



GEF CSO Network Statement On

Agenda 06: [GEF-9 STAR Policy](#)

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

Chair, Council Members, Secretariat,

The GEF-CSO Network welcomes the updated STAR Policy. STAR remains the core of country ownership and predictable allocations. We welcome two changes in particular. The tilt toward SIDS and LDCs is real, with around 37 percent of STAR resources going to these countries. And in the Climate Change index, forest cover now carries a weight of 30 percent, up from 5 percent. We supported this in the replenishment. We are glad to see it land.

We also welcome the mandated reviews. There is a mid-term review of GEF-9 STAR, and a full model review before GEF-10. We ask the Council to include two specific things in these reviews:

First, peatlands. The Climate Change index now rewards forest carbon at 30 percent. But it still leaves out peatlands. Peatlands are the largest terrestrial carbon store. They hold more than twice the carbon of the biomass of all the world's forests combined. If the index counts forest carbon, peatland carbon deserves the same recognition. The UNEP Global Peatland Assessment offers the data, just as FAO data underpins forest cover. We ask the reviews to assess including peatland cover.

Second, rewarding work with civil society. The GEF's target of 20 percent of GEF-9 programming for actions by IPLCs will also be linked to enhanced engagement of CSOs, Women and youth. The 20% target will not come from set-asides alone, especially as SGP has been reduced. It depends on the wider portfolio. So we should start the conversation now. How can STAR recognise and reward countries that deliver with CSOs and IPLCs? This must be measured, through how projects are designed and tracked. And it needs civil society, IPLCs, youth, and women at the table, with real weight, in national steering committees. Looking forward we call for the consideration of a separate index (or else a component in other index) related to the level of resources historically channelled to CSOs, IPLCs, women and youth.

We also note the new special window on **Blended Finance** and look forward to seeing more details in the next council meeting. We ask that these arrangements include clear guidance on how blended finance can be deployed in ways to support the active engagement of civil society, IPLCs, women and youth. This can be through enhanced microfinance mechanisms or green or blue bonds, to scale-up community-driven enterprises and action to secure global environmental benefits - such as through energy efficiency, renewable energy deployment; sustainable land management and biodiversity conservation. Blended finance should expand support to secure global environmental benefits, not divert resources from them.

Thank you.