



talking Points



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I. A Letter from the CEO

Monique Barbut

Dear Colleague:

Summer is upon us. Here in Washington, we are gearing up for the onslaught of the summer heat. Of course, at the GEF rising temperatures weigh often on our minds.

This spring I visited Beijing, China, where I rode on one of the three zero-emission, hydrogen-powered fuel-cell buses now plying the streets of Beijing and saw first-hand a state-of-the-art refueling station for the buses, part of a GEF-funded project at the fore of the global response to climate change.

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II. GEF June Council Meeting

The next meeting of the GEF Council is scheduled to be held June 12-15, 2007 in Washington, DC. An NGO consultation will take place prior to the Council meeting, on June 11, 2007. For more information on the upcoming Council meeting, including the Council papers, please visit the GEF Website: www.theGEF.org

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III. Stories from the Agencies

a. Okavango Delta Boasts Magnificent Game Viewing

The Okavango Delta in Botswana boasts some of the most magnificent game viewing in Africa. These attractions draw a lucrative tourism industry, mostly in exclusive hunting and photo safaris, as Botswana has adopted a ‘high-cost, low-volume’ tourism approach. Tourism from the Ngamiland district, one of the most popular safari destinations, brings important revenue to the country: over \$200 million a year.

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b. Good Tourism Practices in Belize and Ecuador

A UNEP/GEF project is reaching out to the tourism sectors in Belize and Ecuador. In partnership with the Rainforest Alliance, Conservation International, and local nongovernmental organizations, the project is creating a supply of sustainable tourism services in these countries. At the heart of the project is training a critical mass of tour operators and accommodations owners in the adoption of good practices—such as conserving globally important biodiversity.

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c. Important Lesson from Crocodile Rehabilitation Project

An important lesson has emerged from the Crocodile Rehabilitation, Observance, and Conservation (CROC) project: community consultations and public awareness campaigns can be more effective tools than penalties and patrols to enforce environmental legislation, say Jan van der Ploeg and Merlijn van Weerd, team leaders. The CROC project aims at changing opinions about crocodiles and bringing the species back from the brink of extinction.

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d. Bringing Sustainability to the Marine Aquarium Trade

A booming market exists for marine aquarium fish—estimated at \$200-330 million annually. The largest markets for these products are in the United States and Western Europe, with Japan and Hong Kong rapidly increasing their demand. Overfishing and environmental degradation of the fisheries habitat, particularly coral reefs, pose a grave danger both to this trade and resources it depends on. The International Finance Corporation-GEF supported Marine Aquarium Market Transformation Project (MAMTI) is working to put the trade of aquarium ornamentals on a sustainable path in Indonesia and the Philippines—the world’s largest exporters of marine tropicals.

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IV. News from the GEF Evaluation Office

The issue of capacity development is a major priority within the global conventions and the GEF. Nearly all GEF medium and full-sized projects include some objectives or activities related to capacity development. However, in most of these projects, capacity development is not the principle objective, but a means to a broader global environmental goal. This has been the principal pathway for addressing country capacity development needs and GEF strategic priorities.

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V. Focal Point News

VI. New Country Support Programme Knowledge Management Facility Launched

The GEF Country Support Programme (CSP) is pleased to announce the launch of the new knowledge facility for GEF Focal Points website: <http://www.gefcountrysupport.org>. In designing this online knowledge facility, the CSP paid close attention to the needs and preferences identified by GEF Focal Points during the 2006 subregional consultations and in surveys conducted in Oct/Nov 2006.

[read more »](#)

VII. GEF Strategic Investment Program for SLM in Africa

An international initiative to counter land degradation in Sub-Saharan Africa got the green light at a conference in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, held April 24-25, 2007. The Strategic Investment Program for Sustainable Land Management in Sub-Saharan Africa (SIP), which has been two years in the planning, could eventually raise around \$1 billion to rehabilitate damaged and degraded lands and prevent new land degradation.

[read more »](#)

VIII. GEF NGO Network Election

The GEF-NGO Network is pleased to welcome five new Regional Focal Points (RFPs):

[read more »](#)

IX. SGP Prizes and Awards

Community initiatives funded through the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) have recently been recognized with several prizes and awards for their innovative and effective approaches to delivering global environmental benefits, while at the same time generating sustainable livelihoods for local communities.

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X. New Focal Points and Council Members

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This spring I visited Beijing, China, where I rode on one of the three zero-emission, hydrogen-powered fuel-cell buses now plying the streets of Beijing and saw first-hand a state-of-the-art refueling station for the buses, part of a GEF-funded project at the fore of the global response to climate change.

Even though fuel cell technology is not yet commercially viable, by supporting this project we hope to show how cutting-edge technology along with appropriate infrastructure can provide pollution-free transport in one of Asia's largest mega-cities. My visit to China coincided with the release of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report, which presented an eye-opening picture of the likely global implications of rising greenhouse-gas levels.

