



GEF CSO Network Statement On

Statement on Agenda 05 : [Strengthening the GEF Partnership: Agency Expansion Procedure](#)

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

Chair, Council Members, Secretariat,

At the 69th Council, we called for an expansion that is transformational. One that puts civil society, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, youth, and women at the heart of GEF's work. We thank the Secretariat for a paper that responds to several of those asks.

We welcome three things. Criterion 5 makes “networks with CSOs, IPLCs, and the private sector” a minimum eligibility gate. The Policy on Stakeholder Engagement is assessed in full, even under the fast-track. And Annex V asks for evidence of participation in project design and implementation, and for grievance redress. That is more than consultation.

These are real steps. But we must be direct about what the paper does not yet do.

First, this expansion should strengthen access for IPLCs and civil society. It is a deliverable of Objective 4.o. It is one lever under the Augmented Access objective. We ask that candidate Agencies be assessed and prioritised under Criterion 5 for real, demonstrated delivery with IPLCs, CSOs, and local communities. The new cohort should widen access, not replicate it. It should help us find new ways to partner with civil society, IPLCs, youth, and women. We echo Brazil.

Second, this expansion is the foundation to build the track record we need for the second half of GEF-9, for GEF-10, and beyond.

But new Agencies alone will not deliver the aspirational target for IPLC, women, and youth (Objective 4.p). The existing Agencies must also step up. The Secretariat's own December 2024 analysis showed that almost half of current GEF Agencies have never financed a CSO-led project, or have allocated less than 3% of their portfolio to such work. As recommended by the US, perhaps de-accreditation is one of the pathways to explore.

We therefore ask the GEF to examine, in detail, why this is the case, and to identify concrete measures to enable existing Agencies to enhance their support for CSO and IPLC projects. Accrediting new Agencies is necessary, but not sufficient.

Third, civil society knowledge should inform the assessment. The independent panel should verify engagement claims against documented evidence. It should also seek input from the affected communities, or their representative institutions, consistent with free, prior and informed consent. That input should be on the record, with the entity's right to respond. Civil society should also keep its voice at Stage 4.



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Fourth, the shift to risk-based compliance monitoring in Annex VI must not weaken safeguards. CSO and field-sourced information matters here. Grievances and community reports should be recognised as legitimate triggers for a formal compliance assessment.

Agency expansion must mean expanding justice, not just expanding institutions. This procedure opens the door. We ask the Council to ensure civil society, IPLCs, and local communities walk through it. The success of GEF-9 will let us raise our ambition in GEF-10 and the years ahead.

Thank you.