace, traditional sources. They noted that while public financing, including official development assistance (ODA), has long faced challenges related to competing demands, augmenting stresses on public finance and a “volatile diplomatic environment” have fueled this competition.

Participants also pointed to the vast finance gap all MEAs face, with available funds only meeting a tiny fraction of those

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needed to achieve their goals and avert environmental decline. While some noted that GEF-9 resource mobilization has not fully satisfied their expectations, many pointed toward Conferences of the Parties (COPs) of major MEAs convening in 2026, including on biodiversity, climate change, and desertification. Such COPs have historically attracted new financial pledges.

While technical and administrative considerations dominated the GEF Council meetings, the Assembly's role is more strategic and forward-looking, bringing to the table new ideas, thoughts, and visions. A series of high-level roundtable discussions organized under nine themes provided such a space. Main messages included that:

- integration should be embedded in program design through a theory of change that fosters adaptive management, monitoring, and learning;
- blended finance is not a silver bullet but a proven tool to mobilize private capital;
- regional collaboration and nexus approaches are essential to address intertwined environmental challenges;
- reforming harmful subsidies, integrating sustainability into fiscal policy, and aligning resource mobilization are key enablers of nature-positive outcomes;
- community-led and IPLC-managed approaches deliver durable outcomes;
- public capital fills private finance gaps by optimizing investment risk, addressing market failures, and creating enabling conditions for private investments; and
- collective action is key to mobilize the private sector at scale.

The eighth GEF Assembly, the 71st meeting of the GEF Council, the 40th meeting of the Council of the LDC Fund (LDCF) and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), and the sixth meeting of Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF) Council took place from 31 May – 5 June in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, attracting more than 2,000 delegates and observers. A Civil Society Forum convened on 3 June.

### A Brief History of the GEF

Originating with a 1989 proposal by France to formulate financing responses to mounting concern over global environmental problems, the GEF was established as a pilot program in 1991 through arrangements between three “Implementing Agencies”—the World Bank, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP)—and housed in and administered by the World Bank. Its purpose was to provide concessionary and additional funding for the incremental costs of achieving global environmental benefits, with an initial endowment of around USD 1 billion. By 1994, developing countries' calls for democratic decision making to replace the World Bank's weighted voting system based on the share of the Bank's capital stock held by each member country resulted in the GEF's restructuring in March 1994, where representatives of 73 countries adopted a new GEF Instrument. With this restructuring, the GEF became a separate institution, hosted but not administered by the World Bank. It operates as a key mechanism

for global environmental funding, with its Implementing Agencies now numbering 18.

The GEF's organizational structure now includes:

- an Assembly that meets every four years;
- a Council that meets twice a year;
- a Secretariat;
- a Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), which was established in 1995 and provides independent advice to the GEF on its work as well as assistance in the delivery of members' responsibilities; and
- an Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), which was created in 2003, and 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. Meeting twice a year, it is composed of 32 appointed Council members, each representing a constituency—that is, a group of either donor or recipient countries.

The GEF Assembly, which has convened eight times between 1998 and 2026, is the main guiding structure for the GEF, comprising 186 member governments. It provides a forum for discussion leading up to replenishment negotiations and is responsible for reviewing and ratifying Council recommendations.

The GEF administers the LDCF and the SCCF, which were established under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2001, and provides secretariat services to the Adaptation Fund, which was established by Parties to the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC.

The GEF also administers the GBFF, which was established under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to support implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The GBFF was approved by the GEF Council in June 2023 and officially ratified and launched in August 2023 at the seventh GEF Assembly.

The GEF is funded by donor countries, which commit money every four years through a process called the GEF replenishment. 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 5.3 billion (GEF-8). The initial agreed envelope for GEF-9 is USD 3.9 billion. Additional pledges can be made right up until the World Bank, as Trustee, adopts the final resolution on the replenishment. The GEF-9 investment period will officially commence on 1 July 2026 and will run through June 2030.

In addition, the GEF serves as a financial mechanism for several MEAs, including the: CBD; UNFCCC; UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD); Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants; and Minamata Convention on Mercury. The seventh GEF Assembly adopted amendments to

the GEF Instrument in order for it to also serve the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement). In addition, the GEF's work focuses on, among other areas, sustainable forest management, and international waters.

Daily reports of this meeting and Summaries of ENB coverage of past GEF Council and Assembly meetings can be found at: [enb.iisd.org/negotiations/global-environment-facility-gef](http://enb.iisd.org/negotiations/global-environment-facility-gef).

### Report of the 71st GEF Council Meeting

The 71st GEF Council meeting took place from Sunday, 31 May, to Wednesday, 3 June, and included the 40th LDCF/SCCF Council meeting and the sixth GBFF Council meeting.

#### Opening of the Meeting and Adoption of the Agenda

On Sunday, 31 May, GEF Interim CEO and Council Co-Chair Claude Gascon opened the meeting, highlighting accomplishments under GEF-8, including their focus on:

- high-impact investments and blended finance;
- integration, with 98 countries participating, including 31 LDCs and SIDS; and
- advanced knowledge sharing and learning, gender equality, and Indigenous Peoples' participation.

Via video message, Rob Walton, Rob Walton Foundation, announced a new collaboration with the GEF that will match up to USD 50 million in GEF funding, focused on areas identified by the [Africa Keystone Protected Area Partnership](#).

GEF Council Co-Chair Richard Bontjer (Australia) stressed the importance of providing solutions amid geopolitical tensions and accelerating environmental and climate crises, noting a proposal to add up to three new Implementing Agencies to address identified gaps in programming for the private sector and IPLCs.

Aziz Abdulkhakov, Advisor to the President of Uzbekistan on Environment, and Chairman, National Committee on Ecology and Climate Change, outlined his country's strong collaboration with the GEF and announced their intention to contribute to GEF-9.



**Aziz Abdulkhakov**, Advisor to the President of Uzbekistan on Environment and Chairman, National Committee on Ecology and Climate Change



**Claude Gascon**, Interim CEO and Chairperson, GEF

Interim GEF CEO Gascon presented, and the Council approved, the meeting agenda ([GEF/C.71/01/Rev.01](#)).

#### Summary of Negotiations of the Ninth Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund

On Sunday, Maitreyi Das, World Bank, noted that GEF-9 negotiations were conducted with openness, perseverance, and a shared sense of commitment. She added that while the initially agreed envelope is USD 3.9 billion, additional pledges can be made. The World Bank, as Trustee, is expected to adopt the final resolution on the replenishment in July 2026.

Gascon presented document [GEF/C.71/02/Rev.03](#), containing the investment strategy, policy recommendations, and a resource allocation model. He identified the main GEF-9 priorities and said the package represents a renewed vote of confidence in multilateralism, the GEF Partnership, the GEF as a financial mechanism, and the importance of protecting the global environment.

Council members generally welcomed the outcome, although several expressed disappointment in the smaller envelope compared to previous replenishments. Several particularly welcomed the emphasis on LDCs, SIDS, and IPLCs. Some also stressed the importance of GEF-9 implementation being a country-owned and country-driven process.

Among other issues, members:

- encouraged more transboundary projects;
- urged expanding the number of agencies available to support LDCs and SIDS;
- underscored the importance of the new *ad hoc* working group on the evolution of the GEF architecture, oversight, and donor base;
- stressed the potential of private sector, blended, and non-grant-based finance, noting this must not substitute the allocation of concessional resources;
- called on donor countries to rapidly finalize their pledges, to allow for clear and predictable programming;
- welcomed the aspirational target of directing 20% of GEF-9 programming toward actions by IPLCs, and called for clearly defining these actions; and
- stressed the need to redirect nature-negative financial flows.



Council members during Sunday's proceedings

Council members adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The Council welcomes the successful conclusion of the replenishment, takes note of the Summary, and endorses the programming directions, including the allocation of resources, policy recommendations, and Draft Replenishment Resolution. Furthermore, the Council requests the GEF CEO to transmit the Summary to the World Bank to follow the appropriate procedure for adoption.

### **Work Program for the GEF Trust Fund**

On Sunday, Fred Boltz and Mohamed Bakarr, GEF Secretariat, introduced document [GEF/C.71/03](#). They reviewed GEF-8 achievements in the five GEF core focal areas of biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, and chemicals and waste. They highlighted blended finance initiatives, expansion of the Small Grants Program (SGP), support to IPLCs, the Fonseca Leadership Program, and GEF-8 contributions to multiple GBF targets.

They also introduced the June 2026 Work Program, explaining it comprises 16 projects in 19 recipient countries, totaling USD 141.4 million, and is expected to mobilize USD 828.1 million in co-financing.

Many Council members highlighted the Uzbekistan Risk Mitigation Facility project as an example of the potential for using blended finance to increase co-financing. Many also welcomed the utilization of 97% of programming for GEF-8 and the Work Program's geographical coverage and expressed satisfaction with surpassing most core indicator targets. Some members voiced concerns about targets which have yet to be reached. Others encouraged using innovative technologies and blended finance, aligned with national priorities.

The GEF CSO Network highlighted, among other things, the [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund](#) and the [Global Flyways Grant Mechanism](#) projects as examples for strengthened CSO participation.

Members raised issues regarding:

- Implementing Agency concentration in the Work Program;
- lessons learned from setting targets in GEF-8;
- the drivers behind the weaker co-financing ratio in the Work Program;

- the lack of mercury-related projects;
- how to promote a whole-of-society approach in GEF-9;
- multilateral development bank (MDB) engagement since GEF-7;
- the lack of contribution to GBF Target 18 (reducing harmful incentives to biodiversity) by GEF-8 projects; and
- the need for progress toward reaching the agreed level of appetite for risk.

One member voiced concerns about earmarking GEF-8 resources for projects involving countries for which they had human rights concerns.

In their response, Boltz and Bakarr noted the relatively modest size of this Work Program, explaining that for GEF-8 overall, the co-financing ratio is 8:1, while no agency has exceeded the 30% participation limit. They said more progress is expected for some targets as the pipeline matures, including work to fully expend resources on mercury.

Boltz and Bakarr further clarified that:

- the GEF-9 policy directions ([GEF/R.9/Inf.14](#)) ensure an active and diverse GEF Partnership, describing how the 25% ceiling of GEF portfolio allocation per Implementing Agency will be managed;
- remaining funding from GEF-8 will be carried over to GEF-9 and incorporated in the overall replenishment figure;
- MDB reporting will be incorporated for GEF-9; and
- only a few countries used their System of Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) allocations on GBF Target 18, though all 91 countries in the umbrella program supporting the development of biodiversity finance plans are working to identify harmful incentives to biodiversity.

Gascon also described the 97% utilization rate of GEF-8 programming, saying the 3% represents what had been pledged but was not yet available in the GEF Trust Fund.

Council members adopted the draft decision.

**Decision:** The Council approves the Work Program comprising 16 projects and programs. Total GEF resources approved in this Work Program amount to USD 141.4 million, including GEF project financing and agency fees. Annex A contains project and program proposals submitted for the 71st GEF Council's approval.



Laura Rajaniemi, Council member, Finland



**Richard Bontjer**, GEF Council Co-Chair

Annex B includes enabling activities and medium-sized projects approved since the 70th Council meeting.

### ***GEF Business Plan and Corporate Budget for the Fiscal Year 2027***

On Sunday, Peter Lallas, GEF Secretariat, presented document [GEF/C.71/04/Rev.2](#), noting the budget request is designed for effective and efficient delivery of the ongoing project portfolio and related work needs. Among priority areas of delivery, he cited support for conventions and new mandates, including the newly entered into force BBNJ Agreement, support for a strong start to GEF-9, and enhanced engagement with countries and partners.

In the ensuing discussion, many Council members recognized efforts to maintain efficient and transparent administrative management aligned with GEF-9 priorities. Some stressed that the document provides a bridge between strategic directions and practical execution and balances ambition with financial realism.

Some Council members questioned the need for two in-person Council meetings per year, suggesting that one be held virtually. Others opposed, citing time-zone and communication challenges.

Many stressed efficient resource use and a focus on implementation that minimizes administrative costs, further querying increased staff costs. They suggested streamlining operations and reflecting the division of labor between Secretariat staff, while fully recognizing their independence.

A member suggested that a gap analysis on environmental priorities, technological readiness, institutional capacity, and financial needs would assist developing countries toward better-designed GEF projects. Several members drew attention to the ongoing STAP review as an opportunity to streamline its budget.