Here at the GEF we are also gearing up for the next Council Meeting. This meeting will offer an opportunity to consider important policy issues concerning the Sustainability Compact that I announced last December.

We are submitting for Council review a new project cycle, a set of revised focal area strategies, a proposed results-based management framework, and other measures. These changes are all part of my efforts to streamline the GEF and make it a smoother, more efficient operation. This new direction is essential for the GEF family and for better

engagement with countries.

For more information on highlights of the Council Meeting, please see the article in this issue of Talking Points.

Before closing this letter, I want to invite you to visit the new and improved GEF web site at www.thegef.org. Through this new site, you will have more interactive, user-friendly access to the vast amount of knowledge and resources in the GEF. I invite you to make full use of the site, which contains:

- A new search engine which will give you quick access to information throughout the site
- Easier access to Council documents and meeting information
- A new country portal, still under design but which will contain targeted information for GEF countries, and a link to the exciting new Country Support Program web site created by UNDP
- An improved access to the GEF project database
- More intuitive sets of horizontal and vertical menus for accessing site information
- The beginnings of a new page for stories about GEF projects told by those who are working on the projects
- More up-to-date news and access to speeches and statements
- Ultimately, a password-protected portion of the site for your own use
- Introduction of our new tagline "Investing In Our Planet"

The site is still being developed to some extent, and we will continue to refine it in the coming months. Ultimately, this is your site, and I hope you can make it a significant two-way portal of knowledge for your work with the GEF.

With best wishes,

Monique Barbut
CEO and Chairperson
Global Environment Facility



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GEF June Council Meeting

Highlights of Upcoming GEF Council Meeting

The next meeting of the GEF Council is scheduled to be held June 12-15, 2007 in Washington, DC. An NGO consultation will take place prior to the Council meeting, on June 11, 2007. For more information on the upcoming Council meeting, including the Council papers, please visit the GEF Website: www.theGEF.org.

The Provisional Agenda includes:

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Election of a Chairperson
3. Adoption of the agenda
4. Statements by Executive Secretaries of the Conventions
5. Relations with Conventions and other Institutions
6. Annual Performance Report (EO)
7. Country Portfolio Evaluation: Philippines (EO)
8. Country Portfolio Evaluation: Samoa (EO)
9. Four-year rolling work plan and budget of the Evaluation office (EO)
10. STAP
11. Comparative advantages of GEF agencies
12. Proposed policy on fiduciary standards and financial accountability
13. GEF project cycle
14. Work program
15. GEF Business Plan FY08-10 and FY08 Corporate Budget
16. Focal area strategies and Strategic Programming for GEF-4
17. Results-based management framework
18. Operational guidelines for the application of the incremental cost principle
19. Other business
20. Joint summary of the Chairs

Brief Highlights of Selected Agenda Items

GEF Project Cycle (GEF/C.31/7)

In 2006, the GEF Evaluation Office conducted an evaluation of the GEF project cycle, which concluded

that (a) the GEF activity cycle is neither effective, cost-efficient, nor efficient, and that the situation has grown worse over time; and (b) GEF modalities have not made full use of trends towards new forms of collaboration that serve to foster ownership and promote flexibility, efficiency, and results.

In December 2006, the GEF Council, after taking note of these conclusions, agreed that no gains would be achieved by streamlining the current project cycle at the margins. The Council requested the Secretariat, in consultation with all the GEF entities, present for Council review in June 2007 options for a new project cycle, with the objective of processing a proposal from identification to start of implementation in less than 22 months (without compromising project quality or undermining financial accountability).

The June 2007 Council will be reviewing, *GEF Project Cycle* (GEF/C.31/7), which proposes a new GEF project cycle that is based on Council's guidance to the Secretariat, GEF Evaluation Office recommendations, as well as the CEO's proposals for reforming the GEF as outlined in the five-point Sustainability Compact presented to the Council in December 2006. The proposed new GEF project cycle will establish a target for average elapsed time of 22 months from PIF approval to endorsement by the CEO. Besides reducing the number of steps in the project cycle, the revised cycle aims to reduce the documentation requirements by sharply focusing the Secretariat reviews of the PIF and the project document on those criteria that are critical to achieving the objectives for which a GEF grant is provided. Other criteria that reflect the GEF operational principles—such as sustainability, replicability, stakeholder involvement, cofinancing commitment, scientific, and technical innovation—are better and more realistically monitored during project implementation through the annual project implementation reporting and review process, as outlined in the Results-Based Management Framework. Such an approach reflects a shift from an "approval" culture to a "results-management" culture.

Focal Area Strategies and Strategic Programming for GEF-4, GEF/C.31/10

The policy recommendations for the fourth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund requested the Secretariat to review and revise as necessary the six focal area strategies, taking into account cross-cutting issues of sustainable forest management and sound chemicals management. The revised strategies were also to provide the basis for a simplified approach to the GEF's operational programs and strategic objectives for the fourth

replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund.

