



Talking Points

An Electronic Newsletter for GEF Focal Points

Volume 1, No. 1
May-July 2001

Message from the CEO/Chairman

“Communication, Communication, Communication.” For this inaugural issue of the focal point newsletter, I am reminded of a phrase made famous by real estate professionals the world over: “location, location, location.” And just as the value of property is raised by a good location, the value of a partnership or a simple conversation is enhanced by good communication.

The GEF is in a unique situation. Although still a young organization, the GEF has made substantial strides forward as its original mandate continues to be both refined and expanded. A key to our progress, however, is the countries with whom we work. They must take these steps forward with us to create a GEF that serves them effectively and reflects their needs. Together, we are breaking ground, but we will be most successful in achieving our goals if we make communication an ongoing process.

The GEF initiated the Country Dialogue Workshops as a focused tool for exchanging information with governments. We hope the workshops will kick off a new era in GEF communication with its focal points and the countries they represent. GEF intends to work to make information and feedback part of a complete cycle, in which GEF news and country responses travel back and forth on a continual basis.

Mohamed T. El-Ashry
GEF CEO and Chairman

=====

Contents

GEF and Its Members
Support for the GEF Focal Point
May 2001 Council Meeting
Country Dialogue Workshops
Persistent Organic Pollutants
Biodiversity
Monitoring and Evaluation
World Summit on Sustainable Development

GEF and Its Members

Today, GEF has 167 member countries. Working together, representatives of both donor countries and nations eligible for GEF funding address the issues that result in global environmental problems. With so many countries involved and so many global environmental

issues to deal with, it is necessary to maintain open channels of communication between GEF and its national focal points, to hear the views and experiences that arise in each country from day to day, and to exchange ideas on the best ways to involve stakeholders, improve environmental awareness, and coordinate national-level entities most effectively.

For this first newsletter, we have chosen some topics that are particularly timely and others that review how GEF supports and offers assistance to its focal points. In this issue, you will find information on focal point support, country dialogue, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, biodiversity issues, monitoring and evaluation, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

Please let us know your opinion about communication between the focal points and the GEF. What are the issues you would like to see us address in this newsletter? Would you like to use this channel to publish an article on GEF action and concerns in your country?

Support for the GEF Focal Point

Since June 1999, 110 GEF focal points have responded to the letter of GEF's CEO and Chairman about the availability of support to focal points. As agreed by Council on May 7, 1999, after countries have identified the implementing agency through which they wish to receive support, GEF will provide funds to country field offices, which in turn disburse the funds to focal points. (Please refer http://www.gefweb.org/COUNCIL/GEF_C13/pdf/c13_13.pdf on the website for more details.) Seventy-eight countries have submitted a budget plan, and GEF subsequently disbursed the requested funds to the appropriate implementing agency field office. After a report is received summarizing first-year expenditures, funds are disbursed according to a budget plan for the second year. So far, eight budget plans have been approved for the second year. The *Review of GEF Support to National Focal Points and Council Members Representing Recipient Country Constituencies* (GEF/C17/Inf10) has been prepared for the May 2001 Council Meeting. Go to http://www.gefweb.org/Documents/Council_Documents/GEF_C17/C.17.Inf10.pdf to view it on the website.

If you do not yet participate in this support effort through one of the implementing agencies, please contact the GEF Secretariat.

Another different type of focal point support is now available from the GEF. In January, the GEF published *Good Practices: Country Coordination & GEF*, which presents the results of the Good Practices in Country-Level Coordination workshop held in March 2000. The workshop sought information on experiences in country-level coordination and enabled an exchange of views among focal points from countries that have established effective mechanisms for coordinating GEF-related matters. One of GEF's goals for the workshop is identifying useful themes and lessons to disseminate to other countries as models for their own efforts. You may access *Good Practices* at http://www.gefweb.org/Good_Practices.pdf or request a copy from GEF.

May 2001 Council Meeting

During its May 9-11, 2001, Council meeting, the GEF Council took decisions on 1) guidelines for initial enabling activities related to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, 2) options for enhancing GEF support in assisting affected countries to implement the Convention to Combat Desertification, 3) elements of a strategic collaboration and a framework for GEF action for capacity building, 4) a Work Program with 16 projects worth more than one-half billion dollars, 5) the 2000 Project Performance Report by the monitoring and evaluation team, 6) the

CEO note on GEF activities related to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, 7) a note on the Second GEF Assembly, 8) the FY02 Corporate Budget, 9) mechanisms and arrangements for expediting disbursements of GEF funds to small projects, and 10) criteria for expanding opportunities for executing agencies. You may access the Joint Summary for the decision text at http://www.gefweb.org/Joint_Summary_of_the_Chairs.pdf.

Country Dialogue Workshops

In May 1999, the GEF Council approved a project to facilitate dialogue at country level between national stakeholders and participants and the GEF. These dialogues are designed to promote ownership, facilitate national coordination, and enhance awareness-building.

