

Summary of the 62nd Meeting of the Global Environment Facility Council: 21-23 June 2022

The 62nd meeting of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council endorsed the next four-year replenishment period for the GEF. Negotiations for the eighth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund (GEF-8) took place over the last two years and concluded with pledges of USD 5.33 billion to support projects that bring global environmental benefits for people and the planet. The eighth replenishment is over 30% higher than the funding level of GEF-7.

The Council also approved the final Work Program under GEF-7. Council Members adopted a proposal for allocating USD 165.8 million for 19 projects and programs from all five focal area envelopes and from the non-grant instrument funding window. The Secretariat highlighted that the Work Program would contribute to a green and blue recovery and direct significant resources to small island developing States (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs), with Africa holding the largest share.

Convening as the Council for the Least Developed Countries Fund/Special Climate Change Fund (LDCF/SCCF), the Council endorsed a USD 72.4 million LDCF work program, which is also the final Work Program under GEF-7 for this fund. Over the past four years, the LDCF has provided support to each of the 47 LDCs, with projects that will bring 3.2 million hectares of land under climate-resilient management, mainstream climate resilience in 869 policies, and train nearly 700,000 people on identifying and managing climate risks and adaptation measures.

During a briefing from the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), Rosina Bierbaum, the Council discussed opportunities for the GEF-8 period, including the need to consider the “transformation/risk/innovation trio.” Bierbaum highlighted that transformational change will require innovation, which can entail risks. The Council called for the Secretariat, in consultation with the STAP and interested Council Members and Alternates, to prepare a paper on a GEF-8 programming risk framework for consideration by the Council at its 64th session.

Council Members also conducted a dialogue with the conventions for which the GEF serves as a financial mechanism. In her final address to the GEF as UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Executive Secretary, Patricia Espinosa highlighted that the GEF-8 replenishment negotiation outcomes point to the GEF’s role as a key financial source for climate action and sustainable development. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), highlighted that GEF-8 has substantially increased the funding for biodiversity, and noted that the

GEF is supporting early action grants for national planning in response to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Rolph Payet, Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions Executive Secretary, said the Secretariat is putting together a strategy to achieve the “maximum possible” elimination of PCBs by the upcoming 2025 and 2028 deadlines, and called for exploring how to leverage the GEF-8 replenishment in support of this goal. Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention, noted that parties recently agreed on the terms of reference for the second review of the financial mechanism, which she said would allow parties to make any necessary adjustments. UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Deputy Executive Secretary Andrea Meza Murillo welcomed the GEF-8 replenishment and increased flexibility for countries to allocate resources across focal areas.

In her presentation to the LDCF/SCCF Council, Madeleine Diouf Sarr, Chair of the LDC Group, reported that the new programming strategy, which raises the funding cap for LDCs from USD 10 million to USD 20 million and creates a special funding window for SIDS, reflects recipient countries’ priorities.

Among other agenda items, the Council discussed GEF support to sustainable forest management (SFM), the report of the *Ad-Hoc* Working Group on Governance, and preparations for the seventh meeting of the GEF Assembly, which is expected to take place in Vancouver, Canada, in mid-2023.

Ali’ioaiga Feturi Elisaia of Samoa served as the elected Co-Chair for the Council meetings, which took place from 21-23 June 2022, in McLean, Virginia, US. This meeting was the first in-person meeting since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared

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Elected GEF Council Co-Chair for 2022 **Ali'ioaiga Feturi Elisaia**, Samoa

in early 2020. Approximately 150 participants attended in person, and another 150 participants joined online.

A Brief History of the GEF

The GEF was created in 1991 to formulate financing responses to the mounting concern in the preceding decade over global environmental problems. The GEF operated in a pilot phase until mid-1994. Negotiations to restructure the Facility were concluded at a GEF participants' meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, in March 1994, where representatives of 73 countries agreed to adopt the GEF Instrument.

The GEF's organizational structure includes:

- an Assembly that meets every four years;
- a Council that meets twice a year;
- a Secretariat;
- the STAP; and
- the Independent Evaluation Office, which was created in 2003.

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 has convened six times: from 1-3 April 1998 in New Delhi, India; from 16-18 October 2002 in Beijing, China; from 29-30 August 2006 in Cape Town, South Africa; from 25-26 May 2010 in Punta del Este, Uruguay; from 28-29 May 2014 in Cancún, Mexico; and from 27-28 June 2018 in Da Nang, Viet Nam.

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 by USD 2.75 billion (GEF-1), USD 3 billion (GEF-2), USD 3.13 billion (GEF-3), USD 3.13 billion (GEF-4), USD 4.34 billion (GEF-5), USD 4.43 billion (GEF-6), USD 4.1 billion (GEF-7), and USD 5.33 billion (GEF-8).

The GEF administers the LDCF and the SCCF, and provides secretariat services to the Adaptation Fund established by the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC.

The GEF also serves as a financial mechanism for a number of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), including the:

- CBD;

- UNFCCC;
- UNCCD;
- Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants; and
- Minamata Convention on Mercury.

The GEF's work also focuses on SFM, international waters, and ozone layer depletion.

Funding from the Facility has been channeled to recipient countries through 18 "GEF Agencies": the UN Development Programme (UNDP); the UN Environment Programme (UNEP); the World Bank; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO); the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); the African Development Bank (AfDB); the Asian Development Bank (ADB); the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD); the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB); the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); World Wildlife Fund-US.; Conservation International; the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA); the Brazilian Biodiversity Fund (FUNBIO); the Chinese Foreign Economic Cooperation Office (FECO); the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF); and the West African Development Bank (BOAD).

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

Report of GEF Council Meeting

Prior to opening the 62nd meeting of the GEF Council on Tuesday morning, 21 June 2022, Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, GEF CEO and Chairperson, expressed sorrow at the news that Delphin Aidji (Benin), GEF Council Member from the West Africa constituency, had passed away over the weekend. Rodríguez invited the Council to stand for a moment of silence.

Rodríguez opened the meeting noting it would be the first in-person Council meeting he would chair, since he was appointed soon after the global pandemic was declared. He highlighted that Ambassador Ali'ioaiga Feturi Elisaia, Samoa, who is the elected Co-Chair for the Council meetings in 2022, comes from an "LOC" – large oceanic country – and has been on the front lines of negotiations related to the GEF.

Rodríguez recognized that the pandemic is not yet over, and we are all still dealing with its impacts, including institutional and financial realities such as debt and fiscal recession. He said the approaches to be implemented through GEF-8 can provide inspiration in this difficult time. He recognized the work of the Secretariat, GEF Agencies, GEF CSO Network, and others to support the GEF through the end of GEF-7 without significant consequences for its portfolio.

Rodríguez recognized the work of his predecessor, Naoko Ishii, to increase the GEF's transformative impact, and expressed his hope that by the end of GEF-9, the GEF would be able to support countries where all public and private investments are aligned with the Paris Agreement on climate change and other environmental agreements. He stressed that we can address the triple planetary crisis by working together with governments, the private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs). He shared photos of recent visits to GEF project sites and emphasized the role of women and youth in implementation, as well as the technical capacity of the representatives of the GEF Agencies and project managers he met with. He also stressed that, based



Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, GEF CEO and Chairperson

on the discussions in the recent meetings of the Conferences of the Parties (COPs) to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the UNCCD, and the BRS Conventions, there is a clear desire for more integration.

Council Co-Chair Elisaia highlighted that SIDS had a seat at the table at the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations for the first time and said being in the room was “not only priceless but eye opening and empowering.” He reported that developing and developed countries had pledged funding for GEF-8, which represents a “vote of confidence” in the GEF and its stakeholders.

Rodríguez announced Qatar would be joining the GEF partnership, and highlighted its interest in climate adaptation issues.

Adoption of the Agenda

During the discussion of the provisional agenda (GEF/C.62/01/Rev.03), Council Members inquired about the inclusion of key documents on the implementation of the GEF-8 strategy as information documents (INF) for the 62nd meeting of the Council rather than full documents with associated places on the agenda. Council Members said the documents were not aligned with what was agreed during the GEF-8 negotiations and would need to be considered by the Council for approval, along with associated budgets.

Some Council Members indicated their intention to make a statement condemning the Russian Federation’s unprovoked war during the agenda item on other business. Another Council Member cautioned against making the GEF a political forum.

The GEF Secretariat informed Members that the INF documents were posted for information, and the Secretariat would further develop them into full documents to be presented to the 63rd meeting of the Council.

The Council adopted the agenda.

Summary of Negotiations of the 8th Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund

On 21 June, Akihiko Nishio, Vice President of Development Finance, World Bank, delivered a video message congratulating the GEF community on the historic eighth replenishment, despite global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical conflict. He encouraged all contributing participants to formalize their pledges in a timely manner.

Gustavo Fonseca, Director of Programs at the GEF Secretariat, presented the “Summary of Negotiations of the 8th Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund” (GEF/C.62/03), noting

that five virtual replenishment meetings were held between December 2020 and April 2022. He said the process resulted in a replenishment of USD 5.33 billion. Fonseca highlighted approval of a private sector engagement strategy, an expanded country engagement strategy, and a dedicated window on innovation designed to “keep the GEF at the leading edge” and better prepare it to identify solutions for the global environment.

