



# GEF Assembly Bulletin

**A Daily Report from the Fourth Global Environment Facility (GEF) Assembly**

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## FOURTH GEF ASSEMBLY: 25-26 MAY 2010

The fourth Assembly of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) opens today in Punta del Este, Uruguay, and will continue until Wednesday, 26 May 2010. Prior to the Assembly, a Civil Society Forum and a GEF Council meeting convened on 24 May. Held every four years, the GEF Assembly gathers GEF stakeholders to review the policies and operations of the Facility. Over 1,000 participants are expected to attend the Assembly, representing member states, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, and the private sector.



Monique Barbut, GEF CEO and Chairperson

The GEF is an independent financial organization that provides grants to developing countries and countries with economies in transition for projects related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants (POPs). These projects benefit the global environment, linking local, national, and global environmental challenges and promoting sustainable livelihoods. It also acts as a financial mechanism, assisting developing countries in meeting the objectives of four international environmental conventions: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol; the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD); and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. The GEF also collaborates closely with other related treaties and agreements like the Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer.

A Special Meeting of the GEF Council, a Civil Society Forum, and a series of side events preceded the opening of the Assembly. The Assembly features plenary sessions and a series of roundtables in different languages to discuss two broad areas of reform, namely: enhancing country ownership; and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the GEF. Alongside these numerous side events, visits to GEF project sites will be organized, and a special event to celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity will be held on 27 May in the Uruguayan Parliament.

The GEF Assembly will be informed on the status of the GEF Trust Fund, the work of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), the results of the Fourth Overall



Maria Lechner, Fundacion ECOS, Jorge Patrone, Vice Minister for Housing, Land Planning and Environment, Uruguay, Monique Barbut, GEF CEO and Chairperson, Faizal Parish, Director of the Global Environment Centre, and Central Focal Point of the GEF NGO Network, Miguel Reynal, Fundación ECOS, Uruguay

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Performance Study of the GEF, and the results of the fifth GEF replenishment. It is also expected to adopt amendments to the GEF Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured GEF.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GEF

The GEF was created in 1991 as a result of mounting concern in the preceding decade over global environmental problems and efforts to formulate financing responses to address these problems. The GEF operated in a pilot phase until mid-1994. Negotiations to restructure the GEF were concluded at a GEF participants' meeting in Geneva in March 1994, where representatives of 73 States agreed to adopt the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured GEF.

The GEF organizational structure includes an Assembly that meets every four years, a Council, and a Secretariat, as well as the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel. The GEF's main decision-making body is the GEF Council, which is responsible for developing, adopting, and evaluating its operational policies and programmes. It is comprised of 32 appointed members, each representing a constituency (i.e. a group of countries including both donors and recipients). The GEF Assembly comprises representatives from all member states, which as of 15 May 2010 totaled 181. Previous GEF Assemblies were held in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2006, Beijing, China, in 2002 and New Delhi, India, in 1998.

The GEF is funded by donor nations, which commit money every four years through a process known as the GEF replenishment. Since its creation in 1991 the GEF Trust Fund has been replenished by US\$2.02 billion (1991), US\$2.75 billion (1998), US\$2.92 billion (2002) and US\$3.13 billion (2006). The results of the fifth replenishment will be presented at this meeting. The GEF also administers the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund, and provides Secretariat services to the Adaptation Fund.

GEF funding is channeled to recipient countries through ten agencies: the UN Development Programme (UNDP); the UN Environment Programme (UNEP); the World Bank; the UN Food and Agriculture Organization; the UN Industrial Development Organization; the African Development Bank; the Asian Development Bank; the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; the Inter-American Development Bank; and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

**FIRST GEF ASSEMBLY:** Held from 1-3 April 1998 in New Delhi, India, the first GEF Assembly focused on the GEF in the 21st century. More than 1,000 participants adopted the New Delhi Statement highlighting the GEF's unique role and calling upon it to accelerate its operations.

**SECOND GEF ASSEMBLY:** Convened from 16-18 October 2002 in Beijing, China, the second GEF Assembly considered the GEF's performance, operations and policies. It convened in plenary, roundtables, and panel sessions focusing on the GEF, its stakeholders, and the global environment. Participants adopted the Beijing Declaration, which supports the expanded mandate of the GEF in response to its evolving challenges, and calls, *inter alia*, for: enhanced activities at the country level; synergies among the global environmental conventions; enhanced strategic planning for allocation of scarce resources to high priority areas within and among focal areas to maximize global environmental improvement; better private sector engagement; and improved understanding of agreed incremental costs and the global benefits of GEF projects.