The CSO Network highlighted provisions in the budget for strengthening the Network to support key GEF-9 commitments. The Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG) noted support for Indigenous Peoples throughout the GEF financial architecture and the planned update of the Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples by 2028.

Some suggested amendments to reduce travel costs, including potential adjustments to World Bank policies. Others cautioned against micromanaging the Secretariat, proposing, instead,

a cap on travel-related expenses and encouraging voluntary downgrades.

Following consultations, Co-Chair Bontjer noted a revised draft decision had been circulated to Council members that calls for the Secretariat, under the leadership of the new CEO, to find solutions to reduce travel costs, including a dialogue with the World Bank about its related policy. The Council approved the corporate budget with this modification.

**Decision:** The Council takes note of the business plan, and approves a corporate budget for 2027 from the GEF Trust Fund of USD 43.776 million, comprised of: USD 36.488 million for the GEF Secretariat; USD 80,000 to the GEF Secretariat for a Special Initiative to recruit a short-term consultant to support the Working Group on the STAP review; USD 3.140 million for the STAP; and USD 4.068 million for the Trustee. Budgets for the Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund of USD 22,700, and Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT) from the CBIT Trust Fund of USD 223,600 were also approved. The Council also requests the Secretariat, in consultation with the STAP and the Trustee, to present a combined corporate budget and business plan for the 2028 financial year for discussion at its June 2027 meeting and to find solutions to substantially reduce travel costs, including through a dialogue with the World Bank on any adjustments that may be made to its travel policies.

### ***Strengthening the GEF Partnership: Agency Expansion Procedure***

On Sunday, Jonathan Caldicott, GEF Secretariat, presented document [GEF/C.71/05/Rev.01](#), outlining the proposed four-stage procedure. He explained that the initial screening would focus on entities already accredited by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and/or the Adaptation Fund that could fill GEF Partnership gaps in addressing the needs of LDCs and SIDS, which would be given fast-track assessment and possible approval as early as June 2027. Caldicott said entities not accredited with the GCF or the Adaptation Fund would be subject to a standard assessment pathway requiring about 14 months. He reviewed the proposed eight minimum eligibility criteria. Caldicott also detailed a proposed change in the GEF's compliance assessment policy to align it with those in the GCF and Adaptation Fund, moving from



**Perpetua Latasi**, Council member, Tuvalu

the current annual assessment to continuous compliance risk monitoring.

Council members generally welcomed the paper, the proposed procedure, and minimum eligibility criteria, as well as the proposed switch to continuous compliance risk monitoring. Some requested clarifications about the timeline and steps.

On the proposed procedure, members queried:

- the evaluation of candidates regarding their engagement with IPLCs and civil society, and mobilization of the private sector;
- a possible pathway for national agencies to join the GEF Partnership;
- the possibility of de-accrediting existing GEF agencies; and
- the necessity of expanding the search for agencies beyond those already accredited by the Adaptation Fund and GCF.

In response, Caldicott outlined the timeline for expanding the number of agencies and emphasized that the four key GEF minimum standards—fiduciary standards, environmental and social safeguards, stakeholder engagement, and gender equality—still apply. Regarding de-accreditation, Caldicott highlighted action plans developed to improve internal policies when needed and added that national entities do not meet the criteria of geographical reach and scale of engagement.

Some Council members suggested amendments to the selection process, including through: the nuanced categorization of potential agencies; expanding criteria to include expertise in other GEF focal areas; and prioritizing entities working in underserved regions. Several cautioned that limiting the selection pool to agencies already accredited by the Adaptation Fund and GCF would hinder the consideration of entities with expertise on non-climate focal areas. They stressed ensuring the expansion is needs- and evidence-based, and provides added value, and urged focusing on monitoring and evaluation.

One member cautioned against lengthy timelines in accrediting agencies that are already accredited with the GCF and the Adaptation Fund. Some members expressed concerns with the proposed eligibility framework, urging for a standalone criterion assessing demonstrable experience of working with IPLCs. IPAG called for accrediting a network of Indigenous Peoples as an Implementing Agency, citing the successful track record of Indigenous-led projects. The agenda item was suspended pending informal consultations to finalize the draft decision.



**Ben Green**, Council member, UK



**Aliona Rusnac**, Council member, Moldova

Following informal consultations on Monday, Caldicott presented GEF/C.71/05/Rev.2, circulated by email for members' consideration. He noted the revised document incorporates changes in four main areas, reflecting:

- the need to unambiguously align the agency expansion procedure with GEF-9 objectives and recommendations;
- members' calls to consider complementarity among agencies;
- that not every agency will have capabilities or capacity in all thematic areas identified for GEF-9; and
- concerns that the objective of harmonizing the multilateral climate funds (MCFs) does not detract from the importance of the GEF's five focal areas.

Caldicott outlined the changes, including amendments to the minimum eligibility criteria. The Council adopted the revised decision and associated annexes.

**Decision:** The Council adopts the procedure for expanding the GEF Partnership under GEF-9, aligning it with GEF-9 policy recommendations to consider opportunities for accrediting a group of new complementary agencies that collectively have expertise with LDCs, SIDS, IPLCs, and the private sector, and in the five GEF focal areas.

The Council requests the Secretariat to:

- implement the adopted procedure, initiating an initial desk review at the start of GEF-9 and the formation and appointment process of an independent assessment expert or panel;
- update the Council on progress at its following meeting to be held in January 2027; and
- present the Council with the agencies recommended by the independent assessment expert or panel by June 30, 2027, and in the case of delays or constraints, to report to the Council by this date on progress made, challenges faced, and proposed adjustments to implementation.

The Council further approves amendments, effective 1 July 2026, to the GEF Policy on Monitoring Agency Compliance and related policies on Minimum Fiduciary Standards, Stakeholder Engagement, Gender Equality, and Environmental and Social Safeguards, annexed to the Decision, aiming to transition from a periodic review cycle to a continuous, risk-based compliance monitoring approach.

### GEF-9 STAR Policy

On Sunday, Naiying Peng and Sonja Sabita Teelucksingh, GEF Secretariat, presented document [GEF/C.71/06](#), drawing attention to the STAR policy and the STAR indices and calculations, annexed to the document. Peng highlighted key proposed modifications to STAR, including:

- enhancements to the methodology and data of the Global Benefit Indices (GBI) for biodiversity, land degradation, and climate change;
- introduction of a disbursement sub-index under the Country Performance Index;
- an increase in the weight of the Gross Domestic Product Index (GDPI); and
- lowering the STAR focal area ceilings to 5% of the respective focal area STAR envelope.

They noted that following the adjustments, approximately 43% of GEF-9 STAR resources will be allocated to SIDS and LDCs. They highlighted the expansion of the special window in STAR with a thematic focus on blended finance and the conducting of a mid-term review to assess resource utilization.

Council members welcomed efforts to strengthen the STAR methodology. Some noted that the GDPI does not capture climate risks, natural disasters, economic shocks, or dependence on natural capital, particularly for SIDS, suggesting further efforts to recognize their unique circumstances. Several members noted that increases in the weighting of the GDPI may affect countries transitioning to a higher income status that remain vulnerable to climate and environmental risks. One stressed that large economies should not be eligible for funding. Members highlighted the Drought Vulnerability Index, encouraging consideration of a broader multi-hazard approach.

Some queried the proposed expansion of the special window for the ten top STAR recipient countries. A few expressed caution regarding the level of priority given to SIDS and LDCs, suggesting that in some cases, concessional finance may achieve greater global environmental benefits when allocated to projects involving countries belonging to neither category.

One member stressed: preserving country ownership related to the special blended finance window; assessing whether innovative financing mechanisms simply replace concessional



Licheng Yao, Council member, China

resources; and the aspirational target of the total STAR allocation for SIDS and LDCs, emphasizing the agreed 35% and noting the formula's outcome is 43%.

Members suggested:

- an analysis of the decline of the STAR portion of the GEF portfolio over recent replenishments;
- considering a GBI for chemicals/waste in GEF-10;
- priorities for the GEF-9 STAR mid-term review; and
- using the mid-term review to ensure effective funding allocation and potentially reconsider the maximum allocation per country.

Members also queried the process for reusing frozen resources and stressed continued support toward the timely allocation and disbursement of resources.

The CSO Network urged adding peatland ecosystems to the Climate Change Index and called for civil society to have real weight in national steering committees.

Responding to members, Peng explained that the proposed STAR policy reflects the GEF-9 replenishment negotiations, including the focal areas. She said the proposed policy's blended finance elements will be part of the GEF-9 blended finance implementation plan that the 72nd Council meeting will discuss. Teelucksingh said any proposals for a chemicals/waste GBI will be considered in the context of the discussions on the GEF-10 model, which are expected to begin early in GEF-9.

Following consultations, a revised document ([GEF/C.71/06/Rev.01](#)) was circulated, stating that "the adjusted STAR formula indicates that the share of GEF-9 STAR resources allocated to SIDS/LDCs would be approximately 43%, with the final share depending on the final replenishment size. These results are preliminary and not yet final."

Council members approved the amended STAR policy.

**Decision:** The Council approves the STAR policy, which replaces and supersedes all relevant previous Council decisions regarding STAR. It takes note of the STAR index methodologies and calculations. The operational details of the special STAR window on blended finance will be further elaborated in the GEF-9 Blended Finance Implementation Arrangements for Council consideration and approval at its 72nd meeting.

The Council requests the GEF Secretariat to:



Luciana Melchert Saguas Presas, Council member, Brazil

- conduct a mid-term review of GEF-9 STAR;
- take stock of current STAR programming;
- highlight any significant under-utilizations;
- potentially develop measures to further incentivize timely programming; and
- undertake a full review of the STAR allocation model in anticipation of GEF-10.

Annex I contains the STAR policy. Annex II comprises STAR indices and calculations.

### ***GEF-9 Integrated Programs Lead Agency Terms of Reference and Selection Process***

On Sunday, Mohamed Bakarr, GEF Secretariat, introduced [GEF/C.71/13](#), noting it is an update to the terms of reference and selection process approved by the Council at its 62nd meeting in June 2022, and includes lessons learned. He noted that since GEF-6, the role of Lead Agencies has gained critical importance, now demanding stronger commitment and capability, including the ability to mobilize significant co-financing at scale, willingness to collaborate with partners and countries, and a comparative advantage for coordination. Acknowledging the importance of continuity in leadership and coordination across GEF cycles, Bakarr added that Integrated Programs evolving to GEF-9 proposing new or alternative lead agency arrangements must demonstrate capability and clear commitment to continuity frameworks.

In subsequent discussions, members welcomed the inclusion of criteria on experiences working with SIDS and mobilizing private finance. A member underscored the importance of country ownership on program implementation and informing upstream government decisions. IPAG and the CSO Network stressed including civil society and IPLCs in project design and evaluation.

Many members cautioned against agency concentration in Integrated Programs. The Secretariat specified that Integrated Programs have a lower agency concentration rate compared to the rest of GEF-8.

The Council adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The Council agrees with the proposed process for the selection of Lead Agencies and asks to be provided with a brief report on the process and outcomes at the 72nd meeting of the Council.

### ***Report of the Chairperson of the STAP***

On Sunday, STAP Chair Rosina Bierbaum presented the STAP Chairperson's report to the GEF ([GEF/STAP/C.71/Inf.01](#)). Bierbaum reviewed new science and its implications for the GEF, recent STAP reports, STAP's observations on the GEF Work Program, and plans for future STAP work.

On new science, she noted recent reports on:

- rising global temperature change;
- climate costs of growing crops;
- synchronization of fire weather across regions;
- the risk multiplier effect of extreme heat events;
- the threat of a warming Ocean on seafood supply;
- limits and safeguards in biodiversity finance;



**Rosina Bierbaum, STAP Chair**

- the public health burden of plastics; and
- exposure pathways for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

Bierbaum reviewed recommendations from the STAP report to the Assembly, including to:

- articulate an overarching GEF-9 theory of change for transformation;
- emphasize innovation risk;
- advance policy coherence across sectors, countries, and MEAs;
- strengthen CSOs' role in governance;
- influence market transformation;
- monitor to verify that systems transformation is occurring; and
- build on lessons learned from both successes and failures.