Françoise Clottes, Director of Strategy and Operations at the GEF Secretariat, explained that the replenishment negotiations had debated policy recommendations designed to facilitate implementation, such as: measures to foster balance in resources for different Agencies and avoid excessive concentration; commitments to enhancing sustainability and inclusiveness; and continued focus on implementation of policy upgrades. She said changes to the GEF-8 System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) include: moving to full flexibility for countries, enabling them to transfer funding from one area to another; retaining and giving greater weight to a GDP index; and funding for country-driven activities that reflect the national policy landscape.

Norway announced that her country would contribute USD 89 million, and Denmark announced a contribution of USD 125 million, to GEF-8.

Many Council Members lauded the historic level of funding for the replenishment. Several appreciated SIDS’ participation in the process, and expressed hope that LDCs be similarly involved in the GEF-9 process.

On the STAR formula, several Council Members lauded the decision to give flexibility to countries to allocate funds to different focal areas, saying this will contribute to adequate implementation. Several Council Members emphasized that the GEF should not introduce new categorizations of countries for financial resources, noting the MEAs that the GEF supports do not make such distinctions. One Council Member thanked all parties for avoiding a formula that would “punish” developing countries by introducing a vulnerability index. Other Members supported giving more attention to vulnerable countries.

One Council Member underscored the importance of continuing to work with Indigenous and local communities, young people, and women.

Akhteruzzaman Sano, GEF CSO Network, emphasized that CSOs complement and add value to the GEF’s work, and called for the Network to be made a legal entity.

Council Members adopted the decision without amendment.



Gustavo Fonseca, Director of Programs, GEF Secretariat



Akhteruzzaman Sano, GEF CSO Network

Decision: In its Decision 07/2022, the Council welcomes the successful conclusion of the replenishment, takes note of the Summary, and endorses the programming directions (Annex I), the policy recommendations (Annex II), and the Draft Replenishment Resolution (Annex III). The Council requests the GEF CEO and Chairperson to transmit this summary to the World Bank with a request that the World Bank Executive Directors be invited to adopt Annex III of the Summary.

Work Program for the GEF Trust Fund

On 21 June, Gustavo Fonseca, GEF Secretariat, introduced “Work Program for GEF Trust Fund” (Document GEF/C.62/07), and summarized the results of the seventh replenishment cycle (GEF-7). He outlined the proposed USD 165.8 million Work Program comprising 19 projects and programs from all five focal area envelopes, and from the non-grant instrument (NGI) funding window. He highlighted that the Work Program will contribute to a green and blue recovery and direct significant resources to SIDS and LDCs, with Africa leading programming at USD 55.2 million.

Reflecting on the entire GEF-7 cycle, he stressed overall progress on all programming fronts, with 93% of total resources being programmed in GEF-7 once the final Work Program was approved. He highlighted that all focal areas, except climate change, were over 90% programmed despite difficult circumstances due to the pandemic. He said levels of co-financing were better than expected. While 17 of the 18 GEF Agencies have received resources, he said UNDP, UNEP, FAO, and the World Bank account for the highest share, with 15-30% each.

While Council Members expressed general support for the Work Program, they raised questions on both the Work Program and overall performance during GEF-7. Several Council Members stressed the importance of:

- meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs);
- the integration of gender, including through disaggregated data and relevant indicators, at all project stages;
- active participation of operational focal points and countries across the project cycle for NGIs;
- GEF support for reporting and transparency requirements of the Paris Agreement and an ambitious climate response;
- fiduciary standards and avoidance of double counting in co-financing; and
- proper target setting and balance across focal areas and indicators.

Some Council Members expressed concerns regarding:

specific projects, including requests for a second review; levels of co-financing reached and required; concentration of funding among a small number of Agencies; and underachievement regarding certain targets and resource allocations.

A Council Member said his country’s policies on human trafficking, state-sponsored terrorism, and transparent military audits did not allow him to support several projects proposed in the program, and asked that his objections be reflected in the Co-Chairs’ Summary.

A Council Member highlighted the imminent danger of a catastrophic oil spill happening off the coast of Yemen, where USD 145 million could help avoid an environmental disaster potentially costing USD 20 billion. The Chair pointed to ongoing conversations with the World Bank, UNDP, and the operational focal point in Yemen.

A representative of the GEF CSO Network called for early and meaningful participation of CSOs and IPLCs, highlighting the benefits gained from their contributions from the moment the project identification form is designed.

In responses to points raised, Fonseca explained, *inter alia*, that:

- Overall results for GEF-7 were remarkable, exceeding half of the target indicators and only falling short on two;
- Targets were set based on modeling using data from the GEF-7 cycle in an effort to reflect reality, while realizing targets was not completely under the GEF’s control since the process depends on county ownership and priorities;
- Overachievement in the area of marine biodiversity protection is due to a recent boost in marine conservation, and while targets were not reached for two terrestrial indicators, the land restoration target was overachieved by 40-50%;
- A co-financing policy developed and approved by the Council is in place and projects are being reviewed individually to ensure additionality;
- The cancellation of two NGI projects was not related to financial risk but in one case resulted from a lack of time to fulfil requirements for Council approval, and in the other from lack of viability given a shift in priorities due to the pandemic;
- The GEF has engaged in discussions with multilateral organizations and funders regarding forced labor in the solar PV industry, and added due diligence requirements and safeguards for the PV supply chain, with care taken especially in the context of mini-grid projects in Africa;
- Engagement of IPLCs is not a “box to tick off” but an ongoing process taken very seriously, and all Agencies need to meet the GEF standards for engagement of IPLCs across different stages of project development;
- The proposed NGI by the Selva fund is complementary to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) bioeconomy fund, a stakeholder engagement plan is in place, including for IPLCs, and operational focal points in target countries have been contacted and will be involved in all process steps;
- Resources programmed for climate change amount to only 85% since some countries have not programmed their STAR allocations, and countries have used the flexibility for allocations more for this focal area; and
- 100% programming achieved during GEF-6 is also due to accounting revisions that “shaved off” allocations countries had not used given challenges with currency fluctuations, and the actual fraction of resources used is larger for GEF-7.

The Secretariat noted all comments on mandates and concerns regarding specific projects, and invited written comments through 21 July 2022.

Decision: In its Decision 11/2022, the Council approves the Work Program comprising 18 projects and one program, subject to comments made during the Council meeting and additional comments that may be submitted in writing to the Secretariat by 21 July 2022.

Total resources approved in this Work Program amount to USD 165.8 million, which includes GEF project financing and Agency fees. The Work Program is comprised of the following Project Identification Forms (PIFs), Program Framework Documents, and Non-expedited Enabling Activity:

- Regional (Gabon, Namibia): Enduring Earth: Accelerating Sustainable Finance Solutions to Achieve Durable Conservation;
- Turkmenistan: Developing National Capacity of Turkmenistan through Improving Regulatory Environment towards Energy Efficient and Sustainable Building Sector;
- Brazil: Strengthening the National Transparency System in Brazil Under the Paris Agreement (DataClima+);
- Colombia: Energy Efficiency for the Transition to Carbon Neutral Cities in Colombia;
- Argentina: Comprehensive Land Management in Forestry and Agri-food Systems of Three Water Basins in Argentina to Contribute to Land Degradation Neutrality and to Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change;
- Costa Rica: Strengthening the National Capacity for the Management of Persistent Organic Pollutants in Costa Rica;
- Iraq: Integrated Persistent Organic Pollutants Management Project;
- Regional (Argentina, Bolivia): Integrated Water Resources Management in the Transboundary Bermejo River Basin;
- Regional (Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda): Groundwater for Deep Resilience in Africa (G4DR in Africa);
- Indonesia: Protection of Biodiversity and Sustainable Land-use in Conservation Landscapes in South Sulawesi, Gorontalo, and East Nusa Tenggara;
- Djibouti: Conserving Biodiversity and Restoring Ecosystem Functions in the Day and Mabila Mountains;
- Global: Umbrella Programme for Preparation of National Communications and Biennial Transparency Reports to the UNFCCC;
- Regional: The Selva Fund;
- Nigeria: Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Use of a Lowland Forest Mosaic Landscape in Ogun, Edo, Delta, and Ondo States;
- Venezuela: Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in the Caroni River Basin of Bolivar State;
- Burkina Faso: Sustainable Land Management to Strengthen Social Cohesion in the Drylands of Burkina Faso;
- Global (Ecuador, Guatemala, Mauritania, Morocco, Panama, Senegal): Mainstreaming Sustainable Marine Fisheries Value Chains into the Blue Economy of the Canary Current and the Pacific Central American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystems;
- Chad: Innovative Approach to Protect Ouadis through the Promotion of Non-connected Mini-grid Solar Energy in Three Municipalities (Mao, Kokedena, and Nokou) of Kanem region; and
- Regional (Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Mali): GEF-7 Africa Minigrids Program.

