



GEF CSO Network

Statement on Draft GEF-9 Strategic Positioning and Programming Directions

[Presentation by GEF Secretariat \(Document GEF/R.9/08\)](#)

GEF-9 Replenishment (Second Meeting), Oct 07-09, 2025

The GEF CSO Network calls for GEF-9 to turn the whole-of-society approach from words into action. Civil society, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and youth are not just stakeholders — they are partners who deliver real results. Their voices must be embedded in decision making, not limited to consultations. The Network highlights the wording on Plastic Pollution IP as a good example where civil society holds formal seats in steering committees. This model should be applied across all IPs, including biodiversity and food systems, to make participation meaningful and consistent.

We support the comments by the UK, Finland, Australia, Norway, Canada, Belgium, Netherlands, and others to enhance support for CSOs, IPLC, women and youth. The CSO Network recommends strengthening direct access to funding for local actors, and welcomes the expansion of SGP. The SGP remains one of the most effective channels for local action. GEF-9 should commit at least 360 million US dollars for the SGP and 100 million for the Inclusive Conservation Initiative, with clear indicators for women and youth-led projects.

The Network stresses that IPLC Empowerment and community-led conservation must also go beyond set-asides of biodiversity programming. IPLCs should not be confined to the Inclusive Conservation Initiative. Their role must be mainstreamed across all relevant IPs and projects. The CSO Network also welcomes mainstreaming Innovation. Building on earlier calls for stronger direct access and whole-of-society implementation, the Network proposes transforming a part of the SGP into a global accelerator for community-led innovation and technology. This would enable CSOs, youth, women, and Indigenous innovators to develop open, low-cost digital tools for conservation, monitoring, and empowerment. The Network notes that the GEF IEO has also recommended greater use of digital tools and technology to enhance efficiency, transparency, and learning. The SCCF is already supporting digital innovation in adaptation projects, offering lessons that GEF can build on and scale. Instead of discontinuing the Innovation Window, GEF-9 should integrate it into the SGP, turning local innovations into global solutions.

Finally, the Network emphasizes that technology built around people can lower costs, improve transparency, and strengthen local capacity. A Small Grants–based digital tech accelerator would connect community innovation with global systems, allowing GEF-9 to fund not just projects but platforms that multiply impact. This way we can make inclusion efficient, and GEF-9 can deliver both equity and results through a true whole-of-society approach.

We will submit detailed written comments on the text.