She also discussed recommendations from recent STAP reports on:

- the global hydrological cycle;
- emerging technologies and the GEF;
- illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing;
- breaking "lock in" in the chemicals and waste focal area; and
- a checklist for reviewing blended finance project proposals.

On the Work Program review, she noted only one major concern raised by the STAP and highlighted four exemplary project proposals.

As for STAP work over the next six months, Bierbaum outlined a focus on three pathways as the GEF Partnership begins implementing GEF-9: filtering global science through the GEF lens; supporting quality in the GEF investment portfolio; and supporting adaptive management and learning.

Council members strongly welcomed the value of science in underpinning solutions to environmental challenges, and the STAP's demonstrable contributions toward strengthening the GEF's work and credibility.

Some stressed the voluntary nature of the recommendations and advice. One member expressed concerns that some analyses extended beyond technical assessments and into strategic, political, or regulatory reforms, and noted certain concepts used in the reports are not recognized by all member states. The

CSO Network noted several outstanding gaps, including the need to develop an overarching GEF-9 theory of change, and to complement blended finance with strategies that shift regulation and corporate behavior toward nature-positive outcomes.

Bierbaum reflected that the STAP does not provide prescriptive recommendations, but rather diagnoses what works and what does not.

The Council took note of the report.

### ***Relations with Conventions and Other International Institutions***

On Monday, 1 June, GEF Interim CEO and Council Co-Chair Gascon introduced a panel of MEA Executive Secretaries and high-level representatives, inviting them to discuss: expectations for GEF-9; programming and policy updates; and links between the GEF and work under their respective conventions.

Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary, Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions, stressed that chemicals and waste have been treated as an adjacent, secondary consideration and GEF-9 must “mark the moment when we stop treating pollution as a footnote to planetary health.” He urged mobilizing capital beyond grants to close the finance gap and stressed de-risking, catalyzing, and unlocking relevant investments.

Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary, Minamata Convention on Mercury, highlighted new guidance for integrating chemicals and waste, and welcomed the expanded blended finance toolkit, adding that a strong GEF investment for 2027 will send a powerful signal. She called for further efforts toward integration, including bringing mercury into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). She stressed that “cutting mercury and other pollution is not a standalone cost. It is a driver of co-benefits for biodiversity and for the climate.”

Daniele Violetti, Senior Director, Programmes Coordination, UNFCCC, stressed the need to: maximize the catalytic impact of resources; leverage the Integrated Programs to deliver climate outcomes; and strengthen support to developing countries to move from commitments to implementation. He called for strategically using GEF-9 resources, and mobilizing and complementing other sources of finance, and highlighted systems transformation and integrating climate objectives among broader priorities.



**Daniele Violetti**, Senior Director, Programmes Coordination, UNFCCC



**Monika Stankiewicz**, Executive Secretary, Minamata Convention on Mercury

Asad Naqvi, Director, Implementation Support Division, CBD, welcomed GEF support for NBSAPs and national reports, emphasizing they are the foundation for implementing the GBF. He called for: focusing on sustainable use and benefit sharing in addition to conservation; a systemic shift in economic and finance systems; and simplified processes and accessible funds to drive implementation.

Cathrine Mutambirwa, Programme Coordinator, Land Degradation Neutrality and Land Restoration at the Global Mechanism, UNCCD, highlighted synergistic efforts among the Rio Conventions with GEF support and the need to scale up partnerships with the private sector, expanding to non-grant instruments (NGIs). She welcomed the GEF’s focus on droughts, calling for a cross-sectoral response and continued support for smart investments and flagship initiatives. “The work ahead is urgent, but our partnership is strong,” she noted, looking forward to a GEF-9 “that the world’s land users can feel in healthier soils, more resilient harvests, and restored hope.”

Engaging in a dialogue, Council members welcomed insight on how GEF-9 will enhance workstreams, including on country engagement strategies, and closer cooperation among MCFs. Several members urged strengthening existing funds and using them more efficiently and effectively, opposing the proliferation of new funds.

Members queried:

- ways to simplify and coordinate burdensome national reporting;
- expectations on tripling annual outflows from MCFs by 2030 when there is a reduction for the climate change focal area under GEF-9; and
- opportunities presented by the [UN80 Initiative](#) on streamlining and efficiency.

They called for greater focus on scaling for GEF-9 programming beyond project cycles, and linkages between the pollution crisis, climate, and energy. On the global plastics treaty negotiations, one member underscored the GEF as the only viable option for a funding mechanism. IPAG called for developing guidelines on actions by IPLCs analogous to those of the GBFF across other funds.



**Asad Naqvi**, Director, Implementation Support Division, CBD Secretariat, and **Cathrine Mutambirwa**, Programme Coordinator, Land Degradation Neutrality and Land Restoration, Global Mechanism, UNCCD Secretariat

Mutambirwa noted progress on the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership, highlighting GEF-9 as an opportunity for enhancing collaboration.

On reporting, Naqvi highlighted work underway using leftover GEF-8 funds to pilot a unified and simplified reporting template across MEAs. Violetti stressed the goal of tripling MCF annual outflows requires increasing coherence across MCFs and catalyzing innovative sources of funding.

Stankiewicz shared lessons learned from simplifying reporting and enacting joint work programmes with the BRS Conventions. Payet urged breaking silos and opening communication channels at the government level for efficient and effective resource use and reduced administrative burdens.

Following the panel discussion, Rawleston Moore, GEF Secretariat, introduced [GEF/C.71/07](#) on Relations with the Conventions and Other International Institutions.

Many members highlighted the GEF's role in promoting synergies among MEAs and supporting coordination at the national level. Several also welcomed cooperation with the BBNJ Agreement.

One member suggested considering how to increase the relevance of guidance from COPs to the GEF. Another urged promoting stronger scientific and technical support for decision-making in the MEAs. Noting the guidelines for tracking the 20% target of GBFF resources toward supporting IPLC actions, the CSO Network stressed counting only those actions under IPLC control.

Council members adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The Council welcomes the report and requests that the GEF Partnership continue to work with recipient countries to reflect the guidance and national priorities in their GEF programming and activities.

### ***Work Program and Budget of the GEF IEO for 2027***

On Monday, Geeta Batra, Director, IEO, presented [GEF/E/C.71/01](#), providing an update on the Work Program since the last Council meeting and outlining: the proposed Work Program and budget for 2027; the completion of the eighth comprehensive evaluation of the GEF; evaluation work underway; and the

IEO's knowledge management and outreach activities. She noted the proposed Work Program covers three areas of evaluations, on institutional, thematic, and regional and country clusters, alongside knowledge management products. She detailed the proposed budget of USD 8.233 million for 2027.

Drawing attention to the launch of the IEO country evidence series, Kseniya Temnenko, IEO, highlighted the first [StoryMap](#) focusing on Uzbekistan.

Members generally supported the proposed Work Program and budget for 2027, emphasizing the value of the IEO's work and role in strengthening the GEF's credibility. One member requested further justification for any real budgetary growth, emphasizing the need for fiscal restraint. Several stressed that any use of machine learning, or artificial intelligence (AI), be done responsibly. Some members emphasized that the reduction in size of the envelope for evaluations will require careful and impactful resource allocation. Another called on the IEO to evaluate the agency expansion procedure and the turnover rate for operational focal points (OFPs).

The CSO Network called for the upcoming four-year strategy to deepen engagement with CSOs and consider strengthening the evidence base by drawing on other knowledge systems.

Batra provided explanations on one-time budgetary costs and subsequent efficiencies, including building AI infrastructure and model testing. She noted that the IEO will publish "deep-dives" on GEF-8 NGI interventions before producing a comprehensive evaluation.

The Council adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The Council acknowledges the progress made by the IEO and approves the budget request of USD 8.233 million to carry out the Work Program for fiscal year 2027.

### ***GEF Evaluation Policy 2026***

On Monday, Fabrizio Felloni, Deputy Director, IEO, introduced document [GEF/E/C.71/02](#), noting that modifications in the Evaluation Policy reflect the evolution of the GEF Partnership and broader changes in international evaluation practices. He highlighted reinforcing accountability, mutual learning, and evidence-based decision making in an increasingly complex institutional environment. Felloni also underscored how the refined policy strengthens evaluation, including through



**Stéphane Cieniewski**, Council member, France



**Andrea Stewart**, Council member, New Zealand

innovative methods, data use, and responsible AI use, as well as the links between policy and practice.

Council members welcomed the timely updating of the Evaluation Policy, noting it balances continuity and evolution, and offers a more effective governance framework. Many welcomed the distinction between policy and operational guidance and welcomed the addition of coherence as an evaluation criterion. On AI, some called for safeguards related to confidentiality, data protection, and human supervision alongside frequent reviews, and noted AI use should be explicitly stated.

Some members underscored further strengthening exchanges with evaluation offices to promote harmonization of evaluation approaches, shared learning, and potential joint work. Others emphasized the role of OFPs and national stakeholders and the need to accompany the policy with capacity-building efforts.

The CSO Network called for enhancing the policy to strengthen tracking of CSO and IPLC project engagement. The Council approved the new GEF Evaluation Policy.

**Decision:** The Council approves the 2026 GEF Evaluation Policy, which supersedes the previous 2019 GEF Evaluation Policy and authorizes the GEF IEO to proceed with its dissemination and implementation.

### ***Evaluation of GEF Sustainable Cities Program and Management Response***

On Monday, IEO Director Batra introduced [GEF/E/C.71/03](#). Neeraj Kumar Negi, IEO, summarized the report's findings, and noted its three recommendations, namely to:

- strengthen the focus on investments and support the replication of investment pilots;
- address gaps in the global platform's coordination with, and support to, child projects while sustaining its knowledge and convening functions; and
- measure and track system-level transformation over time, consistent with the program's strategic directions.

Aloke Barnwal, GEF Secretariat, introduced the management response to the evaluation ([GEF/C.71/08](#)), noting the Secretariat's full agreement with all three IEO recommendations. Many members welcomed the documents, further appreciating the program's track record of providing co-benefits.

Members highlighted the need to:

- strengthen efforts on investments and providing predictable resources;
- strengthen links between planning, execution, and investment;
- achieve system-level transformations;
- ensure social and economic co-benefit generation;
- replicate successful experiences to strengthen impact; and
- improve follow-up and adaptive management.

The CSO Network stressed examining the risk of green gentrification, calling for safeguards to prevent investments from displacing lower income and informal residents.

In response, Barnwal highlighted, among others:

- strong collaboration with MDBs for mobilizing investment;
- selection criteria to strengthen partnerships with financial institutions in GEF-9; and
- the GEF's core priority of reducing vulnerability.

Batra noted previous studies on co-benefits, highlighted an indicator capturing social and economic benefits, and outlined the relevant knowledge products produced.

The Council adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The Council takes note of the related evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.

### ***Evaluation of GEF Support to Marginalized Groups and Management Response***

On Monday, Batra introduced [GEF/E/C.71/04](#). Kate Steingraber, IEO, summarized the report's findings, and noted its three recommendations to:

- develop and update guidance to support the engagement of marginalized groups;
- strengthen review processes to support whole-of-society engagement beyond the design stage; and
- invest in knowledge management and learning to strengthen understanding of what works, for whom, and under what conditions.

Adriana Gonçalves Moreira, GEF Secretariat, introduced the management response to the evaluation ([GEF/C.71/09](#)), noting the Secretariat agrees with all three recommendations.

Members welcomed the response's commitment to updating the 2012 [Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples](#). They emphasized the importance of:



**Nanette Laure**, Council member, Seychelles

- improving engagement and meaningful participation for women and persons with disabilities;
- effectively involving actors and stakeholders across project lifecycles;
- ensuring engagement strategies are tailored to national circumstances; and
- improving follow-through on engagement.

A member queried the level and quality of engagement with marginalized groups in fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCS).

The CSO Network called for strengthened engagement requirements under GEF-9. IPAG suggested incorporating lessons learned from IPLC involvement in the SGP in GEF-9.

Gonçalves Moreira clarified potential accountability mechanisms and modalities for engagement tracking. Batra noted that the first evaluation on FCS demonstrated women and marginalized groups were more adversely impacted.

The Council adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The Council takes note of the related evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.