GEF-8 Integrated Programs Lead Agency Terms of Reference and Selection Process

On 21 June, Gustavo Fonseca, GEF Secretariat opened the discussion of “GEF-8 Integrated Programs Lead Agency Terms of Reference and Selection Process” (GEF/C.62/05/Rev.1). He noted that the GEF-8 negotiations included proposals on this topic and GEF-8 would learn from previous work on integrated programs (IPs), including for the selection of the lead Agency for each IP. He noted that the designation of a single lead Agency would increase accountability, and reviewed the criteria for lead Agencies, including: recognized leadership specific to the theme; commitment to engaging with other GEF Agencies and convening stakeholders; commitment to leverage its own resources; and demonstrated experience of engaging with the private sector. He said all GEF Agencies would have the opportunity to express an interest in being named a lead Agency, and the selection process would begin in the coming months.

Council Members emphasized the importance of selecting the right lead Agency as well as fostering inclusive partnerships. Speakers identified several ways in which the draft decision should be revised. Among the changes proposed were:

- Include a member of the STAP in the selection committee;
- Clearly define ways to ensure the bidding process is open and transparent;
- Include more incentives for bids from Agencies to co-lead IPs while respecting the need for accountability;
- Clarify that regional expertise would be recognized in addition to global expertise;
- Add a ceiling for the number of IPs that a single Agency could lead; and
- Incorporate diverse perspectives, including through engagement with Indigenous Peoples, women, and civil society.

The Secretariat highlighted that IPs form 30% of GEF-8 resources, and that the role of the IP lead can be challenging as opposed to implementing child projects within an IP. He requested flexibility rather than restrictions to help ensure the selection process is credible and transparent.

Following an informal conversation among Council Members at the conclusion of Tuesday, a new draft agreement was presented on Wednesday morning. Fonseca reviewed the changes in the text, including:

- A requested report to the next Council meeting on the Agency selection criteria;
- The addition of criteria for lead Agency selection, including past performance with IPs;
- Text regarding options for co-leadership arrangements;
- Inclusion of the STAP in the selection committee; and
- Changes to the template on criteria for engagement and experience of Agencies with a focus on innovation and collaboration.

A Council Member proposed adding text regarding the involvement of women, youth, and civil society. The Council agreed to review the final version in the Co-Chairs’ Summary of the Council meeting and adopted the revised decision.

Decision: In its decision 09/2022, the Council agrees with the proposed process for the selection of Lead Agencies and asks to be provided with a detailed report on the process at the 63rd meeting of the Council, including full transparency about the

proposals received, and consideration of the potential impacts of Lead Agency selection relative to the aspirational targets on Agency share for GEF-8.

Updating the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR)

Co-Chair Elisaia presided over this discussion on 21 June. Françoise Clottes, GEF Secretariat, presented “Updating the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR)” (GEF/C.62/04). She highlighted that GEF-8, recognizing the key role of STAR, agreed to increase funds allocated to SIDS and LDCs. She outlined several updates to STAR, including:

- giving developing countries full flexibility in their use of GEF-8 STAR allocations;
- harmonizing the SIDS floors with LDC floors and raising these to USD 8 million, as well as raising the floors of non-SIDS and non-LDCs to USD 5 million;
- lowering the focal area ceilings to 6%;
- increasing the weight of the GDP per capita index; and
- creating a competitive window in STAR to encourage country-driven investments that enhance domestic policy coherence and reflect the national policy landscape.

She said the Secretariat proposes that the STAR policy come into effect on 1 July 2022.

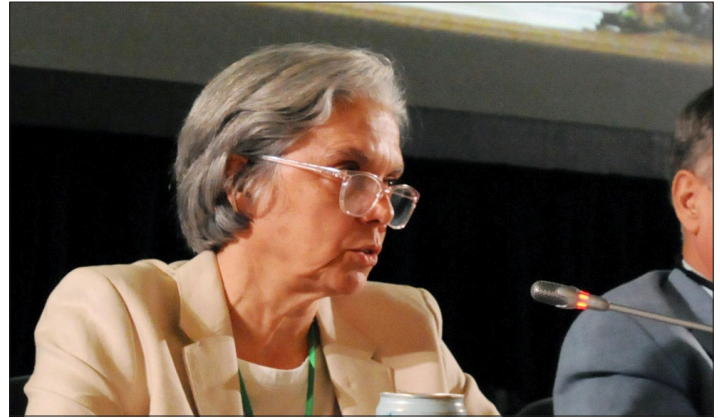
Many countries supported the updates to STAR, with several noting the changes would enhance the transparent allocation of resources. Several Council Members highlighted with appreciation the provision of more support to SIDs and LDCs. One lauded the expansion of the use of markers to include biodiversity and land degradation, which he said would allow for more robust measurement of results.

Some Council Members asked why the call for proposals for the competitive window was scheduled for November 2023, saying this was late. Clottes explained that there is a heavy workload for the first year of the replenishment and, as this is a small proportion of STAR, the Secretariat thought it could be scheduled later.

Many Council Members asked how the results of projects from the competitive window would be measured and reported, supporting a mid-term review to assess performance and identify measures to take if it seems targets are unlikely to be met. Others asked how the projects would be selected by the Secretariat. Clottes explained that decision criteria remain to be determined and will be informed by consultations. She said the Secretariat will monitor the use of flexibility by countries and share this data with the Council.

Several Council Members did not favor the introduction of the concept of vulnerabilities, with one saying this “contentious language” is intended to prevent some countries from accessing GEF resources. Several other Members supported the work of the Secretariat on a vulnerability index. One Council Member emphasized that there are references to vulnerability and vulnerabilities across all the MEAs the GEF serves. Acknowledging “quite a spectrum” of views on this issue, Clottes clarified that it has already been decided that this issue will be discussed and analyzed, but said it remains to be seen “where the discussion will take the Council.”

Noting that this decision would become operational within days of agreement, another Council Member requested a technical workshop to help his constituency fully use the resources available through GEF-8. Clottes confirmed this would



Françoise Clottes, Director, Strategy and Operations, GEF Secretariat

be possible, emphasizing that the Secretariat is committed to helping countries with implementation.

Sana Taktak Keskes, GEF CSO Network, supported the updates to STAR and suggested that a flowchart that would make it easier for users to understand the guidelines.

The Council adopted the decision without amendment.

Decision: In its decision 08/2022, the Council approves the STAR Policy contained in Annex I, which replaces and supersedes all relevant previous Council decisions regarding STAR. The Council takes note of the STAR Index descriptions and methodologies in Annex IA, and requests the GEF Secretariat to continue to explore options to reflect vulnerability considerations in the STAR for GEF-9. The Council welcomes the STAR Guidelines in Annex IB and the operational details of the competitive window in Annex IC. The Council requests the GEF Secretariat to monitor the utilization of STAR resources relative to portfolio-level targets on focal-area financing, monitor achievement of results over the GEF-8 period, and report on progress towards those targets with each Work Program of GEF-8 and in the semiannual Corporate Scorecard. The Council also requests that the Secretariat organize a mid-term review to assess portfolio performance under full flexibility, and to identify potential measures if portfolio-level focal area financing is not progressing to meet the agreed targets. The Council requests that the IEO evaluate STAR as part of its Eighth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF, and that it share its findings, conclusions, and recommendations in sufficient time to inform the negotiations on the ninth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund.

FY23 corporate budget and business plan

Peter Lallas, Advisor to the CEO of the GEF Secretariat, presented the “GEF Business Plan and Corporate Budget for FY23” (GEF/C.62/08/Rev.01) on 21 June, highlighting initial steps needed to enhance capacity in the Secretariat to respond to the significant increase in funding and major new priorities and demands for GEF-8.

Council Members supported the proposed budget, commending the step-by-step approach to reconfiguring the GEF Secretariat staff by using consultants in the transition year, the proposed greening of the workplace and reduced environmental footprint of operations, and additional basic support for CSO engagement. Council Members also sought clarification on:

- exchange and collaboration with other actors on existing best practices to support the alignment of operations with the goals of the Paris Agreement;



L-R: Peter Lallas and Sonja Sabita Teelucksingh, GEF Secretariat, and Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, GEF CEO and Chairperson

- prioritizing empowerment of operational focal points;
- the use of consultants, staffing needs in fiscal year 2024 (FY24), and the envisaged transition process;
- Rio+20 special activities;
- new work modalities, including less travel and more digital use, and potential savings from reduced office floor space;
- shifting to virtual meetings where appropriate; and
- the extended use of long-term consultants and associated increases in variable costs.

Lallas explained that the Secretariat will assess the needs for additional staff in FY23, which could lead to a reduced budget line on consultancy in FY24. Lallas confirmed that: focal points are being empowered; the Secretariat will continue to track savings produced by hybrid work modalities and other efficiencies; negotiations are underway with the World Bank on the amount paid for administrative services, and salary increases are anticipated; office lease extensions account for flexible work modes, increased telecommuting, and additional space needed due to new extended-term consultants; and Rio+20 and other special initiatives are used selectively and will not be extended indefinitely.

The draft decision was approved without amendment.

