



## **GEF CSO Network**

### **Statement on Agenda 15 : [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\) on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction \(BBNJ\)](#)**

**71th GEF Council Meeting, May 31 - June 3rd, 2026**

Thank you, Chair.

The GEF CSO Network welcomes the draft Memorandum of Understanding between the Conference of the Parties to the BBNJ Agreement and the Council of the Global Environment Facility. We recognize this as an important step in operationalizing the financial mechanism for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond national jurisdiction.

Overall, the draft MoU provides a solid institutional foundation for cooperation, reporting, and accountability between the COP and the GEF Council. We particularly note the strong provisions on reporting, periodic review, and coordination between secretariats.

We would like to highlight several areas where the MoU could be further strengthened to ensure that implementation is not only effective, but also inclusive and equitable.

First, while the MoU references Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the preambular text, it does not yet ensure systematic reporting on their participation, benefits, or the integration of traditional knowledge. Given the central role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in biodiversity stewardship, we encourage the inclusion of clearer reporting requirements on their engagement and outcomes.

Second, we note the absence of explicit provisions on civil society participation. As implementation moves forward, meaningful engagement with civil society organizations, women, youth, and other stakeholders will be essential to ensure transparency, accountability, and legitimacy of funded activities.

Third, we observe that gender equality is not explicitly reflected in the reporting framework. We encourage the inclusion of gender-responsive indicators and reporting to ensure that the benefits of BBNJ implementation are equitably shared.

Fourth, while the MoU includes strong provisions on reporting and evaluation, we encourage further attention to safeguards, including environmental and social safeguards, grievance mechanisms, and measures to ensure that funded activities do not unintentionally exacerbate inequalities.



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Finally, we would welcome stronger provisions on equitable access to resources, particularly for least developed countries, small island developing States, and landlocked developing countries, including reporting on the actual distribution of resources.

In conclusion, Chair, we see this MoU as a strong and timely foundation. With the additions suggested, it can also become a model for inclusive, transparent, and people-centered implementation of global environmental agreements.