### ***Lessons from Evaluating GEF Support for Policy Coherence and Management Response***

On Monday, Batra introduced [GEF/E/C.71/05](#). Steingraber summarized the report's findings and noted its three recommendations, to:

- clarify and articulate the GEF's strategic niche in supporting policy coherence, drawing on its comparative advantage and track record, while preserving the flexibility to respond to country-driven priorities;
- ensure policy coherence interventions are grounded in country contexts by systematically assessing governance conditions and institutional capacities prior to designing them; and
- leverage existing learning and monitoring mechanisms to strategically support and track outcomes of long-term policy processes.

Teelucksingh, GEF Secretariat, introduced the management response to the evaluation ([GEF/C.71/10](#)), noting the Secretariat agrees with all three recommendations. Council members supported efforts for: improved coordination; experience exchange; transformative investments; country-driven, flexible approaches aligned with national realities; and identifying harmful policies.

Several members supported the use of GEF national steering committees, with one stressing that their establishment is voluntary. The CSO Network called for formalizing civil society participation across project lifecycle phases in GEF-9.

Teelucksingh outlined the established Management Action Record undertaken by both the IEO and the GEF. She noted only a few recipient countries will pilot national steering committees in accordance with the GEF-9 Country Engagement Strategy, with lessons learned incorporated from existing committees.

The Council adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The Council takes note of the related evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.

### ***Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on BBNJ***

On Monday, Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat, introduced the draft MoU between the COP to the BBNJ Agreement and the GEF Council ([GEF/C.71/12](#)). She outlined the MoU's development, noting the GEF Trust Fund is part of the financial mechanism of the BBNJ Agreement.

Many Council members welcomed the draft MoU and highlighted its results from intense negotiations at the last session of the BBNJ Preparatory Commission. They suggested approving the MoU without further comments and amendments, noting the process may derail the delicate balance achieved.

Other members supported the two-step approach for the MoU to enter into force, inviting comments by Council members and submitting a revised MoU for consideration at BBNJ COP1. Some emphasized that the multi-fund structure of the BBNJ Agreement may require tailored arrangements. One member



GEF Council members pose for a family photo

called for equitable access to the financial mechanism, including for landlocked countries.

Others welcomed further information on the practical mechanism to coordinate resource utilization across the different funds of the BBNJ Agreement's financial mechanism.

On Tuesday, following overnight informal consultations, Council members agreed to proceed with the originally recommended decision, to invite members' comments on the draft MoU with a view to reflecting them in a revised MoU.

One member reiterated that many on the Council believe the draft MoU represents a carefully crafted text, agreed by consensus at the BBNJ Preparatory Commission, and requested reflecting this in the meeting report.

The Council adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The Council invites members to submit to the GEF Secretariat any comments on the draft MoU by 31 July 2026 and requests the GEF Secretariat to reflect their views in a revised draft MoU, and transmit it to the BBNJ COP 1, through the BBNJ Agreement interim secretariat.

### Other Business

**Dates and Format for the 72nd, 73rd, and 74th Council Meetings and Election of the Co-Chair:** The Council decided to hold its 72nd and 73rd meetings in a hybrid format in Washington DC, US, during the weeks commencing 25 January 2027 and 14 June 2027, respectively. An email will be circulated for Council approval to schedule the 74th meeting for January 2028.

The Council also decided to extend the tenure of Richard Bontjer as Co-Chair until its 72nd meeting.

**STAP Chair's Appointment:** Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UNEP, highlighted the role of the STAP in times when science and the multilateral system face growing pressures. Emphasizing that science offers a foundation for cooperation and guides collective action on interconnected environmental challenges, she explained that hosting the STAP is not only an institutional responsibility for UNEP, but also a stewardship role, as it fully respects the Panel's independence and scientific integrity.

Andersen commended outgoing STAP Chair Rosina Bierbaum for her leadership, noting she will conclude her term in June 2026. She suggested appointing Edward Carr as interim Chair



Inger Andersen, UNEP Executive Director

for one year. She added that the current panel membership will remain in place during the interim period.

The Council adopted the decision on the appointment of the interim STAP Chair.

## Report of the 40th LDCF/SCCF Council Meeting

### Opening of the Meeting and Adoption of the Agenda

On Tuesday, 2 June, Interim CEO Gascon opened the meeting, noting it takes place at a critical moment for the funds and the communities they serve. Gascon explained that with this final Work Program under GEF-8, the LDCF reaches 44 LDCs with total programming of over USD 750 million, while the SCCF expands its reach with 40 projects, 25 of which are in non-LDC SIDS.

Council Co-Chair Bontjer noted the adaptation strategy reflects an inclusive process with “an evolutionary and practical result that does not reinvent the wheel—but builds on what it does well,” and welcomed the aspirational target directing 20% of resources for actions that benefit IPLCs.

Evans Njewa, on behalf of the LDC Group, said the Work Program demonstrates a collective agreement to support vulnerable communities. He stressed further efforts to close the finance gap, drawing attention to seven technically cleared projects that are unlikely to be approved for implementation under GEF-8 due to insufficient resources. Njewa highlighted the accelerating impacts of climate change that SIDS and LDCs face, calling for urgency and determination.

The LDCF/SCCF Council approved the meeting agenda ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.40/01](#)).

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

On Tuesday, Jason Spensley and Tshewang Dorji, GEF Secretariat, presented the Programming Strategy ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.40/02](#)), which proposes three priority themes: agriculture and food systems; water; and nature-based solutions (NbS) and infrastructure. It also outlines four distinct approaches to drive transformational adaptation: policy integration and country leadership; adaptive social protection; partnerships with



Jason Spensley, GEF Secretariat

development banks and financial institutions; and innovative finance and market development.

The Strategy also foresees two indicative financial scenarios, depending on available contributions with total resources of USD 1 and 1.3 billion for the LDCF, and USD 200 and 300 million for the SCCF.

Council members welcomed the draft strategy and its:

- priority themes;
- target for supporting locally-led adaptation or adaptation actions that benefit IPLCs;
- target for greater collaboration with MCFs; and
- emphasis on mobilizing private finance.

Members also welcomed details about the financial scenarios underpinning the draft strategy. One member stressed the scenarios' levels should be viewed as minimums. Several members urged those in a position to do so to contribute to the two funds. One member said the GEF Partnership needs to reflect on how to broaden the donor base.

The CSO Network and IPAG urged changing monitoring indicators to more accurately track progress toward the IPLC target.

Spensley assured members that work on new guidance for the monitoring framework is underway, and tracking regarding IPLCs will be done separately and in addition to the results framework.

The Council adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The LDCF/SCCF Council welcomes the GEF Programming Strategy and Operational Improvements on Adaptation to Climate Change for the LDCF and the SCCF for the GEF-9 period of July 2026 to June 2030 and endorses it as a basis for programming resources under the funds.

### ***Work Program for the LDCF and the SCCF***

On Tuesday, Aoki presented the Work Program ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.40/03](#)), noting the GEF Council's approval of USD 67.64 million for both funds. She highlighted: four LDCs accessing LDCF resources for the first time in GEF-8; a focus on FCS; significant international financial institution (IFI) engagement and co-financing; and alignment with thematic and sectoral priorities.

Olusola Ikuforiji, GEF Secretariat, outlined the Work Program's seven projects for the LDCF, including one multi-trust fund project, and one for the SCCF. Aoki and Ikuforiji presented updates on programming and results so far, and key risk analyses of both funds.

Council members supported the Work Program, commending that 44 of 46 LDCs and 28 of 30 SIDS will have benefitted during the GEF-8 period. They welcomed its focus on gender considerations, its broad geographic coverage, and coherence and complementarity with other MCFs.

Members called for:

- more balanced agency diversification, particularly for the SCCF;
- monitoring financial service usage; and
- integrating NbS where possible.



**Evans Njewa**, former Chair and representative of the LDC Group

A few members expressed concerns that some projects were not included due to resource constraints, calling for their future consideration. Others queried the lack of SCCF projects, and an overemphasis on co-financing.

The CSO Network called for measuring and reporting indicators on civil society engagement in GEF-9.

On the diversity of agencies working in SCCF Window A (on SIDS), Aoki noted that the GEF-8 country cap of USD 3 million affected Implementing Agency distribution. She indicated the Secretariat would develop guidelines to enable target monitoring and reporting in GEF-9. Aoki highlighted that more projects are integrating NbS beyond small-scale implementation, presenting alternatives to grey infrastructure.

Ikuforiji emphasized that co-financing is not a determinant of the projects' financing and outlined the process for determining the selection of co-financing agencies.

The Council approved the Work Program.

**Decision:** The LDCF/SCCF Council approves the Work Program comprising seven projects for the LDCF and one project for the SCCF. Total resources approved in this Work Program amount to USD 64.71 million from the LDCF and USD 2.94 million from the SCCF, including GEF project financing and agency fees. Annex A contains project proposals submitted for LDCF/SCCF Council approval.

### ***Administrative Budget and Business Plan for the LDCF and the SCCF for 2027***

On Tuesday, Juan Pablo Hoffmaister, GEF Secretariat, presented the budget ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.40/04](#)). He outlined main accomplishments during 2026, including finalization of the GEF-9 LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy, development of the GEF-9 results framework, and development of two Work Programs totaling USD 121.87 million. The budget requested for 2027 totals USD 8.1 million for both funds.

Members commended the Secretariat for their prudent financial management that resulted in underspending for 2026, with some welcoming the aspirational target of 10% for coordinated investments with MCFs and the Program/Project-based Implementation Approach Capacity Building Program. Several members queried the personnel and IT budget increase, and how the administrative budget compares to the funds' overall resources.

The Secretariat clarified that two of the vacancies already approved for 2026 will be filled in 2027, and the one new hire will bring expertise and focus on resource mobilization. They specified that the increase in IT expenditure pertains to a one-time cost of upgrading the submission, review, and tracking portal. Furthermore, they stressed that the administrative costs remain far below industry standards for both funds.

The Council approved the proposed budget for the GEF Secretariat, STAP, and Trustee.

**Decision:** The LDCF/SCCF Council approves the 2027 administrative budget and business plan for the LDCF and the SCCF for the GEF Secretariat, STAP, and Trustee as follows:

- USD 4,981,637 (GEF Secretariat), USD 140,000 (STAP), and USD 612,000 (Trustee) from the LDCF; and
- USD 1,786,416 (GEF Secretariat), USD 140,000 (STAP), and USD 150,100 (Trustee) from the SCCF.

### ***LDCF/SCCF Annual Evaluation Report 2026 and Management Response***

On Tuesday, IEO Director Batra introduced [GEF/LDCF.SCCF.40/E/01](#). Anna Birgitta Viggh, IEO, detailed the report's findings, stressing that the LDCF and SCCF are delivering results, with 83% of evaluated projects demonstrating satisfactory outcomes. She added, however, that while delivery is strong, project sustainability is not.

She noted three recommendations, calling for strengthening:

- sustainability and scaling at the project design and review stages;
- quality-at-entry reviews to better align project design with implementation realities in LDCs and FCS; and
- the implementation and use of monitoring and evaluation systems to improve outcomes and learning.

Presenting the management response ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.40/05](#)), Dorji said the Secretariat accepted all three recommendations. He noted some are already reflected in the just-approved programming strategy for the LDCF and SCCF.

Council members welcomed the documents' insights. The Council adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The LDCF/SCCF Council takes note of the related evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.



**Barthélémy Lamba**, Council member, Central African Republic

### ***Work Program and Budget for the GEF IEO under the LDCF and the SCCF for 2027***

On Tuesday, Batra introduced the Work Program and budget ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.40/E/02](#)), noting plans to produce a Program Evaluation of the LDCF/SCCF during 2027 and an annual evaluation report, as well as conduct knowledge management activities.

The CSO Network called for explicit, structured beneficiary engagement strategies and formally incorporating community consultations. They encouraged the IEO to strengthen focus on equity and power dynamics beyond institutional performance and typologies, and to improve local actors' access to knowledge products.

Batra indicated the IEO would address these gaps.

The Council adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The Council approves the annual budget of USD 283,762 to carry out the Work Program for 2027. The approved budget is being distributed as follows:

- USD 152,157 from the LDCF; and
- USD 131,605 from the SCCF.