Decision: In its decision 12/2022, the Council takes note of the business plan and approves an FY23 corporate budget from the GEF Trust Fund of USD 33.256 million, comprised of:

- USD 26.990 million for the GEF Secretariat;
- USD 2.976 million for STAP; and
- USD 3.290 million for the Trustee.

The Council also approves a total FY23 administrative budget for the Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund (NPIF) of USD 18,400, comprised of the following allocations from the NPIF to cover the Secretariat's and Trustee's expenses for NPIF administration and implementation:

- USD 13,500 for the GEF Secretariat; and
- USD 4,900 for the Trustee.

The Council also approves a total FY23 administrative budget for the Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT) from the CBIT Trust Fund of USD 0.441 million, comprised of:

- USD 0.412 million for the GEF Secretariat; and
- USD 0.029 million for the Trustee.

The Council requests the Secretariat, in consultation with STAP and the Trustee, to present a combined FY24 corporate budget and business plan for discussion at its 64th meeting.

GEF'S Private Sector Advisory Group Summary Report

On 21 June, Gustavo Fonseca, GEF Secretariat, introduced the "GEF's Private Sector Advisory Group Summary Report" (GEF/C.62/11). He noted that the report summarizes the Private Sector Advisory Group's (PSAG) activities and its role in GEF-7 and outlines plans to transition towards GEF-8. Fonseca noted that PSAG was created to develop the Private Sector Engagement Strategy (PSES) during GEF-7. With the creation of the strategy, the private sector could be engaged through a Private Sector Advisory Network and PSAG would no longer be needed.

Council Members complimented the work of PSAG and the engagement of the private sector that had resulted. Many emphasized the engagement of micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises, and cautioned against losing the momentum PSAG brought for private sector engagement. A Member suggested that the Secretariat "keep an eye on" private sector engagement and propose additional activities if it "falls off." Another stressed the need to continue to engage private sector actors headed by Indigenous Peoples and women.

The Council adopted the decision as drafted.

Decision: In its decision 18/2022, the Council extends its appreciation to the members of PSAG for their contribution to the development of the PSES and, as PSAG ceases operation, invites the Secretariat and the wider GEF Partnership to continue to maintain close links with PSAG members and other private sector interlocutors for activities that are relevant to the implementation of the PSES.

Celebration of 30 years of the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP)

On 21 June, Yoko Watanabe, Global Manager of the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP), launched the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the SGP, saying it is the longest-standing programme of the GEF dedicated to supporting civil society. She emphasized that active participation of local communities is key to reversing environmental degradation and promoting effective stewardship. Watanabe said the SGP promotes: policy dialogues between governments and CSOs; South-South cooperation; and the sharing of lessons learned on the ground. She noted that the SGP has supported over 27,000 projects in 136 countries, investing over USD 720 million, and looked forward to expanding the scope and scale of the SGP together with a wider range of partners and stakeholders.

GEF CEO Rodríguez emphasized that bottom-up approaches are essential to success, and highlighted the vital contributions of civil society. Saying the Council has a big responsibility to "position the GEF in the minds of the young kids of this planet," he called for bringing the GEF closer to the youth through the "healing SGP."

Report of the Chairperson of the STAP

On Wednesday, 22 June, Rosina Bierbaum, STAP Chair, presented the "Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel" (GEF/STAP/C.62/Inf.01). Bierbaum provided an overview of scientific developments related to the GEF-8 agenda, explaining that we have now transgressed six planetary boundaries, including climate change, biogeochemical flows, biosphere integrity, land system change, novel entities (toxics and plastics), and green water. She underscored the need to redefine our relationship with nature from extraction and exploitation

to care. Bierbaum called attention to the “transformation/risk/innovation trio,” saying transformational change will require innovation, which can entail risks. She outlined nine new papers produced by the STAP, noting, *inter alia*, that:

- higher risk might be sought in exchange for higher rewards and global environmental benefits (GEBs);
- metrics for monitoring and learning about transformation could include governance and policies, multi-stakeholder dialogues, innovation and learning, financial leverage, and capacity for change;
- including metrics for necessary co-benefits will improve results-based management;
- there is “more than one plausible future,” and GEBs need to consider drivers of change such as population, migration, and conflict, in addition to climate change;
- the STAP is proposing a theory of change to guide development of a new knowledge management and learning strategy;
- policy coherence creates synergies, helps manage trade-offs, avoids damaging behaviors, and ensures GEBs are not undermined by misaligned policies;
- four of the new IPs support the blue economy, and the STAP suggests possible priorities for investment, including circular economy approaches, marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), de-risking finance, and using innovation to mobilize investment;
- the STAP has prepared a decision tree to help ensure projects have a robust adaptation rationale; and
- natural capital approaches can contribute to policy coherence by ensuring that natural capital is included in policy and decision making.

Bierbaum reported that the STAP screened 16 GEF projects, and emphasized that chemicals and waste projects often have co-benefits that are not recorded. She highlighted many possibilities for future work, including a report for the GEF Assembly focusing on the transformation/risk/innovation trio, developing a training course on the theory of change and multi-stakeholder dialogues, and a data and knowledge management platform on mercury. Bierbaum concluded by congratulating the SGP on an early and successful initiative for Tapir conservation, noting this is the foundation of a full-sized GEF program in the same biodiversity hotspot.



Yoko Watanabe, SGP Global Manager

Council Members supported, *inter alia*, the study on the blue economy, implementing recommendations for tracking co-benefits across GEF programming, and a proposed comprehensive framework for policy coherence. Many Members expressed appreciation for the paper on risk appetite; requested further deliberations, including with the wider investment family, on transformation, risk, and innovation; and asked the Secretariat to provide guidance for the development of a transparent risk framework by the 63rd meeting of the Council.

One Council Member questioned the scientific robustness of the planetary boundaries framework, and another cautioned that the definitions of concepts such as nature-based solutions are not multilaterally agreed.

Relations with Conventions and Other International Institutions

GEF CEO Rodríguez opened the discussion on this agenda item on 22 June, recalling that he had recently attended the meetings of the COPs to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the UNCCD, and the BRS Convention, and highlighting the upcoming meetings of the CBD and UNFCCC COPs. He noted that the COPs develop mandates for the GEF, and their meetings provide opportunities to meet with non-state actors. He called for more integration across the conventions, and highlighted the opportunity that a focus on the topic of nature provides in this regard. He said the GEF will be a positive source of action at the landscape and seascape level, but needs to work more with representatives from civil society and the private sector.

In her final address to the GEF as UNFCCC Executive Secretary, Patricia Espinosa highlighted that the GEF-8 replenishment negotiation outcomes point to the GEF’s role as a key financial source for climate action and sustainable development. She recalled three reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that indicate climate change presents a grave threat to our well-being, and said the GEF’s commitment to support the Paris Agreement is an appropriate response to the IPCC’s findings.

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, CBD Executive Secretary, highlighted that GEF-8 has substantially increased funding for biodiversity. She said the GEF-8 pledge of USD 1.919 billion represents an increase of 61.53% for biodiversity over GEF-7, and expressed hope that the post-2020 global biodiversity framework would bring an equivalent increase in global ambition to address these issues. She noted that the GEF is supporting early action grants for national planning in response to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and anticipated this action would help to “jumpstart” implementation of the new framework.

Rolph Payet, BRS Executive Secretary, reported on the July 2021 and June 2022 COP meetings, highlighting that GEF CEO Rodríguez coordinated a panel on financing for chemicals and waste projects at the High-level Segment. Payet reported that the Stockholm Convention COP had: decided to list the industrial chemical PFHxS, its salts, and related compounds in Annex A (Elimination); adopted new guidance on best available techniques/best environmental practices for persistent organic pollutants (POPs); and begun work on a process to provide information on illegal trade. He said the Secretariat is putting together a strategy to achieve the “maximum possible” elimination of PCBs by the upcoming 2025 and 2028 deadlines, and called for exploring how to leverage the GEF-8 replenishment in support of this goal. He said priority

areas of work include PCBs, newly listed POPs, stockpiles of obsolete POPs, unintentionally produced POPs, and national implementation plans. He concluded by launching a video of the actor Pierce Brosnan and his son, Paris, who are supporting the Conventions' work to address plastic pollution.

Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, highlighted: the Convention's recent adoption of the Bali Declaration on illegal trade; the addition of several mercury products for which both import and export will be banned; and the connection between mercury pollution and biodiversity loss. She reported that at COP 4, parties showcased the work they had carried out with GEF funding. She underscored that compliance-related challenges are mounting for developing countries, and expressed confidence that the GEF-8 allocation will be spent in its entirety. She noted that parties agreed on the terms of reference for the second review of the financial mechanism, which she said would allow parties to make any necessary adjustments. She emphasized that several IPs have direct links to sectors covered by the Minamata Convention.

