



GEF CSO Network Statement On

Agenda 03 : [Work Program for the GEF Trust Fund](#)

71st GEF Council Meeting, May 31- June 3, 2026

Thank you Fred,

The GEF CSO Network welcomes the proposed Work Program for the GEF Trust Fund. The Work Program requests \$141.4 million in total GEF resources across 16 projects, bringing cumulative GEF-8 programming to 90.2% of target. We commend the GEF Secretariat, agencies, and recipient countries for strong delivery across GEF-8.

We want to highlight two projects in this Work Program as a high point for civil society engagement in GEF-8. The continued support for the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) will enable over 100 CSOs to lead conservation across four biodiversity hotspots, improving management of 389,000 hectares of protected areas and restoring 68,000 hectares of land. The Global Flyways Grant Mechanism (GFGM) on the East Asian Australasian Flyway creates a dedicated grant instrument for CSOs across six countries. Together, these two projects represent close to 20% of this Work Program going to or directly through civil society. That is the highest share we have seen, and we name it deliberately. It shows what is possible.

As GEF-9 begins, we ask: can this be the floor, not the ceiling?

We also welcome several projects where community governance is central, not supplementary: the Ridge to Reef approach in Solomon Islands (GEFID 12289), IPLC co-management in Malaysia (GEFID 12277), and community-led landscape restoration in India (GEFID 12066). These are the kinds of designs we want to see replicated across GEF-9 from day one.

The GEF's Whole of Society Approach is not a slogan. It is a commitment. But how can we talk about whole of society, if we don't bring whole of society to the table?

We raise this in the context of the Uzbekistan Risk Mitigation Facility (GEFID 11994), a blended finance project in this Work Program designed to mobilize over one billion dollars in private renewable energy investment. We support the climate ambition. But the project's own PIF shows that during the identification phase, civil society organizations were not consulted. Affected communities were not consulted. Private sector developers were. A Stakeholder Engagement Plan is promised only before CEO endorsement. Not before this Council takes a decision today.

We ask the Secretariat: how does the GEF Stakeholder Engagement Policy of 2017 apply within non-grant instrument structures? As GEF scales up blended finance, this question matters more, not less. We ask that community engagement and consultation be required before Council approval, not deferred after it.



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Finally, the GEF-9 replenishment process agreed to an aspirational target of 20% of resources supporting actions that benefit Indigenous Peoples and local communities. This Work Program sets an encouraging precedent. We ask the Council to ensure that the first GEF-9 Work Programs are designed with this target in mind from the start, with clear indicators to track it, not just count it.

Following the meeting, we will submit additional written comments on selected projects in the Work Program.