**THIRD GEF ASSEMBLY:** The third GEF Assembly convened in Cape Town, South Africa, from 29-30 August 2006. Participants reviewed the Facility's policies and operations, meeting in plenary and in a series of roundtables and panel discussions. Delegates took note of reports on the GEF Trust Fund and the Third Overall Performance Study of the GEF, and raised concerns over the provision of funding for land degradation and desertification, and also on the application of the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF). The RAF was also addressed in one of the three high-level roundtables; the other two focusing on market-based mechanisms for financing global environmental conventions, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

### DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE THIRD GEF ASSEMBLY

**GEF COUNCIL MEETINGS:** GEF Council members have met seven times since the third GEF Assembly. Some of the most notable decisions taken during this period were: a shortening of the project cycle to fewer than 22 months; the adoption of principles and procedures for a programmatic approach that allow several projects to be grouped under a single programme; a redesign of the STAP to include six (rather than 15) members and the appointment of Thomas Lovejoy as STAP Chair; the adoption of a Strategic Programme to Scale up the Level of Investment in the Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies; and the provision of Secretariat services to the Adaptation Fund Board. The Council also reviewed the existing RAF and designed a new allocation framework for the fifth GEF replenishment called the System for a Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR). The Council also re-elected Monique Barbut as CEO of the GEF in 2008.

**GEF REPLENISHMENT MEETINGS:** GEF donors met six times, from March 2009 to May 2010, to discuss the fifth GEF replenishment. The replenishment negotiations led



Felipe Villagran, GEF NGO Network, Yolanda Contreras Avalos, Asociación de Artesanas, Peru, and Delfin Ganapin, GEF SGP Global Manager

to an agreement in which over 30 countries pledged US\$4.25 billion to fund GEF projects. The financial pledges include some of the Fast Start Financing discussed at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference, and will feature the creation of a Sustainable Forest Management-REDD Plus initiative focused on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest



Raúl Estrada Oyuela, Academia Argentina del Ambiente, Argentina

degradation in developing countries, as well as conservation, sustainable forest management, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

**37<sup>TH</sup> GEF COUNCIL MEETING:** The GEF Council met on 24 May 2010 and endorsed the results of the Fifth GEF Replenishment negotiations (GEF-5), which include focal area strategies and policy recommendations. The Council also discussed the GEF corporate budget and issues pertaining to the organization of the GEF Assembly.

## CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

A Civil Society Forum was held on 24 May, on the day prior to the GEF Assembly. Monique Barbut, GEF CEO and Chairperson, opened the Civil Society Forum on Monday morning noting the crucial role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in GEF-5. She said GEF-5 provides an opportunity to reform key aspects of GEF operations and added that CSOs should participate in the development of national GEF business plans and be part of national delegations to GEF regional meetings. She emphasized CSOs are an integral part of the GEF mission and key to achieve results at the global level.

Jorge Patrone, Vice Minister for Housing, Land Planning and Environment, Uruguay, noted the key role of civil society in the definition of national environmental policy in Uruguay.

Faizal Parish, Director of the Global Environment Centre, and Central Focal Point of the GEF NGO Network, noted civil society has historically contributed a larger portion to GEF co-financing than any other source. He identified five key CSO-related objectives for GEF-5, namely to: enhance civil society engagement in GEF work; engage stakeholders in national GEF programming and planning exercises; reverse the decline in CSO-led GEF projects; stimulate the formation of national civil society networks; and ensure the CSO network is further strengthened.

Miguel Reynal, Fundación ECOS, Uruguay, said the partnership among civil society and GEF should be strengthened. Noting a reduction in the total allocation of

funds for CSO-led GEF projects from 9 to 3.5% in GEF-4, he cautioned this trend, if maintained, would lead to the disappearing of CSO-led projects in GEF.

Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director, highlighted the innovative value of GEF financing and in particular the success of the Small Grants Programme (SGP), but cautioned that independent projects are not enabling the transformational change needed to address the challenges of environmental degradation and climate change in the present era. He urged participants to think on means to scale up projects and deliver global results.

Ambassador Raúl Estrada Oyuela, *Academia Argentina del Ambiente*, presented the main challenges and the role of civil society in climate change negotiations. He explained that the conditional nature of some country pledges may not allow space for negotiations and highlighted the urgency of adaptation. He lamented the inertia of bureaucracy and obstacles for civil society to access GEF funds and emphasized civil society's role in the sensitization of politicians.

Thomas Lovejoy, Heinz Center for Science, Economics and the Environment, said the impact of climate change is already visible in ecosystem changes and changes in animal behaviors. He stressed the need to think and act on a large scale to address the rapid decline in biodiversity and called for a planet re-engineering based on strengthening natural ecosystem processes, with the participation of civil society.