Working drafts of focal area strategies and two additional draft papers addressing the cross-cutting issues of sustainable forest management and sound chemicals management were presented to the December 2006 Council. The Council reviewed the working drafts and requested the Secretariat to continue its work to revise the focal area strategies as they should focus on global outcomes and impacts of future GEF interventions. They should also provide a basis for the development of measurable results indicators. In addition, the focal area strategies should be focused on a definite set of priority issues reflecting major global environmental concerns. As for cross-cutting issues, they should be more systematically identified, analyzed and integrated in the revised focal area strategies.

To ensure a broad and consultative process for revising the focal area strategy, the CEO established five Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs) on biodiversity, climate change, sustainable land management, international waters, and sound chemicals management, and a Strategy Advisory Group (SAG) as an overarching coordinating group.

Working drafts of the focal area strategies and minutes from the meetings of the TAGs and the SAG were posted on the GEF website throughout the process, along with the terms of reference and membership of the advisory groups. Comments on working drafts received from the GEF partners throughout the process were posted on the website. In particular, Council Members were invited to provide comments on the draft strategy papers presented to the SAG in April 2007.

The document GEF/C.31/10, *Focal Area Strategies and Strategic Programming for GEF-4*, will be submitted for consideration by the June 2007 Council. In this document, the revised strategies and proposed strategic programming for GEF-4 are presented for the six focal areas of the GEF and for the two cross-cutting areas (sustainable forest management and sound chemicals management).

Results-Based Management Framework, GEF/C.31/11

The December 2006 Council requested the Secretariat to submit a results based management framework for consideration at the June 2007 meeting. The document, *Results-Based Management Framework, GEF/C.31/11*, which will be reviewed by the June 2007 Council, provides an overall concept for a results-based management framework for the GEF. The paper outlines the

conceptual and methodological building blocks of how the GEF as an institution intends to measure progress toward results and the associated monitoring activities that the Secretariat will undertake in collaboration with the GEF agencies.

The results based management framework for the GEF which will be implemented for GEF-4, incorporates monitoring and reporting at three levels: institutional (organization); programmatic (focal area); and project level. The framework is built on the strategic programming for GEF-4 focal area strategies and their associated indicators (GEF/C.31/10) and will be tied closely to the proposed project cycle (GEF/C.31/7).

One of the core themes in developing a result-based framework in the GEF is to shift the institution from an “approval” culture to a “results-oriented” culture. The attempt is to move away from a “blue print” approach to project development and design, and towards a results-based adaptable approach focusing on delivering project outcomes and impacts during implementation

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Tourism Companies Join Forces with Local Communities to Preserve Premier African Wildlife Area

The Okavango Delta in Botswana boasts some of the most magnificent game viewing in Africa. These attractions draw a lucrative tourism industry, mostly in exclusive hunting and photo safaris, as Botswana has adopted a ‘high-cost, low-volume’ tourism approach. Tourism from the Ngamiland district, one of the most

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popular safari destinations, brings important revenue to the country: over \$200 million a year.

The Okavango wetlands, the largest Ramsar site in the world, also provide important natural resources and ecological services to an estimated 120,000 people living in local communities, who rely on the wetland's resources as part of their household economy. About 47 percent of communities living in and around the Delta officially live below the \$2-a-day poverty line, although goods and services from the wetlands can contribute as much as \$1,200 annually to household economies.

Degradation of the wetlands, through unsustainable development of tourist infrastructure or overuse of veldt products, would therefore have severe negative

implications for community welfare, as well as for the tourism industry and regional biodiversity. In response to this situation, the GEF and United Nations Development Programme have launched the Building Local Capacity for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in the Okavango Delta project (also known as Botswana Wetlands) to secure the long-term biological diversity of Botswana's wetlands. The project seeks to balance competing uses of land, water, and other wetland resources, while providing for biodiversity conservation objectives.

The project is bringing rural communities and tourism operators together to create community and private sector-based management models for the Okavango Delta ecosystems. It is working with established tourism operators in the region, locally-based private sector tourism partners (community lodges, fishing groups and craft producers), community groups, industry associations (including those for fishermen, wildlife management, hotels, and tourism), craft cooperatives, environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the Tribal Land Board and District Councils, who reinvest tourism resource royalties in human development projects. It is establishing communications channels for a two-way flow of biodiversity information between stakeholders.

In areas where tourism activities clash with local veldt resource harvesting needs, the project will encourage participatory management and appoint an arbitrator to deal with conflicts. The project will also encourage the tourism industry to re-invest in wetland biodiversity and introduce biodiversity-friendly management into both sport and commercial fishing.

In the water sector, a vital concern, the project will develop hydrological models, including biodiversity parameters for the Okavango Delta, and strengthen institutional capacity to regulate water resources harvesting. It will also establish a wetlands monitoring and risk analysis system.