### ***Report of the Sixth GBFF Council Meeting***

#### ***Opening of the Meeting and Adoption of the Agenda***

On Tuesday, Interim CEO Gascon addressed progress since the Fund was launched in August 2023. He highlighted an expanded, diverse contributor base, including the GEF's first non-sovereign donor, the Government of Québec.

Co-Chair Bontjer reflected on the Fund's influence on GEF-9 directions by breaking ground, challenging old ideas, and driving engagement. He emphasized that its track record of meeting or surpassing all three portfolio-level targets exemplifies how these objectives can drive rather than constrain progress.

"Decisions on biodiversity finance taken today will determine whether future risks to economies are mitigated or amplified," stated Asad Naqvi, CBD Secretariat, stressing the socioeconomic and sustainable development co-benefits of implementing the GBF. With over 90% of the USD 387.2 million in contributions already programmed, he urged scaling up investment to enable actions to continue.

The Council approved the meeting agenda ([GEF/GBFF.06/01/Rev.01](#)).

#### ***Work Program for the GBFF***

On Tuesday, Aoki presented the document ([GEF/GBFF.06/02/Rev.01](#)). The Work Program comprises two projects in India and Papua New Guinea, totaling approximately USD 20 million, with an average of 39% supporting actions by IPLCs. Benjamin Singer, GEF Secretariat, highlighted that both projects focus on areas with high levels of biodiversity and poverty, delivering environmental and socioeconomic benefits.

Council members welcomed the Work Program, noting the strong focus on IPLCs and gender responsiveness. Some members welcomed its Implementing Agency diversity and linkages to innovative finance mechanisms.



**Benjamin Singer**, GEF Secretariat

Observers stressed that the current financial architecture often creates barriers for IPLCs. They called for respect to their right to self-determination during the selection of financial mechanisms and supported mandating alignment with the CBD Gender Plan of Action as a project requirement.

One member pointed out the lack of GBFF projects in North Africa.

In response, Singer said the Secretariat is working to improve regional distribution and that one agency currently has 21% of the projects, an IFI has 16%, and five GEF agencies have yet to seek GBFF funding.

Regarding proposals for enhanced observer roles in the project review process, Aoki said these would first require the Council to amend the project cycle policy.

The Council adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The GBFF Council approves the GBFF Work Program comprising two projects, subject to comments made prior and during the Council meeting and additional comments that may be submitted in writing to the Secretariat by 1 July 2026. Total GBFF resources approved in the Work Program amount to USD 20.544 million, including GEF project financing and agency fees.

### ***Administrative Budget and Business Plan for the GBFF for 2027***

On Tuesday, Sumeet Kaur, GEF Secretariat, presented [GEF/GBFF.06/03](#). She noted that in 2026, the GBFF completed its first and opened its second programming tranche, allocating USD 201.6 million and USD 160.5 million, respectively. Kaur also highlighted the launch of the Guidelines on Actions by IPLCs and the establishment of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Predictability of Financing. She outlined planned activities for 2027 and noted the requested GBFF budget represents a 6.6% reduction from 2026.

Council members expressed appreciation for the zero-growth Secretariat budget and efforts toward cost efficiency. Among others, they sought clarification on recruitment, introduced costs on travel and the Country Engagement Strategy, and the utilization of remaining funds from the 2026 budget.

Several members stressed the need to ensure administrative expenditure is proportionate, urging the prioritization of resources

flowing to country-level implementation. One member proposed lowering administrative costs by reducing the frequency and duration of meetings.

In response, Aoki reported that a mid-level post is expected to be filled to support the Country Engagement Strategy. She noted that past fiscal year savings are returned to the GEF Trust Fund and outlined: savings regarding meeting arrangements; necessary travel costs for CBD meetings; and GEF-wide IT infrastructure expenditure.

The Council approved the proposed budget for the GEF Secretariat, STAP, and Trustee.

**Decision:** The GBFF Council approves the proposed 2027 budget amounting to USD 2,675,351 for the GEF Secretariat, USD 297,840 for the STAP, and USD 495,000 for the Trustee.

### ***Towards a Resource Mobilization Strategy for the GBFF 2026-2030***

On Tuesday, Aoki and Kaur presented [GEF/GBFF.06/04](#), noting it is a revised version of the initial proposal based on the recommendations from the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Predictability of Financing.

The document outlines USD 387.2 million in contributions from 11 contributors since August 2023, and two funding scenarios assuming USD 500 and 750 million were contributed.

Kelly Sharp, Co-Chair of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group, outlined the Group's activities and discussions. She explained the Group recommends several key actions to support implementation and four pillars of contributions, from sovereign countries, subnational and regional public institutions, philanthropic and private foundations, and the private sector.

Members welcomed the revised strategy. Some stressed the need to expand the donor base and support innovative measures to attract contributions from the private sector, private foundations, and philanthropies, including new programs, earmarked resources, and bond issuance. Some called for a discussion on costs and benefits before proceeding with any one option.

One member supported eliminating the distinction between sovereign and non-sovereign donors, while others noted that contributions must respect the intergovernmental nature of



**Jon Heikki Aas**, Council member, Norway



Heitor Dellasta, Global Youth Biodiversity Network

the process, align with priorities of receiving countries, and complement, not replace, sovereign funding. Some cautioned private sector involvement must be subject to rigorous safeguards.

The Global Youth Biodiversity Network lamented that observers were not afforded more input into the final version of the Strategy.

Kaur assured members that all non-sovereign donors would be rigorously screened, and that innovative resource mobilization actions would be subject to Council approval. She added that the Secretariat would examine how to further engage observers in resource mobilization efforts.

The Council adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The GBFF Council approves the document, Towards a Resource Mobilization Strategy for the GBFF 2026-2030, and:

- requests the Secretariat to provide an annual progress update on GBFF resource mobilization;
- calls for new and additional contributions from all sources to support the continuous, rapid, and robust capitalization of the GBFF; and
- asks the Secretariat to enhance efforts to mobilize resources in line with the document.

### ***Progress Report on the GBFF***

On Tuesday, Jurgis Sapijanskas, GEF Secretariat, introduced [GEF/GBFF.06/05](#), reporting on the process for the fifth round of project selections, the GBFF portfolio to date, and its anticipated global environmental benefits. Sapijanskas drew attention to the Guidelines on the Implementation of the GBFF Results Framework ([GEF/GBFF.06/Inf.02](#)).

Razan Nimir, GEF Secretariat, provided key updates on the GBFF governance arrangements, namely the Auxiliary Body, Advisory Group of Non-Sovereign Participants, and GBFF Observers.

Sandra Naumann, GBFF Advisory Group, reported on the Group's activities since the Council last met. She explained that the Group had identified a range of potential contributors and stressed creating momentum and enabling conditions for engagement. She cited the need for:

- clear, accessible pathways for contributions;
- defining the value proposition for donors; and
- framing participation as part of broader collective efforts, specifically for local and subnational governments.

Members welcomed the report, noting improvements in regional balance and alignment with portfolio targets.

Some queried the ceiling on the portfolio targets regarding LDCs and SIDS, while others called for additional financial contributions, particularly from non-sovereign actors. One member stressed that deeper engagement with MDBs and emphasis on NGIs can create barriers to countries with limited institutional capacities. An IPLC representative drew attention to the distinction between actions by and for IPLCs.

The Secretariat explained that the 61% ceiling for non-LDCs and SIDS was agreed in the Policy for the Allocation of Resources to ensure representation from vulnerable countries. For IPLC actions, they stressed that since the approval of the new guidelines, the Secretariat tracks actions by IPLCs.

The Council adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The GBFF Council welcomes the report and takes note of the progress made in the operations of the GBFF. It requests the Secretariat to prepare a report for the +3% portion of the portfolio-level target “36% + 3% of GBFF resources allocated to SIDS and LDCs” for the Council to review at its seventh meeting.

### ***Options to Facilitate the Achievement of the Portfolio Target Related to IFIs***

On Wednesday, 3 June, Sino Tohirzoda, Co-Chair, GBFF Auxiliary Body, presented [GEF/GBFF.06/06](#). He highlighted the portfolio-level target for programming 25% of resources through IFIs that are GEF Implementing Agencies, stressing it has been exceeded to date, as 30.4%, or USD 110.07 million, of programmed GBFF resources have been channeled through six IFIs.

Tohirzoda outlined key findings from a survey of GEF OFPs. He focused on advantages of IFIs, such as: co-financing opportunities; technical expertise and capacity; strong management systems; and experience with innovative financial mechanisms. He also addressed key challenges in working with IFIs as Implementing Agencies, including: complex and lengthy



Sino Tohirzoda, Co-Chair, GBFF Auxiliary Body



**Fatumanava-o-Upolu III Pa'olelei Luteru**, Council member, Samoa

procedures; limited flexibility for national circumstances; and insufficient biodiversity expertise. Tohirzoda further highlighted the Auxiliary Body's recommendations, including strengthening coordination and IFIs' biodiversity-related capacities.

Members welcomed the report and recommendations. Some urged: strengthening dialogue between IFIs and countries, including engaging with OFPs when designing projects; and agreeing on concrete steps on IFI staffing, capacity, and regional presence. One member stressed that any transition toward increased IFI participation should take place in a balanced and predictable manner, aligned with national coordination and planning processes.

Members also queried: IFI engagement in the survey; harmonizing and simplifying IFI procedures; and how working with IFIs has influenced their overall portfolio and investments.

Tohirzoda underscored IFIs' advantages in leveraging finance and noted that further engagement with IFIs will assist in deepening mutual understanding and increasing their participation.

The Council adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The GBFF Council welcomes the recommendations of the GBFF Auxiliary Body and requests the Secretariat and the GEF IFI agencies to implement the recommendations directed to them.

### ***Second Formative Evaluation of the GBFF and Management Response***

On Wednesday, GEF IEO Director Batra introduced the evaluation ([GEF/GBFF.06/E/01](#)), explaining it assesses the Fund's early design, governance, and initial portfolio of 82 projects selected across five selection rounds.

Anupam Anand, IEO, summarized the evaluation's findings, including:

- strong demand for GBFF funding;
- successful early mobilization of resources and meeting programming directives;
- improved project design;
- project concentration in certain GBF targets;
- whole-of-society participation with varying degrees of engagement; and
- high donor base concentration.

- He also noted four IEO recommendations aiming to:
  - enhance coordination across the GEF family of funds;
  - strengthen feedback and technical review in the competitive programming model;
  - strengthen implementation of the enhanced Results Framework; and
  - improve reporting on whole-of-society participation and governance outcomes.

Singer delivered the management response ([GEF/GBFF.06/07](#)), noting the Secretariat agrees with all four recommendations and has already made progress on several elements.

Council members welcomed the evaluation and the management response. Several underscored the feedback recommendation, especially regarding why proposals are not selected. Others stressed the finding on donor concentration, with one suggesting development of "an elevator pitch" on the GBFF's added value to attract new donors. The CBD Women's Caucus stressed that women need to be seen as partners in decision-making and implementation.

One member asked why there were not more projects in GBFF Action Areas 7 (invasive alien species) and 8 (biosafety, biotechnology, and access and benefit sharing). Another praised the cross-fertilization underway between the GBFF and the GEF family of funds as new ideas are tested and lessons learned exchanged.

The International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity requested including the Guidelines on Actions by IPLCs as part of the periodic review. The CBD Secretariat proposed shifting focus to GBF targets that are underserved, including Targets 14 (integrating biodiversity in policies), 16 (sustainable consumption), 18 (reducing harmful incentives), and 19 (resource mobilization).

Singer noted more proposals were needed on Action Areas 7 and 8 and encouraged countries and agencies to submit projects on these topics. When asked how the GBFF sets itself apart in the GEF family of funds, Singer replied that investing in the GBFF is like investing venture capital: the GBFF could pilot and test new approaches, such as a novel approach to IPLCs, a simplified and mainstreamed project cycle, and an innovative



**Geeta Batra**, Director, IEO

resource mobilization strategy, with the possibility of scaling across the GEF if successful. He also highlighted that the underserved GBF targets correspond to GBFF Action Areas 4 (resource mobilization), 5 (sustainable use of biodiversity), and 6 (biodiversity mainstreaming), where blended finance approaches can be most useful.

The Council adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The GBFF Council takes note of the related evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.