Between April 2000 and March 2001, 17 GEF Country Dialogue Workshops were conducted. A total of 27 countries participated in 15 national and 2 subregional CDWs during this period. A workshop has been organized, on average, every 3 weeks since the program began. The workshops seem to provide a unique platform for countries to engage in a comprehensive dialogue with the GEF and its implementing agencies. The results of workshop evaluations are encouraging and indicate that the workshop participants, representing a range of national stakeholders, felt their CDWs met or exceeded program objectives.

GEF Country Dialogue Workshops

Country/Region	Date	Location
2000		
1. South Africa	April 4-7	Johannesburg
2. Vietnam	April 25-29	Hanoi
3. Uzbekistan	June 25-29	Tashkent
4. Egypt	June 26-28	Cairo
5. Nigeria	July 18-21	Abuja
6. Algeria	July 24-26	Algiers
7. Caribbean sub-reg' ¹	August 8-11	Roseau, Dominica
8. Philippines	August 22-25	Manila
9. Malawi	October 3-6	Lilongwe
10. Tanzania	November 6-9	Dar es Salaam
11. Sri Lanka	November 7-10	Colombo
12. Caribbean sub-reg' ²	December 5-8	Port of Spain, Trinidad
13. Cuba	December 12-15	Havana
2001		
14. Azerbaijan	Jan 30-Feb 2	Baku
15. Tunisia	February 20-22	Tunis
16. Bolivia	March 6-9	La Paz
17. Cambodia	March 13-16	Phnom Penh

¹ All member states of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States + Barbados participated in this sub-regional workshop hosted by Dominica.

² Bahamas, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago participated in this sub-regional workshop hosted by Trinidad and Tobago

2001 (scheduled)³

18. Pakistan	May 14-16	Islamabad
19. Niger	May 15-17	Niamey
20. Russia Federation	June 6-8	Moscow
21. Ukraine	June 12-15	Kiev
22. Iran	June 17-20	Tehran
23. Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles (reg'l)	July 10-13	Port Louis, Mauritius
24. Lebanon	July 31-August 3	Beirut
25. Pacific Islands ⁴	September 14-18	Apia, Samoa
26. Kazakhstan	Oct 30-Nov 2	—
27. Bangladesh	November 6-9	—
28. Ecuador	November 27-30	—
29. Uganda	December 11-14	—

The *Workshop Facilitation Materials*, other resource materials, and *Guide to Conducting a GEF Country Dialogue Workshop* in the above languages can be obtained from the GEF CDW website at www.undp.org/gef/workshop/main.htm. Additional information such as Program overview, dates for upcoming workshops, and workshop reports prepared by the GEF operational focal points are also available through this website. The GEF CDW website is being continuously updated with new information and materials. It gives also the opportunity to retrieve material for presentations at national meetings relevant for the GEF. Some countries have used the material at meetings which were funded through the focal points support provided through the implementing agencies' field offices.

Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)

The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. The 5th session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for an "International Legally Binding Instrument for Implementing International Action on certain Persistent Organic Pollutants" (POPs) met in Johannesburg, December 4-9 2000, and concluded the negotiations for a POPs Convention. The Convention will be adopted and opened for signature at a Conference of Plenipotentiaries scheduled for May 22-23, 2001 in Stockholm.

The GEF has been designated, on an interim basis, in the draft Convention as the "principal entity entrusted with the operations of the financial mechanism" (Article 14 of the Convention). This means that the GEF focal points will have an additional field of interest to address in their coordination efforts at the national level.

The objective of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) is to protect human health and the environment from POPs. The Convention is global in scope and multimedia in coverage. Parties are obligated to take measures to reduce or eliminate releases of

³ The 10 countries/regions listed here are among those identified to host workshops during the remainder of 2001. A total of 25 countries will be served by these additional workshops.

⁴ Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu will be invited to this regional workshop to be hosted by Samoa.

the POPs covered by the Convention, which focuses initially on twelve chemicals that can basically be grouped into three categories as follows:

- Pesticides: aldrin, chlordane, DDT, dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor, hexachlorobenze (also an industrial chemical and unintended byproduct), mirex, and toxaphene
- Industrial chemicals: PCBs (also unintended by-products)
- Unintended byproducts: dioxins and furans.

The Convention includes an important procedure for adding additional POPs for coverage in order to respond to new threats that will be identified in the future.

It is recognized that many Parties will need technical and financial assistance in order to implement the Convention's provisions. The GEF is now preparing to take early action on POPs, and will present to the May 2001 meeting of the GEF Council the "Initial Guidelines for Enabling Activities for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants." Following Council approval, countries will be able to access funding through expedited procedures, and initiate the preparation of their national implementation plans for the convention. You may access the Council paper at: http://www.gefweb.org/Documents/Council_Documents/GEF_C17/C.17.4.pdf on the GEF website.

The Story on POPs

Entire classes of synthetic organic chemical compounds have proven chronic toxicity, i.e., because of bio-accumulation they cause long-term health effects in living organisms, including humans. They can be transported for long distances, and, once released, persist for long periods in the environment. They accumulate in sinks, like sediments, where they interact and modify, in some cases acquiring even more dangerous properties. Among them persistent organic pollutants (POPs) represent a major group.