UNCCD Deputy Executive Secretary Andrea Meza Murillo presented highlights from the UNCCD process, including the recent successful conclusion of COP 15 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and stressed the need for implementation that was seen across the Rio Conventions. She emphasized how key messages from the second Global Land Outlook launched in the run-up to COP 15 had generated momentum and helped to reach stakeholders. She highlighted the first "Food Day" at a Rio Convention COP, a decision that included the concept of nature-based solutions, a new intergovernmental working group on drought, and the clear acknowledgement that SDG 15.3 on land degradation neutrality (LDN) has created momentum for both implementation of the UNCCD and synergies across the three Rio Conventions. She welcomed the GEF-8 replenishment and increased flexibility for countries to allocate resources across focal areas, highlighting the need for pre-project support and financial requirements to promote implementation of LDN targets.

Many Council Members expressed appreciation for the active participation of the GEF Secretariat in MEA meetings. Several highlighted the importance of the GEF in fostering synergies between the Rio Conventions and the need to make GEF-8 accessible to other conventions. Council Members encouraged continued and intensified collaboration between the GEF and the GCF, including through "duplicating" good practice, inquired about the long-term vision to reach coherency and collaboration

with the GCF, and suggested intensifying collaboration with the Adaptation Fund and the Climate Investment Funds (CIFs).

One Council Member expressed concern about calls for additional needs assessments under the Stockholm Convention, as well as calls for the GEF to support implementation of the Rotterdam Convention, emphasizing the latter was not designed to have a financial mechanism.

Another Council Member, noting the co-benefits of fighting pollution for biodiversity, welcomed the UN Environment Assembly's decision to initiate negotiations of a legally binding global instrument on plastics, and asked how the GEF would be involved in this process. The GEF Secretariat noted that it had attended the Open-ended Working Group meeting on this issue as an observer.

A Council Member highlighted UN 2023 Water Conference, scheduled for March 2023, noting this will be the first water summit in over 40 years and will be aiming for a water action agenda.

The Council approved the report.

Decision: In its decision 19/2022, the Council welcomes the report and requests the GEF network to continue to work with recipient countries to reflect the guidance and national priorities in their GEF programming and activities.

Report of the Ethics Committee

Yoshiko Motoyama, Alternate Council Member, Japan, presented the "Report of the Ethics Committee" (GEF/C.62/10), which summarizes the Committee's work. Reflecting on the implementation of the Declaration of Interest program, she shared lessons learned and set out proposed amendments to the GEF Ethics Policy for consideration by the Council.

Following a brief discussion about the feasibility of restricting access to documents, the Council adopted the draft decision.

Decision: In its decision 17/2022, the Council decides that paragraph 4.4 of the GEF Ethics Policy will be amended to read as follows: 4.4 Covered Individuals who refuse to complete a Declaration of Interest shall lose access to GEF Council meetings and the related non-public information and documents. The Ethics Committee, immediately upon being informed by the Ethics Officer, will present a resolution to that effect to the Council whenever a Covered Individual (i) has explicitly refused to fill in a Declaration of Interest or (ii) has not filed a Declaration of Interest or (iii) has filed a manifestly incomplete or erroneous Declaration of Interest.

Work Program and Budget of the Independent Evaluation Office

On 22 June, Juha Uitto, Director, IEO, presented the "Work Program and Budget Report of the GEF Independent Evaluation Office: June 2022," (GEF/E/C.62/01) outlining current work, including: a review of the management action record; a study of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on project design and performance; and a strategic country cluster evaluation of Mekong River System. He highlighted publication of an open-access book on transformational change for people and the planet. He said the IEO continues to offer training in evaluating environmental interventions and is partnering with the Global Evaluation Initiative. Uitto underscored that the IEO is working to increase accessibility of its work through social media and enhancements to its website.



Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary, Minamata Convention on Mercury

On the budget for fiscal year 2023, Uitto reported the IEO's request is USD 5.607 million, noting the bulk of this is for fixed costs. He noted that the IEO will return USD 150,000 from its operations budgets to the Trustee due to savings from limited travel during the past year.

The Council adopted the decision without comment.

Decision: In its decision 13/2022, the Council acknowledges the progress made by the IEO in the reporting period and approves the IEO budget for fiscal year 2023.

Evaluation of GEF support to Sustainable Forest Management and Study on Climate Risk, Adaptation and Resilience in the GEF Trust Fund

Geeta Batra, Chief Evaluation Officer, IEO, presented an overview of the "Evaluation of GEF support to Sustainable Forest Management" (GEF/E/C.62/02), and the "Study on Climate Risk, Adaptation, and Resilience in the GEF Trust Fund" (GEF/E/C.62/03).

Noting that the GEF has supported SFM for almost 30 years, Batra said the document provides the first comprehensive evaluation of GEF support to SFM, assessing the outcomes and performance of the GEF's diverse portfolio of SFM activities and strategic insights and lessons for future forest-related interventions. Highlighting the importance of SFM for biodiversity, climate, food security, and LDN targets, she said the GEF has supported 640 SFM projects with a total value of USD 3.654 billion, covering diverse geographies, with the largest share in Latin America and the Caribbean, followed by Africa. She reported that performance rating of GEF SFM projects was very similar to the portfolio average across GEF replenishment periods, with outcomes of 81.2% of SFM projects rated in the satisfactory range, and 57.6% of projects likely to sustain their outcomes. She concluded that: the GEF is well positioned as a natural and effective integrator of many forest goals; articulation of a clear long-term vision and theory of change for SFM is indicated; the scope for improving monitoring and evaluation and learning remained despite new developments in design; and managing trade-offs and maintaining benefits of SFM interventions in the longer term remains a challenge. She presented three recommendations: to enhance the GEF's SFM strategy to include all elements necessary for a comprehensive, clearly articulated, and visible long-term vision and strategy for SFM; to strengthen monitoring of socioeconomic co-benefits and promote learning; and to support specific national and local priorities to manage trade-offs and maintain benefits.

Moving to Climate Risk, Adaptation, and Resilience in the GEF Trust Fund, she noted that while the GEF is not focused on climate change adaptation, it is increasingly recognized that the effects of climate change are and will be impacting the GEF's ability to achieve and sustain global environmental benefits. She explained the study aims to understand how the GEF has integrated resilience, climate change adaptation, and climate risks into its programming and to provide evidence on the relationship between these factors and project outcomes. Findings included, *inter alia*:

- statistical analysis clearly demonstrates the positive link between integration of resilience in project design and project outcomes;
- GEF climate risk screening (CRS) guidance has been viewed positively by Agencies, with the need for greater clarity on the GEF Secretariat's quality review of the CRS; and
- the resilience, adaptation pathways and transformation approach (RAPTA) provides the GEF with a tool for integrating resilience into projects and, though not widely adopted, was well received in the pilot phase.

Recommendations included for the GEF to develop guidance on climate risk mitigation measures, and to improve the monitoring of resilience in GEF projects, with attention to the context of each focal area.

Uitto said enabling activities are playing a supporting role in the development of accurate data, but noted the burden on GEF Agencies is high. He reported the IEO has developed new guidelines for evaluating the Ips, and said a tentative work program and budget for GEF-8 would be presented to the Council for approval in June 2023. He said new themes for evaluation would include learning from challenges and failures and nature-based solutions, and all evaluations will consider issues including transformational change and co-benefits.

Fonseca said the Secretariat is taking steps to address climate risk while the Agencies are best positioned to address this risk in the context of specific climate risk measures and adjust project design. He noted the IEO report is the first on GEF support for SFM, the vision for SFM has progressed, and further evaluations are expected in GEF-8. He welcomed in particular the recommendation on social benefits and learning, and noted that policy coherence is a key lever for change.

CEO Rodríguez emphasized that the GEF does not support large-scale logging and "primary forests are too precious to be logged." He recalled the agreement by Heads of State and Government at the Glasgow Climate Change Conference to focus on forests, and complimented the GEF Agencies who are on the frontlines of this issue.

During discussion, many Council Members expressed interest in an evaluation of the sources of and conditions that lead to co-financing. Council Members also supported increasing the visibility of the GEF's efforts to elaborate its SFM strategy, and highlighted the links between forests and ecosystem protection. A Council Member said the GEF can play a unique role in integrating resilience across its projects, while another called for a clearer definition of the concept of resilience. A Council Member asked how the GEF can improve equity. Other Council Members inquired whether the GEF has shared its lessons with other funds, and said the IEO should not lose sight of gender issues in its work.



Anna Viggh and Juha Uitto, IEO

Maria Elena Martínez Delgado, GEF CSO Network, welcomed the IEO's evaluation, emphasizing that local communities know that conservation of forest areas will translate into tourism and other economic benefits, and said social and environmental safeguards will lead to an economy with a vision.

Uitto said he took note of the support for several evaluations, including of the IPs, security, nature-based solutions, and co-financing. He confirmed that the IEO would not lose sight of gender, and said it will consider bringing forward the evaluations of nature-based solutions and the private sector. He noted that the IEO always looks at the involvement of Indigenous Peoples and will consider how this can be strengthened and deepened.

Fonseca acknowledged the comments made during discussion, saying the evaluation and recommendations are clear.

The Council then adopted the draft decisions.

Decisions: In its decision 14/2022, the Council, having considered documents GEF/E/C.62/02, "Evaluation of GEF support to Sustainable Forest Management," and GEF/C.62/14/Rev.01, the "Management Response," takes note of the related evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.