Working with conservation NGOs, including the World Conservation Union and the Kalahari Conservation Society, the project will identify gaps in the protected area system and integrate national Important Bird Area (IBA) networks into the national protected area network, thus, contributing to a consolidated, cohesive and sustainable protected area system throughout the Okavango Delta and helping strengthen the protected areas system throughout Africa.

All of the elements of the project together will help preserve one of Africa's finest wildlife areas.

Photo credit: Curt Carnemark



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Good Practices in Tourism

A UNEP/GEF project is reaching out to the tourism sectors in Belize and Ecuador. In partnership with the Rainforest Alliance, Conservation International, and local nongovernmental organizations, the project is creating a supply of sustainable tourism services in these countries. At the heart of the project is training a critical mass of tour operators and accommodations owners in the adoption of good practices—such as conserving globally important biodiversity.

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To accomplish this, the project has tailored internationally sustainable tourism best practices, consistent with guidelines from the Convention on Biological Diversity, to tropical forest and coastal and marine ecosystems. In just the first year alone, over 300 tourism stakeholders have been trained in Belize and Ecuador. In Ecuador, more than 20 major wholesaler tourism purchasers have signed agreements to provide incentives to their suppliers to adopt best practices. Agreements are in place with the International Galapagos Tour Operators Association, which is responsible for sending 15,000–20,000 tourists annually to the Galapagos (one of the project's pilot sites) and with the Galapagos Chamber of Tourism, which has over 150 members.

Rainforest Alliance and Conservation International have committed to expanding the use of the tools produced through this GEF-financed project and scaling up sustainable tourism throughout their broader global portfolios and through their partners.

Photo credit: Stuart Westmorland /CORBIS



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Community Consultations More Effective than Penalties to Enforce Environmental Legislation

An important lesson has emerged from the Crocodile Rehabilitation, Observance, and Conservation (CROC) project: community consultations and public awareness campaigns can be more effective tools than penalties and patrols to enforce environmental legislation, say Jan van der Ploeg and Merlijn van Weerd, team leaders.



The CROC project aims at changing opinions about crocodiles and bringing the species back from the brink of extinction. As part of the Mabuwaya Foundation in the Philippines' conservation program, CROC is supported by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, of which the GEF is a partner and the World Bank is the Implementing Agency.

Although crocodiles are protected by law in the Philippines, indiscriminate hunting,

destructive fishing practices (fishing with dynamite, electricity, or chemicals), and the conversion and pollution of wetlands continue to threaten the animals. Most people, including local government officials and village leaders, simply do not know that crocodiles are officially protected by law. And if they know, they often consider the penalty outrageous and unfair, since most people in the Philippine uplands earn less than \$2 a day, whereas killing a crocodile carries a penalty of 100,000 pesos (\$2,000). As a result, using dynamite for fishing, killing a crocodile, or clearing crocodile habitat is often tolerated at the local level.

At the national level, lack of funds, technical capabilities and political support undermines the enforcing of environmental laws in remote areas. As a consequence, habitats and species continue to be threatened, despite the presence of national laws and policy frameworks designed to protect the country's endemic biodiversity.

With financial support from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, Mabuwaya has conducted a public awareness campaign in the coastal municipalities of the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park. Lectures were held and posters were distributed in areas where crocodiles still live. Through community consultations to discuss the best possible ways to protect crocodiles, Mabuwaya learned that local communities are supportive of crocodile conservation and people are proud of contributing to the conservation of a threatened species. Mabuwaya also organized a training workshop for village leaders, where local people designed specific action plans to protect crocodiles

and wetlands.

In the Philippine uplands, there is a strong social basis to act against environmentally destructive practices as communities see their resource base threatened. During the workshop local regulations were drafted to protect the resources on which communities depend. The village of Diana, for example, made an ordinance prohibiting destructive fishing methods, and the village of Didadungan created a crocodile sanctuary. Local people consider these local rules important, legitimate, and fair, and consequently respect them, demonstrating that in the Philippine uplands the word is sometimes mightier than the sword.

As a result, the wetlands are effectively protected and crocodiles have become a symbol for local environmental stewardship.

This lesson applies to many environmental conservation projects around the globe. A recent review *Global Gains through Community-Based Approaches* World Bank Sub-Saharan Africa by the World Bank GEF program shows how World Bank–GEF projects in Africa have achieved global benefits while undertaking community-based investments, thus delivering impact at both the global and local levels. To learn more about the African stories click here: *Global Gains through Community-Based Approaches: World Bank–GEF Operations in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 2006

Photo credit: Christophe Loviny, CORBIS



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Bringing Sustainability to the Marine Aquarium Trade

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The International Finance Corporation-

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GEF supported Marine Aquarium Market Transformation Project (MAMTI) is working to put the trade of aquarium ornamentals on a sustainable path in Indonesia and the Philippines—the world’s largest exporters of marine tropicals. The Marine Aquarium Council is implementing the project, which has a high potential to be replicated and to become a global best practice.