### **Work Program and Budget for the IEO for 2027**

On Wednesday, GEF IEO Director Batra and Deputy Director Felloni introduced [GEF/GBFF.06/E/02](#). The Work Program includes the preparation of the annual evaluation report of the GBFF, focusing on: implementation of previous IEO recommendations; strategic coherence; portfolio coherence and value addition; quality of entry and results architecture; implementation performance; and inclusion. Felloni noted the proposed budget for 2027 amounts to USD 561,000, marking a 25% reduction compared to the previous year.

One member queried whether project implementation reports will be ready in time for the evaluation and the difference compared to the IEO budget for the LDCF/SCCF. Another stressed continuing to examine challenges in access to financing, including those related to operational complexities, approval timelines, and institutional capacity.

In response, Batra and Felloni highlighted the importance of early and real-time implementation evaluations, including on the management side. They attributed the increased budget compared to the LDCF/SCCF to the novelty of the Fund, pointing out that the yearly reduction demonstrates efficiencies taking effect as experience is accumulated.

The Council adopted the decision.

**Decision:** The GBFF Council approves the annual budget of USD 561,000 for the IEO to implement the work program for 2027, noting the budget is within the previously approved three-year budget framework.

### **Co-Chairs Joint Summary and Closing of the Council Meetings**

On Wednesday, Council Secretary Noemi Hernández Rodríguez Borjas presented, paragraph by paragraph, the joint summary of the Co-Chairs of the 71st meeting of the GEF Trust Fund Council, the 40th meeting of the LDCF/SCCF Council, and the sixth meeting of the GBFF Council ([GEF/C.71/Joint Summary](#)), which was reviewed.

On the GEF Council, one member requested reflecting in the report that the US and others had stressed the importance of directing STAR country allocations to “the poorest countries.” Another member underscored the need to prioritize hybrid formats for future meetings. Hernández Rodríguez Borjas noted the summary will reflect that the relevant decision is adopted pending budget availability. She also pointed to the inclusion of a footnote to Decision 11 (2027 Work Program and Budget of the IEO), reflecting that “the US did not join the consensus.”



Noemi Hernández Rodríguez Borjas, Council Secretary, GEF Secretariat

The Council approved the joint summary with no further comments.

Interim CEO Gascon underscored members’ instrumental guidance and sense of cooperation in directing the meetings.

In closing remarks, Co-Chair Bontjer emphasized the Council’s unique role in addressing global environmental challenges, noting it stands out for its constructive engagement on tackling the “hard issues” and achieving positive outcomes.

Hernández Rodríguez Borjas closed the meetings at 11:20 am.

### **Report of the Civil Society Forum**

The Civil Society Forum met on Wednesday afternoon, 3 June, bringing together CSOs, IPLCs, women, youth, GEF member countries, Implementing Agencies, and other stakeholders to: share their priorities, interests, and experiences; elevate community perspectives; and strengthen participation in global environmental governance.

In his introductory statement, GEF Interim CEO Gascon highlighted that the whole-of-society approach was central to the GEF-9 negotiations and drew attention to the approval of the 20% aspirational target for IPLCs across the GEF’s family of funds.

Aziz Abdulkhakov, Advisor to the President of Uzbekistan on Environment, and Chairman, National Committee on Ecology, explained that CSOs are becoming important platforms for public participation and require better access to data and involvement in the decision-making process. He called for establishing a regional network of environmental non-governmental organizations in Central Asia to facilitate knowledge exchange.



Faizal Parish, Chair, GEF CSO Network



Artistic performance at the start of the eighth GEF Assembly

Faizal Parish, Chair, GEF CSO Network, called for changing business-as-usual practices in project design and implementation by engaging civil society in all steps.

CSO Network Vice-Chair Sagar Aryal presented findings from the Network's series of "Whole-of-Society Talks" held over the last year.

Panel discussions convened on: scaling community-led solutions; and finance, governance, and accountability. Our full coverage of the Civil Society Forum can be found [here](#).

## Report of the Eighth GEF Assembly

### Opening of the Assembly

**Election of the Chair and Vice-Chairs:** On Thursday, 4 June, GEF Interim CEO Gascon welcomed delegates to the eighth GEF Assembly. The Assembly elected, by acclamation, Aziz Abdukhakimov, Advisor to the President of Uzbekistan on Environment, and Chairman, National Committee on Ecology and Climate Change, as Chair. Members also elected Maina Vakafua Talia, Minister of Home Affairs, Climate Change and Environment, Tuvalu, and Shuichi Hosoda, Deputy Vice Minister of Finance for International Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Japan, as Vice-Chairs for recipient and donor countries, respectively.

Chair Abdukhakimov stressed that environmental sustainability and transitioning to a green economy have become key priorities for Uzbekistan and drew attention to several national environmental targets, including on emission reductions and reforestation. He highlighted GEF support to developing countries as the world faces interconnected environmental challenges "that transcend national borders and require collective action at an unprecedented scale."

**Adoption of the Agenda and Organization of Work:** Chair Abdukhakimov presented the Assembly's agenda ([GEF/A.08/01](#)).

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION queried the lack of interpretation in all official UN languages. The Secretariat explained that the meeting's modalities were agreed at the 70th GEF Council.

The Assembly adopted the agenda and approved the organization of work.

**Statement by the GEF IEO:** GEF IEO Director Batra stressed that the GEF's commitment to accountability and learning underpins its relevance and effectiveness. She highlighted the GEF's capacity to "reflect, adapt, and improve," ensuring past experiences translate to future results. Presenting the Eighth Overall Performance Study of the GEF (OPS8) ([GEF/A.8/05](#)), she noted that over 80% of projects have achieved their objectives.

GERMANY explained that the Study demonstrates a "strong scientific and results-oriented backbone in a world increasingly threatened by misinformation." They stressed that OPS8 recommendations for simpler access, stronger innovation and risk taking, and more consistent social inclusion have already been translated into concrete reforms for GEF-9.

**Statement by the STAP:** STAP Chair Bierbaum said GEF-9 comes at a pivotal moment for global environmental progress, highlighting the GEF's role in promoting the shift to durable, equitable, and transformational outcomes.

Delegates viewed a video summarizing the findings and recommendations of "Accelerating transformation in turbulent times: STAP's report to the Eighth GEF Assembly" ([GEF/A.08/06](#)).

GERMANY thanked the STAP for its science-based contributions to the GEF-9 negotiations, noting they are reflected in the final GEF-9 package. They said the STAP report shows the GEF's strong track record in implementing scientific advice.

**Statements by Civil Society and IPLCs:** Faizal Parish, Chair, CSO Network, called for:

- new pledges for GEF-9 to match or exceed GEF-8;
- direct funding access for CSOs across the GEF family of funds;
- incorporating CSOs into project development;
- deepened CSO engagement in regional and transboundary projects supported by the GEF;
- a strengthened role for youth; and
- expansion of education and capacity-building programs, drawing on civil society's expertise.

Vivian Silole, IPAG, said a healthy planet is only possible when the rights of Indigenous Peoples are fully respected and they are treated as partners. She celebrated GEF-supported Indigenous conservation initiatives and Indigenous-led projects



Vivian Silole, IPAG



**Amelia Arreguín Prado**, GEF Women and Gender Caucus

and highlighted the GEF-9 target of directing at least 20% of financing toward IPLCs, underscoring it is the fruit of years of work, dialogue, and perseverance by Indigenous Peoples.

“Women and girls, in all our diversity, are more than beneficiaries. We are knowledge and rights holders, environmental defenders, and leaders,” in the words of Amelia Arreguín Prado, GEF Women and Gender Caucus, who called on countries to fulfill their obligations on delivering adequate public finance “with the urgency that our planetary crises demand.” Urging the Caucus’ formal recognition, Arreguín Prado noted its role as an effective partner in ensuring direct access to, and impactful utilization of, funds.

“The whole-of-society is at the heart of GEF-9,” said Heitor Dellastas, upcoming GEF Youth Network, emphasizing that youth stand ready, as proven effective partners, to design and implement global environmental solutions. He called for integrating their meaningful participation and contributions across GEF processes, highlighting the creation of a GEF-wide youth engagement strategy as a first step.

**Funding Retrospective:** Vice-Chair Talia introduced the GEF-8 funding retrospective ([GEF/A.08/04](#)). The Assembly took note of the report.

**Report on GEF-9:** Gascon presented the report on GEF-9 ([GEF/A.08/03](#)), which was endorsed by the GEF Council on [Sunday, 31 May](#). He stressed that the successful conclusion of GEF-9 negotiations represents a renewed vote of confidence in multilateralism and the GEF Partnership, and signals the importance of delivering global environmental benefits, “for everyone, everywhere.” Among the upcoming replenishment’s priorities, Gascon highlighted:

- advancing whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches;
- deepening support to IPLCs;
- scaling up blended finance to unlock greater investment;
- sustaining robust support for LDCs and SIDS; and
- streamlining and facilitating countries’ access to GEF resources.

Stressing that GEF-9 will be implemented during a time that is characterized by declining development assistance, rising debt burdens, and growing geopolitical uncertainties, EGYPT called



**Saida Mirziyoyeva**, Head of the Presidential Administration, Uzbekistan

for: coherence; scaled up, predictable public financing; and clear focus on results. CÔTE D’IVOIRE stressed the need for more contributors to unlock finance under GEF-9, stressing that an expanded contributor base would strengthen inclusive governance.

The Assembly took note of the report.

### **High-level Opening Ceremony**

On Thursday, delegates watched a video highlighting global environmental challenges and Uzbekistan’s role in international cooperation with GEF support.

Welcoming participants to the ancient city of Samarkand, Saida Mirziyoyeva, Head of the Presidential Administration, Uzbekistan, on behalf of the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, stressed the GEF’s vital role in addressing the triple planetary crisis. She described Uzbekistan’s ecological transformation as a new development model and presented initiatives on: air quality protection; biodiversity conservation and protected areas; waste management; and environmental education, research, and innovation.

Mirziyoyeva suggested declaring Samarkand the “Green Investment and Innovation Capital” of Central Asia. She announced that Uzbekistan will become a GEF donor and drew attention to, among other things, the establishment of the National Framework for Hydrometeorology and Climate Services, and the “Clean Air of Central Asia” interstate consortium combating transboundary air pollution in collaboration with Kazakhstan.

UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen, speaking on behalf of the GEF Agencies, highlighted that the GEF was created from the recognition that environmental challenges transcend national borders. She said the GEF’s science-based solutions have reached communities, protected nature, underwritten resilience, and helped governments deliver on their commitments, through local, national, and regional actions. Andersen endorsed the criticality of blended finance, called for sectoral integration and agency collaboration, and congratulated the GEF Secretariat, Trustee, and Council members for GEF-9.

Speaking for the GEF Conventions, Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary, BRS Conventions, underlined that the GEF ensures convention commitments become reality. Noting that overlapping environmental pressures affect all economies and communities, he welcomed the new GEF guidance on integrated programming



**Rolph Payet**, Executive Secretary, BRS Conventions

and a whole-of-society approach as major steps forward. He added that relying on traditional grant financing alone is no longer sufficient, nor sustainable, stressing that “NGIs are no longer optional if we are to move into scale.”

Gascon noted the symbolism of convening in Samarkand, “the jewel of the silk road, where peoples, ideas, and commerce have converged over the centuries to solve the challenges of their times.” Welcoming Uzbekistan’s leadership and action on advancing environmental solutions, Gascon urged the Assembly to choose partnership, progress, and possibility. “Let us seize this moment together with solidarity, courage, and respect for those who came before us, and determination to leave a better world for those who are yet to come.”

To the sounds of Mother Earth’s pleas for justice, a performance by an Uzbek ballet company stressed the urgency of stepping forward and taking responsibility for humanity’s environmental destruction.

### **High-level Roundtables**

On Thursday and Friday, a series of roundtables convened under nine themes addressing the diverse yet interconnected pillars for delivering GEF-9 ambitions and policy directions, in the final push toward 2030. Each roundtable brought together ministers, heads of international organizations, and representatives of civil society and IPLCs, aiming to present forward-looking solutions to the triple planetary crisis and delve into the critical dimensions that collectively shape the global environmental response.

On Thursday, 4 June, roundtables convened on:

- how blended finance and the private sector can bridge the funding gap;
- accelerating delivery for environmental outcomes;
- how the GEF can leverage the conventions and its family of funds to deliver on the 2030 goals;
- leaving no country behind: SIDS, LDCs, and fragile and vulnerable countries; and
- forging partnerships for land and water in Central Asia and beyond.