In its decision 15/2022, the Council, having considered documents GEF/E/C.62/03, "Study on Climate Risk, Adaptation, and Resilience in the GEF Trust Fund," and GEF/C.62/13/Rev.01, the "Management Response," takes note of the related evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.

Report of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on Governance

Gabriela Blatter, Chair of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on Governance, reported that the group had looked at the rules of procedure and governing instrument with a special focus on the pilot co-chairing arrangement. She said the group considered the co-chairing arrangement to be successful and proposed to prolong the pilot for a year. She said several minor edits were included in the rules of procedure to reflect current practices, and flagged outdated text for review and possible deletion. The working group proposed the Council take a decision on the matter at its next meeting.

The Council adopted the draft decision as presented.

Decision: In its decision 16/2022, the Council, having considered document GEF/C.62/09/Rev.01, "Report of the Group on Governance," decides:

1) To extend the co-chairing arrangement pilot until the 65th Council meeting and to elect a new Co-Chairperson for the duration of one year from among the non-recipient country representatives in the Council at the 63rd Council meeting;

2) To consider the proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedures for the GEF Council and to the Instrument for the Establishment of the restructured GEF contained in the Annex of GEF/C.62/09 and to request the Secretariat to commence consultations with the Implementing Agencies and the Trustee with a view to the GEF Council at its 63rd meeting:

a) taking a decision on the amendments of its Rules of Procedure;

b) taking a decision on recommending the amendments to the Instrument to the Assembly in accordance with paragraph 34 of the Instrument;

3) To request the GEF Secretariat to prepare, in consultation with the current and the previous elected Co-Chairperson, a manual containing critical information for the elected Co-

Chairperson on the expectations and responsibilities attached with the role of the elected Co-Chairperson to facilitate the handover from one Co-Chairperson to the next.

Other business

On Wednesday, 22 June, a Council Member read a statement on behalf of Ukraine expressing gratitude for the support it has received, detailing the environmental consequences of "Russia's war," and appealing to the GEF and all states for "environmental solidarity." The Council Member who read the statement noted his own history as a survivor of genocide, and called for an end to the war and help for Ukraine in rebuilding the country.

Another Council Member, speaking on behalf of many Members, "condemned in the strongest possible terms" Russia's "unjustifiable and illegal war," saying it has had catastrophic environmental consequences and exacerbated global food insecurity.

Three Council Members objected, saying the GEF is not a political forum.

GEF CEO Rodríguez invited the Secretariat to provide guidance on work for the next Council meeting. The Secretariat reported it will consult with UNDP and other stakeholders on the SGP and prepare a decision for the Council's consideration. GEF CEO Rodríguez added that the Secretariat is considering major changes to SGP, and that both large and small details remain to be defined.

On Thursday, 23 June, Council Members were briefed regarding negotiations on an international legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of BBNJ, and the process that would be required if the GEF were to be proposed to serve as its financial mechanism. The Secretariat noted that the GEF Assembly is the body that can amend the Instrument. He further noted that if the negotiations on the new treaty conclude during the next meeting of the IGC in August 2022, and should the GEF be proposed to serve as the financial mechanism, the relevant decision could be taken at the next Assembly.

Also on Thursday, a Council Member presented the draft decision that had been developed during consultations on action to develop a risk framework. One Council Member inquired about whether it was feasible to establish a risk framework by the Council's 64th meeting.

Decision: In its decision 20/2022, the GEF Council requests the GEF Secretariat, in consultation with the STAP and interested



Gabriela Blatter, Council Member, Switzerland



Tom Bui, Council Member, Canada

Council Members and Alternates, to prepare a paper on GEF-8 programming risk framework for consideration by the Council at its 64th session.

Update on preparations for the GEF 7th Assembly

Co-Chair Elisaia thanked Canada for hosting the seventh GEF Assembly and invited Tom Bui, Council Member, Canada, to provide an update. Bui noted that preparations were underway for the window of May-July in Vancouver, and that news will be provided as soon as possible. He emphasized that Vancouver is situated on the territory of three First Nations and the opportunity this provides, noting that the Assembly will be organized to be a space not only for business but also to embrace nature.

CEO Rodríguez thanked Bui and the team, noting the potential of a “non-conventional assembly” as it will be the first time it convenes in a donor country and “in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples.” Acknowledging that Canada has assumed the responsibility of organizing the CBD COP 15 in December, he lauded the potential of the GEF Assembly to “take us to the next level.”

Responding to an inquiry by one Member whether future meetings will be held in a hybrid or virtual format, Chair Rodríguez said it was too early for a formal response. Noting the advantages of virtual and hybrid meetings in terms of costs and participation, he said information will be provided concerning the next Council Meeting’s format after further consultations.

The GEF CSO Network emphasized the importance of the Assembly for her constituency and pledged full support. The Co-Chair noted that a decision will be adopted by e-mail at a later date.

Report of the LDCF/SCCF Council Meeting

Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, GEF CEO and Chairperson, opened the final meeting of the LDCF/SCCF Council during GEF-7, and emphasized the importance of the two funds’ focus on adaptation, given that our ability to keep global warming at or below 1.5°C “is by no means certain.” Council Members adopted the final Work Program for LDCF projects in the GEF-7 cycle, which amounts to USD 72.44 million for eight projects.

GEF CEO Rodríguez highlighted the input that had been received around the new strategy for the LDCF and SCCF, and stressed the need to scale up and provide predictable funds. He highlighted that the Work Program represented an almost 100% expenditure of the available LDCF funds. He also noted that the

GEF and the Agencies are changing lives at the village level, but not yet at the landscape level.

Co-Chair Elisaia said the LDCF provides a sense of certainty that funds will be available for adaptation. He noted challenges for SIDS even after they graduate from LDC status, given that they “never graduate” from the challenges they face because of their vulnerability. He expressed hope for a dedicated window to fund the needs of SIDS.

Adoption of the Agenda

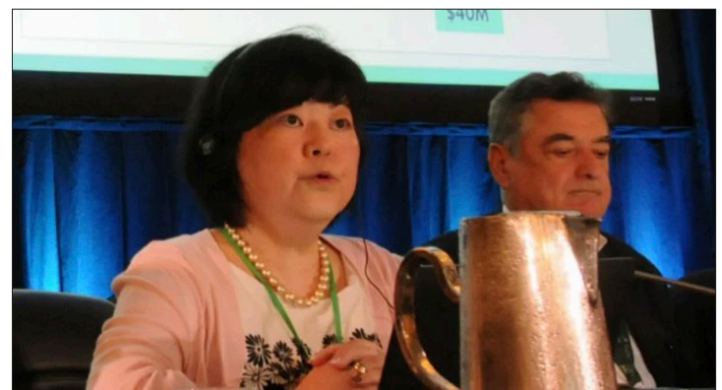
The Council adopted the agenda (GEF/LDCF.SCCF.32/01/Rev.01) without comment.

Opening Remarks by the LDC Chair

Madeleine Diouf Sarr, Chair of the LDC Group, thanked Chair Rodríguez for his visit to her home country Senegal and for showing “our realities and what we are doing.” She highlighted the partnership between the LDC Group and the GEF and the importance of continuing to prioritize LDCs for adaptation and building resilience. She appreciated the growing number of adaptation projects, the inclusive and transparent process of developing GEF-8, and the proactive training provided for LDCs to understand the new strategies, saying this has strengthened their collective vision on adaptation and transformation. She stressed that funds should be 100% for LDCs, saying that “we should not be competing to access these resources” and that LDCs showed their absorption capacity during GEF-7. She applauded that the strategy was accounting for LDCs’ priorities and the doubling of the country cap from USD 10 to 20 million for each period. She asked partners to provide resources to the LDCF to improve predictability, expressing hope that “our international partners are walking along us in this fight” and that the rescheduled funds would be catalytic in the transfer of technologies.

GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change for the LDCF and SCCF for the GEF-8 Period of 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2026 and Operational Improvements

On 23 June, Chizuru Aoki, Lead Environmental Specialist at the GEF Secretariat, presented the “GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change for the LDCF and the SCCF for the GEF-8 Period of July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2026 and Operational Improvements” (GEF/LDCF.SCCF.32/04/Rev.01). She highlighted that the strategy aims to facilitate



Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat, presents on the 2022-2026 GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change for the LDCF and the SCCF.

transformational adaptation in developing countries towards achieving the Paris Agreement's global goal on adaptation. She said the strategy: is built to be agile; represents an opportunity for a "major upgrade" to catalyzing action; and is informed by science. She highlighted four priority themes: agriculture, food security, and health; water; early warning and climate information systems; and nature-based solutions.

Aoki explained that the main elements of the LDCF programming strategy include scaling up finance, strengthening innovation and private sector engagement, and fostering partnerships to support inclusion and a whole-of-society approach. She said participants agreed to a multi-year pledging modality with voluntary contributions, and donors may also make intermittent contributions. She outlined two financing scenarios, one for USD 1 billion and another for USD 1.3 billion, noting the initial cap per country will be USD 20 million.