To obtain the marine tropicals, the Philippines and Indonesia overwhelmingly rely on the harvest of wild organisms. Many thousands of coastal communities in these countries depend on collection of aquarium organisms for their livelihoods. Often three generations of collectors can be found among the poor families living in the coastal villages. In prior times, these families would only fish in front of their houses. But today, the families need to journey progressively further away, because of overexploitation of coral reefs. These long journeys increase stock mortality rates and pose serious risks to the safety of the collectors.

For the marine aquarium industry to genuinely flourish and prosper in the longer term, the MAMTI project is championing a number of fundamental changes:

- greater efforts in the source countries to build collectors’ capacity in nondestructive collection techniques;
- training in handling and shipping methods that maintain the health and quality of the organisms;
- training in safe diving and compressor maintenance;
- empowerment of the collectors through the formation of cooperatives;
- and the teaching of basic business

skills for running viable collection and sales operations.



Sustainability also requires the scientific assessments of the aquarium fishery resources and management plans of the collection areas, which is being implemented in the two countries. The collectors and collector groups, supported by local government, are in the front line in terms of learning to manage their resources more carefully. They need to be encouraged to use a precautionary approach to resource exploitation, and this is not easy at a time when there is increasing competition for dwindling resources. Control of sales and species selection must also become more rational as the two-way information flow between exporters, importers, and retailers improves.

The future of the marine aquarium trade not only requires greater cooperation between collectors, suppliers and exporters, but needs a strong commitment from importers, retailers, and hobbyists. Through the MAMTI project and GEF support, the International Finance Corporation sees hope that this challenge can be met.

Photo credit: MAMTI

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Ongoing Activities

GEF Capacity Development Activities

The issue of capacity development is a major priority within the global conventions and the GEF. Nearly all GEF medium and full-sized projects include some objectives or activities related to capacity development. However, in most of these projects, capacity development is not the principle objective, but a means to a broader global environmental goal. This has been the principal pathway for addressing country capacity development needs and GEF strategic priorities.

In November 2006, the Evaluation Office began assessing the GEF's capacity. After consultation with the GEF Secretariat and the Implementing and Executing Agencies, the Evaluation Office established an approach to evaluating capacity development. In line with the approach, the Office

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is now evaluating the results of all GEF capacity development support, from Enabling Activities and the Small Grants Programme, through to the national results of regional projects, in two neighboring countries, the Philippines and Vietnam, which share environmental challenges of global importance. In each country the evaluation is examining the nature and results of national and



regional interventions and relating these to policy, institutional, and individually focused capacity development objectives.

The evaluation team will use the findings of the two country studies to generate concise protocols for assessing capacity development results, which can be scaled up for use by a broad range of future Evaluation Office activities, including the Annual Performance Report, country and thematic evaluations, and the Fourth Overall Performance Assessment.

For more information and the approach paper, please visit the GEF Evaluation Office website www.thegef.org in the Ongoing Evaluation section; or contact David Todd, dtodd@thegef.org.

International Workshop on Evaluating Climate Change and Development

The preparation of the international workshop on evaluating climate change and development is progressing well. The workshop will take place on February 2-4, 2008 at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, in Alexandria, Egypt. During the workshop, evaluators, practitioners, government, and civil society representatives will help identify good practice and information gaps in assessing climate change and development projects and programs.

The two main themes of the workshop are mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. The Evaluation Office is now searching for relevant evaluations on these subjects and for resource persons and organizations engaged in assessing climate change and development. If you have information or suggestions on this, please let us know at IntWorkshop@TheGEF.org.

It is especially important to ensure participation of developing countries and countries in transition. There will be a Call for Papers on the workshop themes. Select papers will receive an award that includes funding to participate in the workshop.

The GEF Council, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, IUCN, the International Development Association (IDEAS), International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the French GEF, and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina are all generously supporting this vital workshop.

For more information, please visit the Evaluation Office website or contact the Secretariat of the International Workshop at IntWorkshop@TheGEF.org

June Council Session

The GEF Evaluation Office is submitting two Country Portfolio Evaluations—the Philippines and Samoa—to the June Council Session. The

Council will also review the 2006 Annual Performance Report and the Office's work plan for FY08-11. All relevant documents, including Management Responses, are available on the GEF website

http://www.thegef.org/interior_right.aspx?id=17634

Photo credit: Bibliotheca Alexandrina



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Council Members Hold Constituency Meetings

Constituency meetings aim to enhance communication, coordination, and outreach efforts between constituency participants. These meetings provide a forum for focal points participating in the constituency to meet and exchange information and lessons learned as well as discuss implementation of GEF projects. Constituency meetings also provide an opportunity for participants to meet prior to Council meetings to discuss and develop constituency positions with regard to issues under consideration by the Council and to ensure that constituency views are reflected in Council deliberations.

