



GEF CSO Network

Statement on Agenda 03 : [GEF Business Plan and Corporate Budget for FY26 \(GEF/C.69/03\)](#)

69th GEF Council, 2 June 2025

The GEF CSO Network warmly appreciates the GEF Secretariat for its clear, comprehensive, and transparent presentation of the **FY26 business plan and corporate budget**. The thoughtful articulation of strategic priorities and emphasis on fiscal accountability reflect strong governance and a forward-looking vision.

We also sincerely appreciate the ongoing commitment to civil society engagement, demonstrated through the dedicated budget allocation to support the strengthening of the GEF CSO Network and the active engagement of the Network and Civil society on the work of the secretariat and in the GEF-9 replenishment process.

Further, we commend the recognition of the high priority to strengthen engagement with women, youth, and indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) as well as the ongoing support to expand the GEF-8 Small Grants Program (SGP 2.0) to act as a flagship initiative to engage with and support CSOs and local communities.

At the same time, we would like to draw special attention to some continuing challenges around the Small Grants Programme (SGP). In several countries, the SGP has remained inactive for many years, which limits the participation of key local actors in safeguarding the environment, especially in South Asian climate spot countries. Where SGP is run by local, national, and international organizations who declared themselves as local organizations by entering national regulations. But mostly the process is too complicated for local CSOs, grass-root organizations and limiting them to participate in funding cycles as compared to larger organisations.

We respectfully urge the GEF to address the following points:

- Speed up the re-establishment and operation of **the SGP operations across all eligible countries** and request special attention to Climate hotspot South Asian Countries.
- **Simplify application and approval processes:** tailoring them to the capacities of grassroots, **youth-**, women-, Indigenous Peoples-, and persons with disabilities-led organizations to foster greater inclusivity;
- **Further Strengthen civil society participation within Country Engagement Strategies (CES)**, while rapidly establishing SGP 2.0 with a focused commitment to marginalized and vulnerable groups;

- **Strengthen Country Engagement Programs (CEPs)** to ensure civil societies, including youth, women and IPLCs are recognized as an equal and meaningful partner in national planning and decision-making processes.

In line with our mandate, we will continue to advocate respectfully for the voices, concerns and feedback of grassroots CSOs to the Council and broader GEF family. We remain dedicated to collaborating closely with both the Council and the Secretariat to uphold the integrity, inclusiveness, and effectiveness of the GEF's mission to safeguard our environment, strengthen community resilience, and ensure that the perspectives of local stakeholders are meaningfully represented in decision-making.