The mechanisms that underlie their toxicity are not well understood but evidence is mounting on their links to cancer, immune deficiencies, disruption of hormone systems, genetic dysfunctions. Most fall into the category of organohalogenes, organic chemicals that include fluorine, chlorine, bromine, iodine, or astatine. Chlorine is possibly the single most important ingredient in modern industrial chemistry because of its versatility, and ability to link firmly to the carbon backbone of organic molecules, and impart them with new properties: toxicity (pesticides), solubility (solvents, plasticizers), reactivity or persistence, etc. The internationally recognized "dirty dozen" (the most infamous of the POPs) are all organochlorines.

Biosafety

In November 2000, the Council approved GEF's *Initial Strategy for Assisting Countries To Prepare for the Entry into Force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety*. The five primary elements that comprise the strategy are:

- A project to assist interested signatories to the Cartagena Protocol in establishing national biosafety frameworks
- individual, country-based demonstration projects, through any of the GEF Implementing Agencies, to assist in capacity-building to implement national biosafety frameworks
- coordination with other multilateral and bilateral organizations providing assistance in the area of biosafety
- support to enable countries to participate in the biosafety clearing-house, once the clearing-house terms of reference are agreed upon by the Parties
- enhancement of the scientific and technical advice to the GEF on biosafety issues.

The first element, the GEF-UNEP *Development of National Biosafety Frameworks* project, also approved by Council in November 2000, has two key components: 1) a regional component that will assist countries to exchange experiences through regional and sub-regional workshops and identify opportunities for collaboration, and 2) a national component that will enable countries to identify and develop national biosafety frameworks.

The overall strategy and the proposed project were presented at the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of the Cartagena Protocol (ICCP) in Montpellier, France, in December. The ICCP responded positively and called on GEF to move to implement both immediately.

More information on GEF's *Initial Strategy* is available on the website at http://www.gefweb.org/Documents/Council_Documents/GEF_C16/GEF_C.16_4_Rev.1.pdf. For more information on the ICCP decision, please see the documents from that meeting at <http://www.biodiv.org/biosafety/iccp-01.asp>, which are among the information available in the Biosafety Protocol section of the Convention on Biological Diversity website.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Second Study of GEF's Overall Performance (OPS2). The M&E team has nearly completed program studies in three GEF focal areas: biodiversity, climate change, and international waters. These studies—by independent consultants, GEF secretariat and implementing agency staff, and Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) members—will enable creation of a database and analysis of GEF experiences and lessons for OPS2.

In the climate change program study, several “clusters” within the portfolio were reviewed to assess the success of efforts to adopt and develop sustainable markets for renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies and approaches. The biodiversity study sought to identify progress in key field activities, such as establishing new protected areas and improving existing protected area management; promoting sustainable use of biodiversity; supporting the

drafting of biodiversity strategies, plans, and laws; promoting education and awareness; and identifying social concerns related to biodiversity. The study also focused on the resources and support available to determine sustainability of GEF efforts, improve biodiversity research and monitoring, and rehabilitate and rescue species and habitats. The international waters program study, because of the long-term nature of ecological changes in that area, applied performance indicators at three levels—project, country, and international—in its data analysis.

A linkage study looked at the progress of land degradation activities linked to projects in climate change, biodiversity conservation, and international waters. When completed in early 2001, the studies will provide inputs to the overall review of the GEF. The terms of reference for OPS2 can be found in the Results and Impacts section at www.gefweb.org. Or for more details, contact Ms. Elizabeth George at Ebgeorge@worldbank.org.

World Summit on Sustainable Development

GEF and “Rio+10.” The 55th General Assembly of the United Nations has decided that the 2002 Summit, or the World Summit on Sustainable Development, will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa. Although the exact dates of the Summit are as yet undetermined, August is the anticipated month.

In its decision, the General Assembly called for the 10-year review of progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 2002 to reinvigorate, at the highest political level, the global commitment to sustainable development. In doing so, it maintained that the Summit, including its preparatory process, should ensure a balance between economic development, social development and environmental protection. It also stressed a comprehensive assessment of progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 to be carried out at the local, national, regional and international levels.

Among others, the UN GA decision welcomes the GEF report to the General Assembly on its contributions to the implementation of Agenda 21. It invites all donor countries and other countries in a position to do so to make contributions to GEF’s third replenishment and ensure its successful conclusion. GEF also is invited to actively participate in the 10-year review process.

For the May Council meeting, GEF’s CEO and Chairman prepared a proposal detailing the appropriate role of GEF in the events leading up to the World Summit, as well as suggested activities to support a successful outcome in Johannesburg. You may review the *CEO Note on GEF Activities Related to the World Summit on Sustainable Development* on the GEF website at http://www.gefweb.org/Documents/Council_Documents/GEF_C17/C.17.9.pdf.