



GEF CSO Network

Statement on Agenda 14 : [Lessons from Evaluating GEF Support for Policy Coherence](#) 71st GEF Council Meeting, May-June 2026

Summary

The GEF CSO Network welcomes the Independent Evaluation Office report “Lessons from Evaluating GEF Support for Policy Coherence”

At the same time, the report highlights a critical lesson: policy coherence cannot be achieved solely through coordination among government institutions. It requires a genuine whole-of-society approach that actively engages civil society organizations, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, academia, youth, women’s organizations, producer organizations, and other territorial actors throughout the policy cycle.

For this reason, the GEF CSO Network recommends that GEF-9 strengthen the formal participation of civil society throughout three critical phases of the project cycle: . Design and Formulation; . Implementation; and . Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning:

The Network believes that the GEF’s future success in advancing policy coherence will depend not only on aligning policies across sectors, but also on aligning institutions with society, global ambitions with territorial realities, and environmental objectives with the aspirations of the communities whose futures depend on them.

The GEF CSO Network stands ready to contribute its experience to support this transition toward a more inclusive, coherent, and transformative environmental governance architecture.



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Full Statement

The GEF CSO Network welcomes the Independent Evaluation Office report “Lessons from Evaluating GEF Support for Policy Coherence” and recognizes its important contribution to understanding how policy coherence can accelerate environmental outcomes and systems transformation.

The evaluation confirms that the GEF has made significant progress in mainstreaming environmental objectives across sectors, promoting intersectoral dialogue, and advancing integrated approaches. At the same time, the report highlights a critical lesson: policy coherence cannot be achieved solely through coordination among government institutions. It requires a genuine whole-of-society approach that actively engages civil society organizations, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, academia, youth, women’s organizations, producer organizations, and other territorial actors throughout the policy cycle.

From the perspective of the GEF CSO Network, policy coherence should not be understood merely as the alignment of sectoral policies. It should also be understood as the capacity to connect global environmental commitments with territorial realities, local knowledge systems, and the social, economic, and ecological dynamics that shape implementation on the ground.

The evaluation rightly notes that many GEF interventions concentrate on the upstream stages of policy development and adoption, while implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and learning often receive less attention. As a result, policy reforms frequently face challenges in generating sustained outcomes beyond project completion.

For this reason, the GEF CSO Network recommends that GEF-9 strengthen the formal participation of civil society throughout three critical phases of the project cycle:

1. **Design and Formulation:** Civil society should be engaged as a strategic partner in identifying policy incoherences, territorial priorities, and implementation barriers. This participation should move beyond consultation and become a structured mechanism for co-design, ensuring that projects reflect the realities of affected communities and the interconnections among environmental, social, and economic policies.
2. **Implementation:** Civil society organizations play a unique role in facilitating dialogue among sectors, supporting local ownership, generating evidence from the ground, and



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connecting national policies with territorial action. Their participation contributes to building trust, legitimacy, and long-term institutional continuity beyond political cycles.

3. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning: The Network believes that policy coherence must be assessed not only through project outputs, but also through evidence of institutional coordination, territorial outcomes, stakeholder ownership, and policy implementation. Independent monitoring and participatory evaluation mechanisms involving civil society can significantly strengthen accountability and adaptive learning.

The GEF has a unique comparative advantage as a convening platform. However, a more intuitive and effective governance architecture would require the GEF to formally integrate relevant civil society actors into policy coherence processes rather than engaging them solely through consultation mechanisms. Such participation should be structured to avoid conflicts of interest while maximizing transparency, legitimacy, and the collective intelligence necessary to address complex environmental challenges.

The GEF CSO Network also recognizes the strategic value of the Integrated Programs as one of the most promising vehicles for advancing policy coherence. These programs create opportunities to connect multiple sectors, scales, and stakeholders around shared environmental outcomes.

To strengthen learning and accountability within Integrated Programs, the Network proposes the establishment of regional/country monitoring and learning mechanisms that include:

- Representatives of the GEF CSO Network Regional/Country Focal Points;
- The GEF Independent Evaluation Office;
- Relevant Agencies and Operational Focal Points;
- Indigenous Peoples and Local Community representatives where appropriate.

Such mechanisms could generate regional knowledge products, comparative analyses, lessons learned, and evidence on policy coherence, contributing to adaptive management and supporting systems transformation across countries and regions.



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The GEF's future success in advancing policy coherence will depend not only on aligning policies across sectors, but also on aligning institutions with society, global ambitions with territorial realities, and environmental objectives with the aspirations of the communities whose futures depend on them.

The GEF CSO Network stands ready to contribute its experience, territorial knowledge, and regional networks to support this transition toward a more inclusive, coherent, and transformative environmental governance architecture.