



Initial Statement of Civil Society for the GEF 9 replenishment (2 October 2025)

The GEF CSO Network is making the following statement on behalf of Civil Society in advance of the GEF 9 Replenishment Meeting in Botswana on 8-10 October 2025:

- 1. We recognise the importance, effectiveness and track record of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to safeguard the global environment and its potential to unite governments and key stakeholders through a Whole of Society Approach**

GEF is the first and largest dedicated global funding mechanism to safeguard the environment through a multisector, multi-focal and multi stakeholder approach. It has a solid track record of delivery and has shown major enhancements in delivery and efficiency in the last 5 years as demonstrated through independent assessments. It has championed a multistakeholder, Whole of Society Approach and is making good progress in implementing that. It has long worked with and supported Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples, but this support needs to be broadened and scaled-up. It had developed and implemented a broad range of effective policies and procedures for stakeholder engagement, gender equality, environmental and social safeguards etc.

- 2. GEF Donors must ensure an ambitious Ninth Replenishment with funding of at least \$7.5 billion for the period 2026-2030**

Justification

- Current GEF funding levels are not enough to meet current needs let alone the growing need of the future
- Although GEF funds have increased in nominal terms by an average of 1.3% per year between 2010 to 2025, the purchasing power of the US\$ has declined 3% per year – leading to a real-term decline in average GEF resources of more than 20% over the past 16 years, while needs have more than doubled.
- UNFCCC adopted a specific goal for developed country donors to triple finance flows to at least \$300 billion annually for climate action in developing nations by 2035.
- CBD Parties have committed to significantly increase biodiversity-related international financial flows to developing countries, targeting at least \$20 billion per year by 2025 and \$30 billion per year by 2030.
- GEF is the funding mechanism for five global environmental conventions and is likely to be the funding mechanism for additional conventions (eg Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement and the Global Plastic Treaty)



3. GEF should provide at least 10% of GEF resources (a minimum \$500 million) directly to Civil Society organisations, IPLC, women and youth

Justification

- The GEF Independent Evaluation office has clearly determined that inclusion of the Community-based approach makes projects more effective and sustainable than projects that do not.
- The GEF Small Grants Programme and GEF Inclusive Conservation Initiative have been demonstrated to be extremely effective measures for mobilizing and supporting hundreds of thousands of CSOs to address major environmental concerns
- Multiple evaluations have demonstrated the effectiveness of SGP and Community level action
- Community mobilization and empowerment is essential for transformation of society to safeguard the environment.

The Network Calls on GEF to

- Increase total funding target for SGP to 360 million (through an allocation of at least \$260 million from core set aside plus \$100 million from STAR add on)
- Increase core allocation to the Inclusive Conservation Initiative (ICI) to \$100 million to enhance funding direct to Indigenous peoples and local communities
- Allocate \$40 million in GEF 9 for special cross-cutting programmes for capacity development and action for Whole of Society engagement - building on the GEF 8 financing for the GEF Civil Society Challenge programmes (\$20 Million), Fonseca Leadership Program, etc

4. GEF must enhance the level of Civil Society and IPLC engagement in design and implementation and monitoring of medium and full-sized GEF projects

Justification

- GEF has committed to take a Whole of Society approach in GEF 8 and GEF 9.
- GEF's Stakeholder Engagement policy mandates the engagement and participation of Civil society, IPLC, Women and youth in all appropriate GEF projects and programmes
- Enhanced involvement of Civil Society will enhance the effectiveness, sustainability and replicability of GEF interventions
- There has been a decline in CSO led GEF MSPs and FSPs over the past 20 years
- A third of GEF Agencies have never financed CSO-led GEF projects while another third has appointed CSOs for only 1-5% of projects. While only 3 agencies appoint CSOs to lead more than 10% of projects



- Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities should be recognized as rights holders and not just beneficiaries
- CSOs can strengthen GEF programmes by bringing innovation and enhanced mobilization and engagement of communities

GEF CSO Network calls for

- At least 10% of GEF MSP/FSP projects to be CSO led and 50% of projects have with active CSO partnership and involvement
- All GEF Agencies to enhance engagement with CSOs and use of CSO execution
- GEF to provide clear targets or incentives for CSO- led Projects or components
- CSOs to be appointed as members of GEF National Steering Committees and participate in GEF programme development and monitoring
- Special elements and components for CSO/IPLC engagement in all GEF Integrated Programmes

5. GEF must further strengthen the inclusion of the Whole-of-Society Approach in the GEF 9 Programming Directions and GEF 9 Policy Directions.

Justification

- GEF 8 has already committed to the Whole of Society approach and it has been agreed by Council that this must be further enhanced and strengthened in GEF 9.
- However, in the current draft GEF 9 Policy directions – there is very limited reference to WoS approach and only one specific recommendation related to WoS out of more than 20 recommendations overall.
- No details are given in the policy document on how the WoS Approach will be implemented in GEF 9.
- In the programming directions – there is more reference to Whole of Society and to Multi-stakeholder engagement, however there are very few detailed references on how this can actually be done. In addition, there is a great variation between Focal areas and different Integrated Programmes on the degree to which WoS or active engagement of CSOs, IPLC, women and youth are to be included

The GEF CSO Network calls on GEF to:

Elaborate and reformulate the Policy Directions and the Programming Directions to specify more clearly how the Whole of Society Approach is implemented across GEF 9. (Detailed proposals for specific changes will be presented at the GEF 9 replenishment meeting)