Moldova Hosts Constituency Meeting

Council Member, Ms. Violeta Ivanov of Moldova, hosted a meeting for the constituency comprising Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Moldova, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, and the Ukraine in Chisnau, Moldova, on May 18, 2007. This meeting, which was opened by His

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Excellency Constantin Mihailescu, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources and GEF Political Focal Point in Moldova, presented an opportunity for focal points from the countries to interact and discuss various constituency matters. They also discussed proposed policies to be submitted to the June 2007 Council.

The Philippines Hosts Constituency Meeting

A meeting for the constituency comprising Cook Islands, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu was held in Quezon City, the Philippines, on May 30-31, 2007. Participants at the meeting, hosted by Mr. Fransisco Bravo, the Council Member representing the Philippines, prepared for the upcoming June 2007 Council meeting. Several other issues related to constituency coordination at the regional level were discussed at the meeting.

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New CSP Knowledge Management Facility Launched



The GEF Country Support Programme (CSP) is pleased to announce the launch of the new knowledge facility for GEF Focal Points website:
<http://www.gefcountrysupport.org>.

In designing this online knowledge facility, the CSP paid close attention to the needs and preferences identified by GEF Focal Points during the 2006 subregional consultations and in surveys conducted in Oct/Nov 2006. The knowledge facility supports GEF Focal Points by providing ready access to information on priority thematic areas, knowledge materials targeting their concerns, as well as forums to facilitate Focal Point discussion, and exchange at the global, regional, constituency, and country levels. During the subregional workshops scheduled in 2007, the CSP is demonstrating the knowledge facility to Focal Points and Council members and is available to answer any questions or discuss recommendations for enhancing the website.

The knowledge facility is structured on the basis of six main sections:

* GEF Information: designed to provide facilitated access to GEF policies and procedures of direct

interest to Focal Points

- * Knowledge Materials: providing guidance materials developed by the CSP, GEF partners, and Focal Points themselves on some of the key concerns identified by Focal Points in relation to their role

- * Management Tools: providing information on support available through the CSP and National Dialogue Initiative, as well as interactive resources for exchange at the regional, country, and constituency level

- * Discussion Forums: for on-line discussions and exchange among Focal Points and GEF partners on issues of current interest

- * Advanced Search: to enable Focal Points to access relevant information and knowledge on key subjects of interest by searching GEF Partner and Convention sites

- * Partnership Links: providing annotated links to GEF Partner sites and other relevant organizations working on thematic, regional, and knowledge management issues

Primarily, the knowledge facility seeks to support GEF Focal Points in their roles and responsibilities at the country and constituency levels. As such, Focal Points will construct and populate sections of the site, such as the country and constituency pages, by contributing their knowledge and experiences in the context of the GEF. While all visitors to the website will be able to view the information contained in most sections of

the site, the constituency pages and discussion forum will only be accessible to registered users—Focal Points, Council Members and Alternates, and GEF Partners.

For Focal Points and Council Members who would like to log-in to the Discussion Forum, upon entering the "Join a Discussion" page, please click on "Do you need a new password?" and a temporary password will be sent to their e-mail address. Focal Points and Council Members need to enter the e-mail address they have officially registered with the GEF Secretariat. For all other GEF partner agency users who wish to participate in the on-line discussion forums, please contact the CSP to request a password (frances.lim@undp.org).

Note that in order to view some of the pages linked to other agency websites, please be sure that you allow pop-ups for this website, if you have installed a "pop-up blocker" on your computer.

Please bear in mind that the website remains a work-in-progress and some pages are still under construction. The CSP also plans to add subregional pages and information in Arabic, French, Russian, Spanish, and other languages.

We invite users to explore the new website and participate in the discussion forums. We invite focal points to add their country's knowledge and information to their individual country page. This knowledge facility, linked closely to the GEF Secretariat's new website, will remain dynamic and be updated frequently with new information

and functionality. We also anticipate that it will expand its scope in time to support Focal Points based on their recommendations.

Stephen Gold, Global Manager, and Tehmina Akhtar, Knowledge Management Advisor, GEF Dialogue Initiative and Country Support Programme, prepared this article.

Photo credit: CSP website

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Restoring the Health and Wealth of Africa's Degraded Lands: Key Focus of a New International Initiative

An international initiative to counter land degradation in Sub-Saharan Africa got the green light at a conference in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, held April 24-25, 2007.

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The Strategic Investment Program for Sustainable Land Management in Sub-Saharan Africa (SIP), which has been two years in the planning, could eventually raise around \$1 billion to rehabilitate damaged and degraded lands and prevent new land degradation.

Up to a third of the African continent is deemed threatened by land degradation as a result of escalating soil erosion, declining fertility, salinisation, soil compaction, pollution by agrochemicals and desertification. Land degradation is not only an economic and human tragedy but, if unchecked, will undermine attempts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

The SIP will bring fresh approaches and a wealth of experience to overcome the problem. It will reflect the fact that one of the best ways to defeat land degradation is to get funding, expertise, and know-how directly to the grassroots, including farmers and local communities.