Aoki reported that the SCCF will focus on two underserved priority areas: the climate change adaptation needs of SIDS; and innovation, technology transfer, and private sector engagement for all countries. She emphasized significant disparities in adaptation funding across SIDS. She further noted that only one donor supported the SCCF in the GEF-7 period, and said it must be funded properly to fulfill its mandate. She outlined two financing scenarios for 2022-2026, one for USD 200 million and the other for USD 400 million.

Aoki highlighted many operational improvements to both the LDCF and SCCF for GEF-8, including: improved reporting of Rio Markers on Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Desertification; further synergies with the GEF Trust Fund; and aspirational multilateral development bank targets and ceilings to address Agency concentration.

During discussion, many Council Members supported the programming strategy and expressed appreciation for a range of elements included in the strategy, such as policy coherence, private sector engagement, gender, complementarity with other funds, and enhanced tracking of Rio Markers. Two Council Members highlighted the importance of resilience and food security.

One Council Member said her country is ready to increase its financial support for the SCCF, but only if at least one other country contributes to the fund. Another emphasized that the SCCF is "people centered," and several appealed for contributions to the SCCF. Several Members acknowledged this call.

A Council Member highlighted the importance of civil society involvement in implementation. The GEF CSO Network asked for guidance on what role it could play going forward. The GEF Secretariat confirmed that it will consult with the CSO Network on achieving a successful roll-out of the strategy.

The LDCF/SCCF Council adopted the decision.

Decision: In its decision LDCF.SCCF 1/2022, the LDCF/SCCF Council welcomes the Strategy and endorses it as a basis for programming resources under the LDCF and SCCF from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2026.

Work Program for the Least Developed Countries Fund

On 23 June, Gustavo Fonseca, GEF Secretariat, presented the final Work Program for LDCF projects in the GEF-7 cycle, noting it requests USD 72.44 million for eight projects. He highlighted that during GEF-7, 100% of LDCs were supported



Sylvia Schmidt, Council Member, Germany

and the utilization rate of LDCF resources for national projects in the GEF-7 period was 99.2%.

He highlighted that all eight projects respond to the ambition and requirements of the GEF policy on gender equality. He said four of the projects address urgent and immediate climate change adaptation priorities in at least four LDCs, including: work by Comoros to strengthen the resilience of climate-smart agricultural systems and value chains; work by Niger to strengthen the resilience of small farmers through climate-smart agriculture techniques in the Tahoua Region; ecosystem-based adaptation for improved livelihood in Tuvalu; and upscaling ecosystem-based adaptation for Madagascar's coastal zones.

Fonseca said that all projects are expected to deliver adaptation benefits, with: 1,308,995 beneficiaries, 51.1% of whom are female; at least 101 policies and plans; 233,498 hectares of land under climate-resilient management; and 41,043 people (51.9% of whom are female) with enhanced capacity.

During discussion, many Council Members lauded the news that all LDCs were able to access the LDCF during GEF-7, and said they were "happy" with the Work Program. One lauded increased support for nature-based solutions.

Several Council Members welcomed the close collaboration and complementarity between the GEF and GCF, as specified in the report. One asked for more examples of what has been gained from cooperation between the GEF and GCF. Fonseca noted that the GEF's collaboration with the GCF includes upstream planning and approvals as well as downstream implementation and coordination across activities they both fund.

Fonseca expressed appreciation for the support of the Council Members, saying "happy donors make for happy staff, a happy CEO, happy Agencies, and happy countries."

The LDCF/SCCF Council adopted the decision.

Decision: In its decision LDCF.SCCF 2/2022, the Council approves the Work Program comprising eight projects, subject to comments made during the Council meeting and additional comments that may be submitted in writing to the Secretariat by 21 July 2022.

Total resources approved in this Work Program amount to USD 72.44 million from the LDCF, inclusive of GEF project financing and Agency fees.

With respect to the PIFs approved as part of the Work Program, the Council finds that each of these PIFs (i) is, or would be, consistent with the Instrument and GEF policies and procedures, and (ii) may be endorsed by the CEO for final approval by the GEF Agency, provided that the final project

documents fully incorporate and address the Council's and the STAP reviewer's comments on the Work Program, and that the CEO confirms that the project continues to be consistent with the Instrument and GEF policies and procedures.

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

In light of the recent audit report by the UNDP Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) of UNDP GEF Management, all projects included in the Work Program implemented by UNDP shall be circulated by email for Council review at least four weeks prior to CEO endorsement/approval. This shall take place as actions of the Management Action Plan that address the OAI recommendations are being implemented, and as the independent, risk-based third-party review of compliance by UNDP with the GEF Policy on Minimum Fiduciary Standards is being completed. Project reviews will take into consideration the relevant findings of the external audit and the UNDP management responses and note them in the endorsement review sheet that will be made available to the Council during the four-week review period.

Pledging session

On Thursday, two countries pledged funding to the LDCF. Finland announced it will provide EUR 2 million in 2022. Denmark announced it will provide DKK 150 million in 2022 and the same amount in 2023.

FY21 Annual Monitoring Review of the Least Developed Countries Fund and Special Climate Change Fund

Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat, presented "The FY21 Annual Monitoring Review of the Least Developed Countries Fund and Special Climate Change Fund" (GEF/LDCF.SCCF.32/05), referring to projects that had begun on or before June 2021 and were under implementation during at least part of FY21.

Aoki stated that the active portfolios of both funds were progressing well, with the SCCF in particular showing a very high level of achievement, and that despite COVID-19 only small changes were observed between FY20 and FY21.

She reported that the LDCF cohort comprised 74 projects, with USD 464.3 million total LDCF project financing commitments towards the active portfolio as of 30 June 2021, 55% of which had been disbursed, and USD 2,259.4 million confirmed co-financing. The SCCF portfolio comprised 31 projects with USD 135 million in committed financing, 65% of which had been disbursed, with confirmed co-financing amounting to USD 1,327.7 million. She said 59 LDCF projects under implementation, or 82% of the active cohort, were rated moderately satisfactory or higher in terms of their progress towards development objectives. Fifty-eight projects, or 81%, were also rated moderately satisfactory or higher in their implementation progress. For the SCCF, these numbers were 97% and 94%, respectively.

Aoki highlighted results of a qualitative analysis of success factors, such as: extensive participation of stakeholders in providing support and mentoring; participation and empowerment of vulnerable groups; effective stakeholder engagement in problem identification; including local and regional actors in

project design; and adaptive management by project coordinators, supported by local organizations.

Responding to questions from Council Members, Aoki explained that: sex-disaggregated data can be provided in the next Annual Monitoring Review. However, she noted that reporting only started during GEF-6, with newer projects showing disaggregated data and some projects showing "all beneficiaries." She said lower overall ratings for the UNDP portfolio could be due to UNDP having a higher share of countries with higher risk rating in their portfolio.

Gustavo Fonseca, GEF Secretariat, replied to a question about the relatively low performance for "land under resilient management" in LDCs, stating that, while deeper analysis is warranted, one reason could be the trend towards higher cost for land and competing claims over its use, especially with the impending food crisis, making earlier estimates and track records less applicable.

One Council Member suggested involving technical institutions in the Sahel region to improve the quality of monitoring.

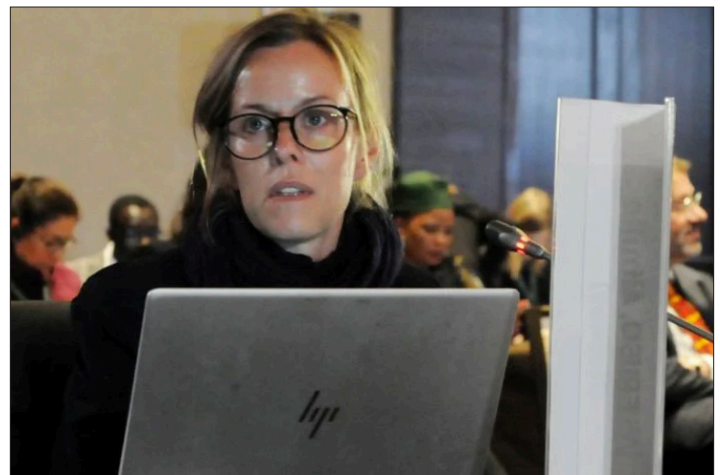
The LDCF/SCCF Council then adopted the draft decision.

Decision: In its decision LDCF.SCCF 3/2022, the LDCF/SCCF Council welcomes the review and appreciates the progress made in reporting portfolio-level performance, results, and lessons learned under the LDCF and SCCF. The Council welcomes the overall finding that the LDCF and SCCF portfolio under implementation in FY21 performed satisfactorily.

Progress Report on the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund

Gustavo Fonseca, GEF Secretariat, presented "The Progress Report on the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund" (GEF/LDCF.SCCF.32/06). Fonseca stated that the report summarizes progress since the inception of the LDCF and SCCF, with a focus on the period from March 2021 to March 2022.