Our full coverage of Thursday’s roundtable sessions can be found [here](#).

On Friday, 5 June, participants reconvened for a second series of roundtable discussions.

**Accelerating Delivery for Environmental Outcomes:** A second panel of this roundtable was moderated by Kaveh Zahedi, Assistant Director General and Director, Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO).

Noting that time is running out towards 2030, Alisher Salomov, Advisor to the Minister of Ecology, Uzbekistan, urged hastening implementation to ensure commitments are translated into results on the ground. He noted that climate change, biodiversity, and pollution are becoming increasingly interconnected challenges that demand increased effectiveness of environmental investments.

Ali Shareef, Minister of Climate Change, Environment, and Energy, Maldives, stressed the importance of the GEF, the GCF, and other environmental funds for SIDS, including in addressing co-financing bottlenecks and building institutional capacity. He urged flexibility when setting co-financing targets and highlighted the importance of integrated collaborative approaches between the public and private sectors.

Noting her country’s commitment to climate finance, Annette Windmeisser, Head of Climate Finance, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany, stressed that public finance alone cannot bridge the funding gap. She highlighted the GEF’s capacity to leverage co-financing, reduce risks, improve coordination, and ultimately make real impacts.

Gianpiero Nacci, Managing Director, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), called for not only moving private capital towards green investments, but also increasing the supply of bankable and large-scale projects. He called for increasing capacity-building interventions, regulations, and standardization for private capital to flow.

Ramzi Issa, Managing Partner, Enosis Capital, explained that standardization can be hard to achieve in the environmental sector across different countries. He highlighted the importance of de-risking investments and innovative financial instruments in unlocking new or existing capital from MDBs and the private sector.

Frank Rijsberman, Global Head, Policy and Public Funding, The Nature Conservancy, called for faster delivery and execution



**Ramzi Issa**, Managing Partner, Enosis Capital

systems, saying that scaling works when finance, policy, and implementation systems are aligned from the start. He urged long-term planning and said GEF financing can often be the missing piece of risk reduction.

**How Can the GEF Leverage the Conventions and Its Family of Funds to Deliver on the 2030 Goals?** The second session of this roundtable was moderated by Musonda Mumba, Secretary General, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The panel opened with Rohey John Manjang, Minister of Environment, Climate Change, and Natural Resources, The Gambia, highlighting the critical role the GEF has played in supporting LDC ecosystems. She stressed closing the gap between approval and disbursement time and increasing the predictability of access to financial resources.

Highlighting their consistent support for the GEF throughout the years, Shuichi Hosoda, Deputy Vice Minister of Finance for International Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Japan, called for effective use of GEF resources to maximize their impact by: supporting SIDS and LDCs; mobilizing blended finance and expanding NGIs; and enhancing Integrated Programs.

Noting that time is running out, Mónica Navarro Del Valle, Minister of Environment and Energy, Costa Rica, called for adequate financing, timely and simplified access, and stronger institutional and technical support. Urging coherence across financial mechanisms and international processes, she highlighted the GEF's strategic position as a financial mechanism serving multiple conventions.

Kamal Rohitha Uduwawala, Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka, outlined the transboundary nature of marine ecosystem challenges and called for sustainable ocean governance, including through the BBNJ Agreement. He urged cross-sectoral approaches across MEAs and highlighted the importance of the GEF and private-sector financing.

Kelly Sharp, Deputy Director for Climate and Nature Finance, Environment and Climate Change Canada, stressed that while traditional donors remain at the core of GEF funding, new sovereign, non-sovereign, public, and private donors are needed to close the finance gap. She underscored ways to achieve this through: changes in governance to attract the private sector; new contribution models, including through bonds; and increased use of NGIs.



**Kelly Sharp**, Deputy Director for Climate and Nature Finance, Environment and Climate Change Canada

Recalling Switzerland's strong support for the GEF since its inception, Katrin Schneeberger, State Secretary and Director, Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland, praised the GEF for its adaptability to new challenges and opportunities. Highlighting growing environmental challenges, geopolitical uncertainties, and fiscal constraints, she stressed the need to provide effective and efficient support to recipient countries and expand the donor base. Schneeberger also called for enhanced integration at the international and national levels and increased private-sector engagement.

**Leveraging Public ODA to Scale Impact: Expanding Resource Mobilization for the GEF:** This roundtable explored how the GEF can utilize public funding most effectively to leverage concessional and private financing. Discussions focused on scaling blended finance, de-risking private investment, strengthening partnerships with MDBs, and aligning public finance with transformative environmental outcomes.

Fred Boltz, Head of Programming, GEF Secretariat, introduced the speakers, emphasizing that public financing remains central to the MEAs the GEF serves. Adding that the scale of global challenges requires more than traditional financing approaches, he underscored the need to go beyond mobilizing co-financing by engaging the private sector in efforts toward transformative change.

In a keynote speech, Joyelle Clarke, Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment, Climate Action and Constituency Empowerment, Saint Kitts and Nevis, emphasized that her country faces the "fortunate and unfortunate reality" of being classified as a high-income country. She noted with satisfaction that GEF resources are available for SIDS irrespective of their development status. Clarke discussed, among other things: ways to improve absorbing capacity to make the best use of ODA; innovative financial mechanisms; mobilizing local capital by bringing local and regional banks on board; and lifting local capacities away from dependency on long-term assistance.

In a panel discussion moderated by Boltz, Valerie Hickey, Director for Environment, World Bank, stressed further developing financial literacy within the environmental community. Using an example from Dominica's development of geothermal resources that resulted in significant financial and environmental



**Valerie Hickey**, Director for Environment, World Bank



**Unusa Haman**, Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development, Cameroon

outcomes, she described how to: identify market failures; create the right policy enabling environment; and provide the required certainty to unlock investments. Hickey added that blended finance should also take into account micro- and small businesses without access to commercial credit.

Nacci, EBRD, noted that de-risking is about risk management—as “avoiding risk altogether is unattainable.” He stressed that concessional finance cannot necessarily address market failures, adding that policy and regulatory frameworks are important. Nacci doubled down on the need to develop financial literacy and reflected on the difference between economic and commercial returns, emphasizing the role of blended finance in that respect.

Kenneth Lay, Senior Managing Director, RockCreek, underscored the importance of communicating with investors. He described how project participation by institutions such as the World Bank can create a “halo effect,” influencing the overall perception of private investors. Lay suggested the GEF identify and aggregate relevant projects for private sector investment, thus enabling them to attract capital from private markets without World Bank funds.

Jakhongir Talipov, GEF Secretariat, introduced Veena Balakrishnan, Co-Founder, Youth Negotiators Academy, who offered insights on democratizing participation in international and multilateral negotiations toward a whole-of-society approach. She highlighted capacity constraints, awareness gaps, and lack of risk-reducing financial instruments, which make GEF funding irreplaceable for many.

#### **Science, Integration, and Systems Transformation:**

Jyotsna Puri, Director, Policy and Programmes Division, UNEP, moderated this Friday roundtable, which focused on exploring how the science and practice of integration can be harnessed for GEF programming to advance transformative systems change.

In her keynote address, STAP Chair Bierbaum reviewed the STAP’s recommendations for integrated approaches and principles for sustainable transformation. She urged: treating systems as deeply integrated; diagnosing them in all their dimensions; positioning Integrated Programs as engines of innovation; monitoring for signals of system change; and designing for durability and uncertainty.

The first panel discussed natural systems. Unusa Haman, Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development, Cameroon, discussed his country’s experience in using agroforestry to address multiple environmental and socioeconomic issues.

Grethel Aguilar, Director General, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), suggested rethinking how resources are used to deliver more efficient impact. She also advocated for collectively rethinking how to monitor transformation and assess impacts “to see the whole picture.”

Carlos Eduardo Marinello, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Brazil, said systems transformation takes time and patience, to: integrate at different scales of management; implement adaptive co-management; and assess results.

Robert Nasi, Director General, Center for International Forestry Research, said science is most useful ahead of projects, since “once they are launched, they tend to be locked into whichever system was originally conceived.” He cautioned against linear thinking about systems.

Francisco Rosado May, Founder, Intercultural Mayan University of Quintana Roo, Mexico, called for moving from emphasis on the science-policy interface to a knowledge-policy one. He also underscored the critical importance of training at all levels to ensure practical knowledge dissemination.

The second panel discussed food systems. Lilian Portillo de Gonzalez, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Paraguay, discussed the GEF’s evolution over the years, from project-focused to a full-fledged Integrated Programs approach.

FAO Assistant Director General Kaveh Zahedi suggested the value of the GEF Integrated Programs is that they create a safe space to explore and innovate for systems change.

Noting the wealth of knowledge and data held by UN bodies and GEF agencies, Pieterel Boogaard, International Fund for Agricultural Development, suggested thinking about an open-source system to enable universal access to this knowledge.

Bram Govaerts, Director General, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, urged visualizing the food system we want in 2050, determining how to get there, and then co-designing with all relevant stakeholders from the start to build toward that vision.



**Veena Balakrishnan**, Co-Founder, Youth Negotiators Academy

Sailendra Mishra, Olam Agri, discussed how his company promoted NbS and integrated approaches in the agricultural sector on food security, water management, waste management, and more.

The third panel discussed urban systems. Harriet Bulkeley, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Lead Author and Professor, Durham University, UK, emphasized: viewing systems as more than a sum of their parts; addressing underlying forces; realizing that change is always nonlinear; and maintaining flexibility to “mix and match” to tackle different aspects simultaneously.

James Njoroge Muchiri, Deputy Governor, City of Nairobi, discussed his city’s efforts to clean up its rivers and surrounding environments.

Noting that globally, urban areas are projected to double over the next 25 years, Ming Zhang, Global Director for Urban, Subnational Finance, Tourism, and Disaster Management, World Bank, said cities are at the nexus for handling numerous environmental issues. He urged using urban planning and NbS to manage this expansion.

Echoing Zhang’s comments, Olle Dierks, Chairman, Team Sweden Smart Cities, and Viable Cities, emphasized the importance of getting all public and private stakeholders to work together from the start. He also called for tapping the power of cities to shape markets.

Puri summarized the roundtable’s takeaways as: thinking about what transformational change should look like and then analyzing what needs to change to get there; rethinking about how we look at and measure change; and creating safe space for co-creation.

**Leaving No One Behind: Forging Partnerships and Advancing Civil Society, IPLCs, Women, and Youth Leadership:** This session began with a fireside chat moderated by Verona Collantes-Lebale, Senior Gender Specialist, GEF Secretariat, in which speakers shared key priorities from civil society and GEF agency perspectives.

CSO Network Chair Parish called for civil society’s integration throughout GEF-9 programming beyond targeted engagement frameworks. Stressing “we cannot influence outcomes if we are only invited once priorities and budgets are decided,” Ana di Pangracion, CBD Women’s Caucus and Deputy Executive Director,

Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, advocated for culturally appropriate, just, and accountable project co-creation.

Aliou Mustafa, IPAG, highlighted the transformative impacts of enhancing women’s leadership in natural resource governance. This was echoed by Jeffrey Griffins, Executive Coordinator, GEF Coordination Unit, FAO, who said the data shows that inclusive project design builds stronger ownership, facilitates implementation, and ensures results that last beyond the project cycle. Cassie Flynn, Global Director of Climate Change, UNDP, urged zeroing in on what works, and scaling up partnerships.

Moderated by Dayana Blanco Quiroga, Uru Uru Team, Bolivia, the first panel focused on territorial management and community leadership.

Wildres Rodríguez Wood, Miskito Nation, and Women Ocean Guardians, emphasized that conservation action cannot succeed while the inequalities and structural barriers faced by frontline communities and women are not considered. Highlighting the role of GEF Inclusive Conservation Initiative funding in supporting Indigenous Peoples’ defense and management of their territories, Maglin Alvarado Vargas, Yine Nation, and Federación Nativa del Río Madre de Dios y Afluentes, called for focusing on accountability and for transparent, accessible processes that are adapted to institutional and Indigenous realities.

On how to transition from participation to inclusive governance, Gcinile Ndzinisa, Incomati and Maputo Watercourse Commission, stressed institutionalization, including dedicating budget lines for integrating youth.

