



GEF CSO Network Statement On

Agenda 07 : [GEF-9 Integrated Programs Lead Agency Terms of Reference and Selection Process](#)

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

The GEF-CSO Network welcomes the Lead Agency Terms of Reference for GEF-9 Integrated Programs. Integrated Programs are a major part of GEF-9 programming. They are also a key route to the Whole of Society Approach. So how Lead Agencies are chosen matters to us.

We raise one concern about balance. The private sector is given its own named selection criterion, with a dedicated section on engagement and blended finance. Civil society, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, and youth appear only once, in Question 11 of the assessment template. The words grievance, safeguards, and free prior and informed consent do not appear at all. For a GEF-9 framed around the whole of society approach, this is not balanced.

We ask the Council for the following.

First, elevate engagement with civil society, IPLCs, women, and youth to a named and weighted selection criterion, on a par with the private sector criterion. Convening stakeholders is not enough.

Second, strengthen Question 11 in Annex 2. We propose it reads: *"Does the agency explain how civil society, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and youth are to be engaged from the design stage of the IP and its child projects, in line with the whole of society approach?"* In GEF-9, the whole of society approach means civil society in the design process as partners, not only in implementation.

Third, connect Integrated Programs to the 20 percent aspirational target. Lead Agencies should be assessed on their track record of CSO and IPLC execution. And Integrated Program contributions should be reported in the Corporate Scorecard.

Fourth, the Lead Agency role should include free, prior and informed consent where IPLCs are involved, and grievance redress, consistent with the Policies on Stakeholder Engagement (SD/PL/01) and Environmental and Social Safeguards (SD/PL/03).

Integrated Programs will shape much of GEF-9. They should be designed with civil society, not only for it.

Thank you.