## SESSION 1: THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN SAFEGUARDING THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

During this session, representatives of CSOs reported on experiences with civil society participation in GEF projects. Ermath Harrington, Caribbean Conservation Association, presented a project in Antigua and Barbuda on island natural resources monitoring and use. Minnie Degawan, the Philippines, presented a global project on increasing awareness and participation of indigenous peoples' organizations in the Convention on Biological Diversity and GEF processes. Essam Nada, Arab Network on the Environment and Development, introduced the Nile Basin Development project and the involvement of civil society in building confidence among Nile



Miguel Reynal, Fundación ECOS, Uruguay

Basin countries. Presenters emphasized the role of civil society in bridging communication, knowledge and technical gaps in GEF project implementation.

### SESSION 2: LOCAL AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AS GUARDIANS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

This session featured case studies from the GEF SGP. Delfin Ganapin, GEF SGP Global Manager, said the programme has supported more than 1500 projects worldwide, and highlighted SGP partnership with indigenous peoples. Yolanda Contreras Avalos, representing a Peruvian female artisans organization, presented how an SGP cotton recovery project contributed to poverty reduction in her area. Samuel Dotse, HATOF Foundation, Ghana, described the main features of 52 projects supported by SGP on, *inter alia*: community protected areas, bio-fuel production, forest product processing and marketing, and ecological restoration. Daniel Macias, *Grupo para la Protección Ambiental Activa*, Uruguay, described a CSO-led SGP project for the creation of a protected area in Uruguay. He showcased how with just US\$20,000 his organization achieved the creation and monitoring of a protected area, several wildlife studies and more than 60 educational activities for children and youth. Participants reinstated the value of the SGP, and one participant cautioned tenure issues should also be addressed by SGP projects to ensure indigenous peoples fully benefit from them.

### SESSION 3: LATIN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES WITH GEF PROJECTS: SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In the afternoon, an interactive panel was held with eight leaders of the environmental movement in Latin America highlighting successes, challenges and opportunities arising from GEF projects. Panelists presented experiences on: conservation and sustainable development in the Atlantic forest of Paraguay; participatory integrated coastal management for sustainability and biodiversity conservation in Patagonia; management for disaster risk reduction and climate change in Central America and Mexico; challenges and opportunities for indigenous peoples in international conventions and the climate change convention in particular; emerging issues in the

Rio+20, and water and gender in Brazil; as well as activities of the NGO Pindó Azul in Uruguay.

### SESSION 4: ENHANCING PARTNERSHIP WITH CIVIL SOCIETY IN GEF-5

This panel addressed mechanisms to improve CSO participation in the next GEF period. Among issues discussed, Faizal Parish said CSOs should be given priority access to medium sized projects, and Maria Leichner, Fundación ECOS, presented a survey of CSO expectations for GEF-5 in Latin America. Yannick Glemarec, UNDP-GEF Executive Coordinator, explained some of the successful experiences gained with CSO-led SGP projects noting their scaling up potential, and emphasized the GEF is the only facility with a funding window exclusive for CSOs, making the SGP a unique financing example. Legborsi Saro Pyagbara, Indigenous Focal Point, Africa GEF NGO Network, said rights recognized in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples must be incorporated into GEF projects. Brennan van Dyke, GEF Secretariat, highlighted CSOs should participate in national portfolio formulation exercises to ensure their adequate participation in GEF-5.

### CONCLUSION AND FORUM STATEMENT

A draft Punta del Este Civil Society Forum declaration was presented with conclusions and recommendations. The Forum recommended, *inter alia*, that: CSOs and GEF should work to strengthen the recognition of indigenous people rights; GEF outreach to CSOs should be enhanced; equitable access to funds should be ensured and funds allocated to CSOs should be at least 20-25% of total GEF funding through the introduction of targets and incentives; the SGP should be maintained; CSOs should be more engaged in oversight and guidance of national and regional full sized projects; the GEF voluntary fund to support consultation and empowerment of CSOs should be made operational; and the role and function of GEF CSO network should be strengthened.

Roberto Cabral Bowling, on behalf of Monique Barbut, expressed great satisfaction for the participation and outcomes of the Forum, thanked the organizers and closed the Civil Society Forum at 6.27 pm.



Yannick Glemarec, UNDP-GEF Executive Coordinator, Brennan van Dyke, GEF Secretariat, Maria Leichner, Fundación ECOS, Roberto Cabral Bowling, Mexico, Alicia Torres, Mexico, Legborsi Saro Pyagbara, Indigenous People's Focal Point, Africa, and Faizal Parish, Central Focal Point of the GEF NGO Network