Presenting his organization’s revival of the traditional Hima system, Assad Serhal, Director General, Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon, pointed to community stewardship and collective governance as fundamental for implementing lasting conservation approaches.

A second panel, moderated by GEF Head of Partnerships Gonçalves Moreira, turned to financing strategies.

Yadixa del Valle-Guardia, Coordinadora Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas de Panamá, stressed the catalytic nature of direct access, saying that Indigenous-led and -owned initiatives outlive those managed by external entities who leave once the project ends.

Rosa Lemos de Sa, Secretary-General, Brazilian Biodiversity Fund, underlined blended finance instruments as enablers for lowering barriers to credit access and strengthening socio-



**Olle Dierks**, Chairman, Team Sweden Smart Cities, and Viable Cities



**Yadixa del Valle-Guardia**, Coordinadora Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas de Panamá

biodiversity supply chains. IUCN Director General Aguilar stressed the need to leave the “old model” of top-down conservation management behind, calling for true partnerships rather than short term capacity-building, and for simplified, direct finance pathways that recognize IPLCs’ land rights.

Nomindari Enkhtur, CEO, Mongolian Nature’s Legacy Foundation, reported on her foundation’s project finance for permanence (PFP) initiative, noting it is a platform that tangibly leverages finance to enable scaled up conservation and sustainable development actions. Zdenka Piskulich, Managing Director, Enduring Earth, added that although PFPs are complex to put together, once established, they provide coordinated strategies for cohesive and impactful investments.

“Environmental policy is not abstract. It is a determinant for our survival, culture, identities, and food sovereignty.” Offering closing remarks, Chelsea Paspalau, Chemicals and Waste Youth Platform, Papua New Guinea, stressed embedding the principle of leaving no one behind across GEF processes.

**Investing in Whole-of-Government Approaches and Policy Coherence for Scale:** This roundtable provided insights from diverse perspectives to examine how policy coherence at different levels of scale is imperative to the generation of lasting global environmental benefits. Drawing on their experiences, speakers reflected on policies, institutional settings, and financing mechanisms that enable coherent action across sectors and levels of governance. The discussion surfaced key challenges, enabling conditions, and emerging lessons focusing on both higher-level political leadership and on-the-ground implementation.

**How Can Blended Finance and the Private Sector Bridge the Funding Gap?** Two breakout sessions during the roundtable provided: a broad overview of private sector engagement through collective action, multistakeholder platforms, value chains alliances, and GEF examples; and a more detailed discussion on how to structure blended finance in private and sovereign operations with specific case studies.

### High-level Plenary

On Friday, STAP Chair Bierbaum stressed that “we vastly underspend on the life-support systems that underpin our economies, while we extract their value on a daily basis.” She emphasized that over 50% of global GDP significantly depends on nature. Noting that GEF financing combined with environmental ODA and existing public expenditure flows still leave a significant nature funding gap, Bierbaum urged increasing financial flows while simultaneously reducing financial needs. She concluded by underscoring that investing in nature is not a trade-off with development and summarized the main messages emanating from the roundtable discussions.

In a keynote address, RockCreek Senior Managing Director Lay offered a financial market perspective, explaining that while ODA has always faced challenges related to competing demands, stress on public finance and the volatile diplomatic environment have fueled this competition. Highlighting that the global savings pool has vast resources at its disposal, Lay stressed that despite best efforts from the environmental community, asset



**Kenneth Lay**, Senior Managing Director, RockCreek

owners “are not in the room with us and do not seem to be losing sleep over our targets.” He stressed the need to build a bridge connecting asset owners with the environmental community.

Lay further underscored that financial models must incorporate nature degradation as a macro-economic variable rather than as a footnote, adding that the ambition of GEF-9 is making “investing in nature as natural as investing in infrastructure.” He stressed the need for predictable frameworks and standardized metrics as well as adequately large ticket sizes and instrument liquidity, resulting in transactions that asset owners can invest in “without making a leap of faith.” Lay said that “if we only run this race among ourselves, we are not going to cross the finish line,” and concluded by stating that “the GEF can become the bridge that connects capital markets with the natural environment.”

A high-level panel discussion ensued, moderated by Bierbaum and Lay.

Shailendra Mishra, Olam Agri, suggested the GEF should look at supply chains through an integrated lens and always consider how GEF-funded projects can improve livelihoods. He urged investing in soil health as a driver for transformational change.

Oliver Withers, Standard Chartered, discussed how to frame nature as an infrastructure issue to unlock private capital for NbS. He also advocated for looking past 2030 and developing tools that help support system change over the long haul. Withers called for bringing asset owners and IPLCs to the same table.

World Bank Director for Environment Hickey highlighted the need to focus on blended finance, wherein the GEF provides the “Goldilocks” blend—just enough involvement to fix a specific



**Shailendra Mishra**, Olam Agri

market failure, while also being financially sound, unlocking private capital, and ensuring measurable outcomes. She called for increasing financial resources by looking domestically, including in private banks, national budgets, and uninvested assets.

Rachel Kyte, Special Representative for Climate, UK, pointed to a UK-commissioned study about the security implications of ecosystem collapse to the British economy and national security. She suggested that framing investment in nature as a security matter could unlock significant investment. Kyte also advocated for joint public and private investments in education, to build skills that can be applied to environmental and infrastructure transformation.

Joyelle Clarke, Minister of Sustainable Development and Environment, Climate Action and Constituency Empowerment, Saint Kitts and Nevis, called for: co-designing and co-building projects with community leadership; getting buy-in by providing economically viable options; and recognizing that sustainability and empowerment go hand-in-hand. She supported incorporating inclusivity, flexibility, and empowerment as core project principles.

BRS Conventions Executive Secretary Payet urged the GEF to: get environmental regulators talking; think about how to further incorporate circular economy and extended producer responsibility into GEF projects; approach e-waste as a profitable source of critical minerals; and consider whether the green technologies advocated today might someday become a source of pollution. Payet also highlighted the GEF's role in translating and defining signals coming from the conventions for the private sector.

To better promote blue carbon, Alisi Rabukawaqa, IPAG Co-Chair, called for the GEF to: consider local stewardship, rights, and benefits; invest in what is already working; enforce the principle of free, prior, and informed consent, cautioning against displacing communities; and map blue carbon resources. She noted the target for actions by and for Indigenous Peoples is only the beginning: "what we must run toward is direct access."

Interim GEF CEO Gascon explained that "2030 is not just a deadline. It is a promise to people, nature, and future generations." Among key messages from the session, he highlighted: the need to defend public development assistance; business models that reward stewardship, not extraction; and ensuring the private sector is a true partner in delivering outcomes. In closing, he underscored that "the most powerful transformations occur where people can see themselves in the future being built."

### Closing Plenary

**Report on Credentials:** On Friday, the Assembly took note of the report ([GEF/A.08/07](#)).

**Report on GEF Participants:** Noting that paragraph 14 of the GEF's Instrument calls on the Assembly to keep country participants in the GEF under review, Vice-Chair Talia presented [GEF/A.08/02](#), noting the GEF presently has 186 participants. The Assembly took note of the report.



Alisi Rabukawaqa, Co-Chair, IPAG

**Presentation of the Chair's Summary of the Eighth GEF Assembly:** Vice-Chair Hosoda introduced the Summary ([GEF/A.08/Summary](#)), which the Assembly noted.

**Closing of the Assembly:** In his closing statement, GEF Assembly Chair Abdulkhakimov said the Assembly advanced the global environmental agenda, strengthened the GEF Partnership, and helped to build trust. He said coverage of the Assembly had reached audiences in 25 languages across over 70 countries, reflecting strong global interest and the GEF's and Uzbekistan's growing role in environmental diplomacy. Chair Abdulkhakimov welcomed the aim of directing at least 20% of resources to IPLCs and GEF-9's strong focus on Integrated Programs and innovative financing.

Closing the Assembly, GEF Interim CEO Gascon said that "what we have seen is not only a discussion about priorities, but a reminder of what is possible when the world comes together with shared purpose." He stressed the GEF was built on the understanding that no one can meet global environmental challenges alone, and that it brings together countries, conventions, IPLCs, civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders to deliver global environmental benefits. Gascon urged participants to continue widening participation, deepening ownership, and ensuring those closest to the challenges have the space to offer solutions.

Chair Abdulkhakimov closed the meeting at 5:12 pm.



Participants at the end of the GEF Assembly

## Upcoming Meetings

**Bonn Climate Change Conference:** The 64th sessions of the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies will meet to advance technical work under the Convention and the Paris Agreement. **dates:** 8-18 June 2026 **location:** Bonn, Germany **www:** [unfccc.int/sb64](http://unfccc.int/sb64)

**CBD SBSTTA 28:** The 28th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the CBD will focus on, among other things, planning, monitoring, reporting, and review of the GBF, synthetic biology, sustainable wildlife management, and marine and coastal biodiversity. **dates:** 27 July – 1 August 2026 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** [cbd.int/meetings/SBSTTA-28](http://cbd.int/meetings/SBSTTA-28)

**CBD SBI 7:** The seventh meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) will continue its work on reviewing implementation of the CBD and the GBF, ahead of COP 17. **dates:** 4-12 August 2026 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** [cbd.int/meetings/SBI-07](http://cbd.int/meetings/SBI-07)

**UNCCD COP 17:** Set to take place during the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, UNCCD COP 17 will bring Parties together to build on efforts to promote the sustainable management, restoration, and conservation of rangelands while accelerating action against desertification, land degradation, and drought. **dates:** 17-28 August 2026 **location:** Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia **www:** [unccd.int](http://unccd.int)

**22nd Meeting of the Persistent Organic Pollutants Committee:** The Stockholm Convention's Persistent Organic Pollutants Review Committee will consider the draft risk profile to list polyhalogenated dibenzo-p-dioxins and dibenzofurans in Annex C to the Convention. **dates:** 21-25 September 2026 **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** [pops.int/theconvention/popsreviewcommittee/meetings/POPRC22](http://pops.int/theconvention/popsreviewcommittee/meetings/POPRC22)

**UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP 17):** CBD COP 17 will feature the first Global Review of progress in implementing the GBF. The 12th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the sixth MOP to the Nagoya Protocol on ABS will meet concurrently. **dates:** 19-30 October 2026 **location:** Yerevan, Armenia **www:** [cbd.int/meetings/COP-17](http://cbd.int/meetings/COP-17)

**UN Climate Change Conference:** Türkiye will host the 31st meeting of the COP to the UNFCCC with Australia designated the "President of negotiations." **dates:** 9-20 November 2026 **location:** Antalya, Türkiye **www:** [unfccc.int/cop31](http://unfccc.int/cop31)

**First International Conference of the Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC):** The first GFC International Conference will feature a high-level segment and multi-stakeholder dialogue on the GFC's five strategic objectives and 28 targets. **dates:** 16-20 November 2026 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** [unep.org/global-framework-chemicals/](http://unep.org/global-framework-chemicals/)

**COP1 to the BBNJ Agreement:** The historic first meeting of the COP to the BBNJ Agreement is expected to address institutional and financial arrangements as well as issues around marine protected areas and area-based management tools. **dates:** 11-22 January 2027 (TBC) **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** [un.org/bbnjagreement/](http://un.org/bbnjagreement/)

**72nd Meeting of the GEF Council:** The GEF Council will consider the Work Program among other agenda items. **dates:** 25-28 January 2027 **location:** Washington, DC, US **www:** [thegef.org/events/](http://thegef.org/events/)

For additional meetings, see [sdg.iisd.org](http://sdg.iisd.org)

## Glossary

BBNJ Agreement	Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction
BRS	Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSOs	Civil society organizations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
FCS	Fragile and conflict-affected settings
GBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
GBFF	Global Biodiversity Framework Fund
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDPI	Gross domestic product index
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IFI	International financial institution
IPAG	Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group
IPLCs	Indigenous Peoples and local communities
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund
LDCs	Least developed countries
MCF	Multilateral climate fund
MDB	Multilateral development bank
MEAs	Multilateral environmental agreements
NbS	Nature-based solutions
NGI	Non-grant instrument
ODA	Official development assistance
OFP	Operational focal point
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
SGP	Small Grants Program
SIDS	Small island developing states
STAP	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
STAR	System of Transparent Allocation of Resources
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change