



GEF CSO Network

Statement on Agenda 06 : [Strengthening the GEF Partnership: Options for Agency Expansion](#)

69th GEF Council, 2 June 2025

The GEF-CSO Network welcomes the Council's initiative to strengthen the GEF Partnership and explore options for agency expansion. We agree that enhancing geographic reach, technical capacity, and responsiveness is essential. However, this expansion must be transformational—not merely procedural. It must center justice, equity, and access.

As emphasized in the GEF consultation with CSOs held 4 days ago - we urge Council Members to ensure that agency expansion is a vehicle for real transformation, one that places civil society, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, youth, and women at the heart of GEF's work.

This paper builds on an analysis presented at the 68th Council meeting that highlighted significant gaps in provision of resources for CSO-led projects. The Council decision requested, in addition to enhancing access to LDCs and SIDS, options **to strengthen engagement with CSOs and private sector**, for consideration by the Council today; We note that there is little reference to CSOs in today's paper so we would like to ask the Secretariat to expand further on the options (through both existing and new Agencies) to strengthen the engagement of CSOs and Non-state actors to help deliver the Whole of Society Approach.

Advancing the approach to enhance the access to global society we have key recommendations, such as:

1. Put People at the Center

Expansion must prioritize options for enhanced engagement of civil society, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, youth, and women, particularly in LDCs and SIDS. Inclusion must go beyond consultation and result in meaningful leadership and funding access for those on the front lines of the climate and biodiversity crises.

2. Guarantee Direct Access

We urge the Council to establish through new or existing agencies:

- Dedicated funding windows for CSOs, IPLCs, youth, and women-led initiatives.
- Simplified, transparent access modalities, particularly for small-scale, community-based projects in land management, climate education, and empowerment.
- Without this, promises of inclusion will remain rhetorical.

3. Make Expansion Ambitious, Transparent, and Inclusive

The Council should adopt a needs-driven and regionally balanced approach, including:

- National and CSO-led entities with strong local presence.
- A transparent accreditation process with civil society participation.

4. Address Structural Barriers and Build Capacity

Expansion must be matched with:

- Technical assistance for new and smaller agencies,
- Active dismantling of barriers faced by LDCs, SIDS, and marginalized stakeholders.

Otherwise, new agencies may inherit the same access limitations as current ones.

5. Maintain High Standards and Strengthen Accountability

We support harmonizing with other funds but put emphasis on:

- Safeguards must not be weakened.
- Strong fiduciary, environmental, gender, and social protections must remain.
- Implement robust civil society oversight, including grievance mechanisms and performance reviews.

Finally, this is an opportunity to shift from symbolic commitments to real empowerment. We urge the Council to ensure that expansion is a tool for:

- ✓ Broader access
- ✓ Stronger representation
- ✓ Shared ownership of global environmental goals

Agency expansion must mean expanding justice, not just expanding institutions.