The initiative, which has been two years in consultation, is being coordinated under the auspices of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and the GEF.

Monique Barbut, the GEF's Chief Executive Officer, said at the opening of

the two-day conference: “The Ouagadougou Conference is a major event that will introduce the new GEF approach in addressing one of the most pressing environmental problems in Africa. The new program emphasizes country partnerships that will channel resources to the ground level where they can make a far reaching impact on the lives and the livelihoods of millions of people on the Continent.”

“There have been many success stories in the battle against land degradation. What is needed now is a strategic approach that unifies and unites all efforts, leverages the necessary funding and builds upon the knowledge that has been gathered over several years. In doing so we can multiply the success stories and deliver a comprehensive victory against one of the great environmental, social, and economic scourges of the 21st century,” she added.

The two-day extraordinary conference consisted of presentations on the critical nature of the problem of land degradation to the future development of Africa, the main features of the SIP, and new approaches and proposed solutions to be initiated through the SIP Program. The conference concluded with a statement of support and commitment from African governments and partners and a declaration by the environmental ministers of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN). The African governments signed a joint statement of political commitment and a declaration of collaboration in implementation of SIP by all partners was also adopted.

The SIP for Africa has been prepared with the support of all GEF Implementing and Executing Agencies and those agencies involved in sustainable land management in Africa under the convening leadership of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and in close consultation with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Regional Economic Communities. TerrAfrica has actively supported SIP preparation and will ramp up support during implementation of the SIP portfolio.

It is anticipated that, subject to GEF Council approval, the implementation phase of the new program will commence in June this year. The GEF is expected to invest about \$130-150 million and hopes to leverage a further \$500-750 million in cofunding.



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GEF-NGO Network Election Results

The GEF-NGO Network is pleased to welcome five new Regional Focal Points (RFPs):

- Western Africa : Enda Energy—Environment Development Programme - SENEGAL represented by Djimingue Nanasta
- South Asia: Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)—INDIA represented by Jagdeesh Rao Puppala
- South East Asia: Global Environment Centre—MALAYSIA represented by Faizal Parish
- Western Europe: German NGO Forum Environment & Development—GERMANY represented by Jurgen Maier
- North America: The Nature Conservancy (TNC)—UNITED STATES OF AMERICA represented by Yabanex Batista

The election process and results are helping streamline the GEF-NGO Network.

The election process began with an Election Committee that was put in place in November 2006. On March 16, 2007 a standard message for the election of RFPs for the GEF NGO Network was sent out and a deadline for receiving nomination was set for March 30, 2007. No nominees were received for Southern Africa, Russia and China. A nomination was received from the current RFP for Central and Eastern Europe; however, the Election Committee made the decision to defer elections in this region.

To ensure public participation, representation of global regions is key. The Network welcome all new RFPs.

For more information please contact: Dorothy Manuel, the GEF NGO Central Focal Point, dorothy@zeroregional.com.

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GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) have recently been recognized with several prizes and awards for their innovative and effective approaches to delivering global environmental benefits, while at the same time generating sustainable livelihoods for local communities.



Woman from the La Barra Community in El Salvador taking care of crops irrigated using the solar energy system. Photo: Juan Rene Guzman.

El Salvador: Renewable Energy Project wins Energy Globe Award

In El Salvador, the National Energy Globe Award: “The World Award for Sustainability” has been presented to a novel approach that provides access to renewable energy for 73 families, while at the same time protecting the ecosystem and generating economic benefits. SGP’s support allowed the Asociación de Desarrollo Comunal Colonia la Barra (ADESCOLAB) to provide access to cheap and clean solar energy and help install fuel efficient stoves. The community-based organization also planted woodlots to reduce unsustainable harvesting in the forest and provide more effective protection of the biodiversity of the San Diego-La Barra ecosystem. In addition,

the project has received a National Environmental Prize and attracted the attention of policymakers for its innovative approaches.

SGP Projects Tops Central Asia Best Practices

SGP projects in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan topped all categories in the “Best Practices Competition in Sustainable Development of Central Asia” awards. First prize was awarded to the SGP project “Mitigation of Threats to Biological Diversity in the Areas Adjacent to Saty Village by Ecology Tourism Development”. The SGP funded five out of six best practices chosen in Kazakhstan, and four out of the nine in Kyrgyzstan, highlighting the program’s achievement in developing best practices for community-based sustainable development.

Honduras: Ecotourism Project Becomes “Green List Honoree”

The Moskitian Route, an ecotourism project in Honduras, was awarded third place in Condé Nast Traveler magazine’s “2006 Green List,” which recognized ecological achievement in 80 projects, tour operators, and world-class quality hotels. The SGP-funded Moskitian Route project was designed to protect the Río Platano Biosphere Reserve, a Natural World Heritage Site that is in danger because of deforestation, colonization, and expansion of agricultural and cattle frontiers.