For the LDCF, Fonseca reported cumulative pledges amounting to USD 1.99 billion, 88% of which were paid contributions, and USD 1.69 billion cumulative funding approvals. During the reporting period, USD 147.8 million in paid contributions and USD 206.2 million in new pledges were received. The LDCF is expected to have 52.8 million direct beneficiaries, with 1.6 million people trained. Agriculture is the sector with the highest share of projects, followed by



Emilie Wieben, Council Member, Denmark

water, climate information services, and ecosystem restoration, protection, and management.

For the SCCF, Fonseca reported cumulative pledges amounting to USD 356,9 million, 98% of which had been paid, and no new pledges received. He highlighted that 55% of the funds were administered through development banks and IFAD, illustrating the SCCF's potential to leverage funding for innovative adaptation. The SCCF is expected to have 8.8 million direct beneficiaries, with more than 200,000 people trained. The leading sector is water, followed by: climate information; agriculture; ecosystem restoration, protection, and management; disaster risk management; and infrastructure.

The LDCF/SCCF Council adopted the decision.

Decision: In its decision LDCF.SCCF 4/2022, the LDCF/SCCF Council welcomes the report contained in document GEF/LDCF.SCCF.32/06, and notes with appreciation the progress made under the LDCF and the SCCF.

FY23 Administrative Budget for the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund

On 23 June, Chizuru Aoki, GEF Secretariat, presented the FY23 Administrative Budget and Business Plan for the LDCF and SCCF. She reported that FY22 developments and accomplishments included, *inter alia*: a pledging session at UNFCCC COP 26 resulting in a record pledge of USD 413 million for the LDCF; development and finalization of the Programming Strategy for the LDCF and SCCF and Operational Improvements for GEF-8; constitution of two work programs for Council approval; and intensified efforts to reach out to the LDC Group and four LDCs that had not accessed LDCF resources in the GEF-7 period by FY22.

Aoki outlined the administrative budget request for FY23, which includes USD 3,080,196 for the LDCF and USD 1,202,037 for the SCCF. She noted spending related to the SCCF would start only upon receipt of contributions from more than one donor, totaling USD 10 million or more. She outlined the FY23 LDCF/SCCF Business Plan, which includes: starting the 2022-2026 strategy implementation; launching the dedicated programs; engaging in the UNFCCC COP and responding to guidance; intensifying knowledge sharing and partnership; building outreach to donors and LDCs; and supporting joint programming and major initiatives with the GCF.

During discussion, one Council Member asked why the budget does not vary with financial scenarios, given small fixed costs, and whether the Secretariat considered what happens to the administrative budget if expected funding levels are not met. Aiko said the administrative budget has been "fairly consistent" throughout GEF-7. She explained the Secretariat is cognizant of the financial situation of the SCCF and has, as a result, incorporated the clause saying that until an additional donor is found and at least USD 10 million is added to the SCCF, the Secretariat will not begin administration of this fund.

The LDCF/SCCF Council adopted the decision.

Decision: In its decision LDCF.SCCF 5/2022, the LDCF/SCCF Council approves the proposed budget for the GEF Secretariat, STAP, the Trustee, and the GEF IEO, as follows: USD 2,502,196 (GEF Secretariat), USD 128,000 (STAP), USD 427,000 (Trustee), and USD 23,000 (GEF IEO) from the LDCF; and USD 941,037 (GEF Secretariat), USD 128,000 (STAP), USD 110,000 (Trustee), and USD 23,000 (GEF IEO) from the SCCF.

FY23 Work Program and Budget for the Independent Evaluation Office under the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund

Anna Viggh, IEO, presented the "LDCF/SCCF Annual Evaluation 2022" (GEF/LDCF.SCCF.32/E/Inf.01), explaining that the LDCF/SCCF evaluation will align with the move of reporting on performance of the GEF Trust Fund and the GEF Management Action Record to a biennial schedule. She said this year's evaluation includes a special analysis of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on project design, implementation, and results from LDCF and SCCF projects designed or implemented between March 2020 and December 2021. Viggh said according to the evaluation, responding to the COVID-19 pandemic has been a significant challenge for LDCF and SCCF projects, and highlighted emerging evidence that ongoing and completed LDCF and SCCF projects have made concrete contributions towards COVID-19 recovery.

Juha Uitto presented the "FY23 Work Program and Budget for the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF under the LDCF and SCCF" (GEF/LDCF.SCCF.32/E/01), stating that in FY23, the IEO will assess the terminal evaluations since the 2021 evaluation, reporting on outcomes, sustainability, monitoring and evaluation design, and implementation ratings for these projects. In addition, he said the IEO plans to study early warning systems that have been financed by the LDCF/SCCF, since this is a priority in GEF-8, and aims to provide evaluative evidence for the design of future projects. He said in FY23, the IEO will also finalize updating the LDCF/SCCF guidance document on evaluation policy.

On the budget, he reminded the Council that USD 340,000 had been allocated for the four-year work program, of which USD 84,000 was budgeted for FY22. He estimated that 95% will be used by the end of the fiscal year, with undisbursed funds rolling over to FY23. For 2023, he said the budget is USD 46,000, to be equally distributed between both funds.

The LDCF/SCCF Council adopted the draft decision.

Decision: In its decision LDCF.SCCF 6/2022, the LDCF/SCCF Council approves the annual budget of USD 46,000 to carry out the work program for fiscal year 2023. The approved budget will be distributed equally, with USD 23,000 allocated to the LDCF and SCCF respectively.

Closing of the Council Meetings

At the end of Thursday, the GEF Council and LDCF/SCCF Councils reviewed the Co-Chairs' Summary of the meetings, which comprises the decisions that were taken during each meeting and adopted the summaries without changes.



Group photo at the end of the 62nd Meeting of the GEF Council

GEF CEO Rodríguez thanked the Council Members and GEF staff for their work. He highlighted that the meeting capped off a successful GEF-7 cycle and looked forward to the new GEF-8 cycle and the opportunities that it will bring. He informed Council Members that the Secretariat will provide information about the timing and format for the 63rd GEF Council Meeting in the coming weeks. The 62nd meeting of the GEF Council closed at 4:00 pm.

Upcoming Meetings

High-Level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG 14 (Second UN Ocean Conference): The Ocean Conference will seek to propel science-based innovative solutions to start a new chapter of global ocean action. The theme of this meeting is “Scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Goal 14: stocktaking, partnerships, and solutions.” **dates:** 27 June - 1 July 2022 **location:** Lisbon, Portugal **www:** www.un.org/en/conferences/ocean2022

IPBES-9: The ninth session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES-9) will consider the thematic assessment of the sustainable use of wild species and the methodological assessment regarding the diverse conceptualization of multiple values of nature and its benefits, including biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services. The meeting will be preceded by a Stakeholder Day on 2 July. **dates:** 3-9 July 2022 **location:** Bonn, Germany **www:** ipbes.net/events/ipbes-9-plenary

HLPF 2022: The 2022 meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, under the auspices of ECOSOC, will convene under the theme “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” The 2022 meeting will hold in-depth reviews of five SDGs: 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 14 (life below water), 15 (life on land), and 17 (partnerships for the Goals). **dates:** 5-7 and 11-15 July 2022 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York, US **www:** sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf

BBNJ IGC-5: BBNJ IGC-5 is the Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) on an international legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). **dates:** 15-26 August 2022 **location:** New York, US **www:** www.un.org/bbnj/

4th Meeting of the SAICM Intersessional Process: The 4th meeting of the Intersessional Process (IP4) for Considering the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and the Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste Beyond 2020 is expected to continue discussions on a possible post-2020 platform for chemicals and waste management. **dates:** 29 August - 2 September 2022 **location:** Bucharest, Romania **www:** www.saicm.org

2022 World Bank Group/International Monetary Fund Annual Meetings: The Annual Meetings will include the meetings of the joint World Bank Group/IMF Development Committee and the IMF International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC). The Development Committee and the IMFC advise the Boards of Governors on issues of global concern, including the world economic outlook, poverty eradication, economic development, and aid effectiveness. **dates:** 14-16 October 2022

location: Marrakech, Morocco **www:** www.worldbank.org/en/meetings/splash/about

Plastics INC-1: The first meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, is tentatively scheduled to convene in November 2022.

dates: November 2022 (tentative) **location:** TBC **www:** TBC

UN Climate Change Conference: The 27th session of the COP to the UNFCCC will take place in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. **dates:** 7-18 November 2022 **location:** Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt **www:** unfccc.int/cop27

UN Biodiversity Conference: The 15th meeting of the COP to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the tenth meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and the 4th meeting of the COP serving as the MOP to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization will convene face-to-face in December 2022. **dates:** 5-17 December 2022 **location:** Montreal, Canada

www: www.cbd.int/process/

63rd Meeting of the GEF Council: The next meeting of the GEF Council is expected to take place in December 2022. **dates:** TBC **location:** TBC **www:** www.thegef.org/events/63rd-gef-council-meeting

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

Glossary

BBNJ	Marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction
BRS	Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSO	Civil society organization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEF-8	Eighth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IP	Integrated program
LDCs	Least developed countries
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund
MEA	Multilateral environmental agreement
PIF	Project Identification Form
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
SFM	Sustainable forest management
SGP	Small Grants Programme
SIDS	small island developing States
STAP	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
STAR	System for 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