Awarding Innovation and Creativity

The UNDP Administrator’s Award for

Innovation and Creativity has recognized SGP initiatives in Cuba and Iran. In Cuba, the burning of 150 tons of solid waste a day at a garbage dump in Guantanamo was severely affecting the adjoining community of Isleta Sur. A recycling facility has now been set up as an alternative to burning waste and SGP support has helped the community transform three hectares of the dump into a garden with fruit trees. The garden is producing compost, while the recycling facility employs 40 local residents, including 19 women. A community member, who was also awarded the National Environmental Award 2006 (the top annual prize given by the Ministry for the Environment), led the dump's transformation.

In Iran, the SGP supported a project with the Salakh Village Council in Qeshm Island in which fishermen and their community were mobilized to rehabilitate local marine resources by developing artificial coral reefs. Fishermen led the design of the project and showed their innovation by creating reef pyramids that were smaller, less expensive, and easier to transport and install. The fishermen and community will monitor the rehabilitation impacts of the project, which was chosen as an Administrator's Award finalist.

Equator Prize Finalists: Cutting-edge Initiatives in Biodiversity Conservation

More than a third of the 25 finalists for this year's Equator Prize are community initiatives funded through the SGP. Projects from Brazil, Costa Rica, Mali, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Senegal, and Tanzania are in line for the

prestigious prize, which rewards outstanding community efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation of biodiversity.

“This illustrates the ability of the SGP to foster best practice in the field of community led biodiversity conservation,” said Delfin Ganapin, Global Manager of the SGP.

“Local communities of the developing world are the source of many of the most innovative and imaginative responses to the challenges of sustainable development,” said Jeffrey Sachs, Equator Prize jury member and Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University.

Community Tours Sian Ka’an, one of the finalists, is a community-based, eco-tourism alliance of three Mayan cooperatives in the Sian Ka’an UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in Mexico. The alliance has been able to raise their tour prices by 40 percent by creating much needed community income with minimal environmental impact. The Community Tours Sian Ka’an alliance is supported by SGP and United Nations Foundation.

The Equator Prize awards are presented by the UN-led Equator Initiative in partnership with the government of Canada, Conservation International, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Fordham University, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), International Development Research Centre (IDRC), IUCN, the Nature Conservancy, RARE, Television Trust for the Environment (TVE), and the United Nations Foundation.

For more information about the GEF Small Grants Programme, updates, and information about the many awards received by the program, please see www.gef-sgp.org, or email sgp.info@undp.org.

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| Name | Country | Category |
|--------------------------|-------------|--|
| Dr. Mohamed Sayed Khalil | Egypt | Council Member/Operational Focal Point |
| Mr. Fransisco Bravo | Philippines | Council Member/Operational Focal Point |
| Mr. Raphael Azeredo | Brazil | Council Member |
| Mr. James | Australia | Council Member |

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|------------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Hall | | |
| Dr. Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher | Ethiopia | Alternate Member/Operational Focal Point/Political Focal Point |
| Mr. Agus Purnomo | Indonesia | Alternate Member/Operational Focal Point |
| Ms. Andrea Alban | Colombia | Alternate Member/Political Focal Point |
| His Excellency Elmi Obsieh Wais | Djibouti | Political Focal Point |
| H.E. Pembe Bokiaga | Congo DR | Political Focal Point |
| H.E. Ahizi Aka Daniel | Cote d'Ivoire | Political Focal Point |
| Mr. Cathal Peppard | Ireland | Political Focal Point/Donor Participants (Replenishment)/Donor Participants (SCCF) |
| Mrs. Jacqueline Ganteaume-Farrell | Trinidad and Tobago | Political Focal Point |
| Mrs. Bounkham Vorachit | Lao PDR | Political Focal Point |
| Sr. Miguel Enrique Pellerano | Argentina | Operational Focal Point |
| Mrs. Ana Maria Hernandez Salgar | Colombia | Operational Focal Point |
| Mr. George Psarov | Ukraine | Operational Focal Point |
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| | | |
|----------------------------|---------|-------------------------|
| Ms. Maria-Elena Teodorescu | Romania | Operational Focal Point |
| Mr. Krishna Gyawali | Nepal | Operational Focal Point |
| | | |

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Thomas is the Special Assistant for the CEO.

Thomas previously worked in the French Treasury where he focused on environmental policies and ODA issues, particularly multilateral development banks and innovative financing mechanism issues. Thomas' previous work experience includes field work in Central Asia for a nongovernmental organization.

Meet Lars Christiansen



The new Junior Professional Officer from Denmark, Lars joined the Climate Change and Chemicals team this spring. He will be supporting GEF's work on the new adaptation funds (SCCF and LDCF).

Lars is a recent graduate in Geography from the University of Copenhagen in Denmark. Previous work experience includes Masters fieldwork in Vietnam on sustainability and cost effectiveness of small-scale land use projects.

