

Notes on the Sub-Regional Consultation, Pretoria, 24-25 April 2006

Day 1, 24 April 2006

Opening Session

On behalf of the GEF Secretariat, GEF IAs and EAs, co-Chair Moctar Toure of the GEF Secretariat welcomed the delegates to the Sub-Regional Consultation for Eastern and Southern Africa. Mr. Toure noted that this two-day sub-regional consultation is the second of a series of sub-consultations to be held globally. The purpose of these consultations are two-fold: (1) to better inform and discuss with GEF partner countries, changes within the GEF environment including the new Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) that comes into effect 1 July 2006, and (2) to identify needs and areas for capacity building interventions to support GEF Operational Focal points (OFPs), particularly in light of their enhanced roles under the new RAF.

Mr. Toure briefly re-counted the history of the GEF and noted that during its existence, various trends in the international environment and development community, and changes brought about by new environmental Conventions, etc. have necessitated changes in GEF policies and approaches. The newest of these changes is the new Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) which is a new mechanism that necessitates discussion and analysis of its implications for countries involved, and also discussion as to how tap into potential opportunities brought about by the RAF. Mr. Toure emphasized that the role of focal points will become even more critical under the new RAF with respect to interface, facilitation, coordination and planning of GEF resource allocations and securing of co-financing. He also indicated that changes if effectively implemented under the RAF, may enable countries to play a more active role in the GEF and to plan and coordinate better at the national and regional levels.

Mr. Toure recognized that questions and issues may arise with respect to the operational details in implementing the RAF but there is insufficient time to address all of these issues during the two-day consultation; however, participants were assured that GEF Secretariat and IA/EA representatives would be available outside of the formal sessions to respond to questions and provide clarifications. Mr. Toure ended his opening remarks by assuring delegates that the GEF and its IA/EAs are available to support and work with the countries to ensure better ownership of GEF at the country and regional levels. He also expressed his hope that the workshop would be remembered as a major step in the history of GEF and wished successful deliberations over the next two days.

On behalf of the Government of South Africa, Mr. Zaheer Fakir, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, welcomed delegates to the sub-regional consultation as well as to the GEF Assembly to convene in Cape Town in August 2006. Mr. Fakir expressed his hope that the meeting would provide an opportunity to discuss critical issues such as the new RAF and country capacity building needs, particularly as they pertain to overarching development issues and commonalities with NEPAD, including

access to resources, partnerships and governance. Mr. Fakir confirmed that South Africa will soon become a donor to GEF.

Delegates introduced themselves. Attendees included representatives of the GEF countries of East and Southern Africa, GEF Secretariat, GEF IAs, and UNDP South Africa. (Annex I: Final Participant List)

Presentation: “GEF Update”

Martin Krause (UNDP/GEF) and Sam Wedderburn (World Bank)

The presenters recounted and elaborated on GEF’s history, institutional framework, replenishment cycle, focal areas and respective strategic priorities and relevant conventions; multi-pronged capacity building approach; project eligibility criteria; funding categories; project cycle, and important recent developments/directions including new funds for Adaptation.

Points of emphasis:

- The advent of RAF results in no change to GEF project eligibility criteria/requirements.
- GEF should not be viewed as a sole financier but rather a co-financier that plays a catalytic role in co-financing. No definitive ratio for co-financing exists; however, recent studies have indicated that over the course of GEF, the average co-financing ratio has been approximately 4.5 to 1.
- The independent GEF Evaluation Office was recently established and is leading a joint evaluation on the GEF project cycle and intends to undertake impact assessment studies in the near future.
- GEF has adapted a multi-pronged capacity building approach including inter alia the National Capacity for Self Assessment (NCSA) that may result in stand-alone capacity building projects or inclusion of capacity building activities in projects.
- Until two years ago, GEF mainly addressed Climate Change Mitigation. New funds have been created to address Climate Change Adaptation.

Question and Answer period:

Q: Several participants sought clarity on the nature of and access to Climate Change Adaptation Funds, specifically the US\$50 million allocated to the Strategic Priority on Adaptation (SPA)

A: Among the new Climate Change Adaptation funds, only the SPA funds projects with expected national *and* global environmental benefits in one of the GEF focal areas. Incremental cost reasoning as applied to traditional projects is therefore applied to SPA projects. The US\$50 million that has been allocated to the SPA will come from the Global and Regional allocation under the RAF, not country or group allocations. All other Adaptation funds do not require that global environmental benefits be a priority rationale for the project; projects supported by these funds need only to show additional national benefits. Although the other Climate Change Adaptation funds are not funded by the GEF Trust Fund, they are subject to GEF procedures as GEF is the caretaker of the Funds. Adaptation

Funds may be used to support activities in several sectors including infrastructure, health and agriculture projects but it is assumed that amounts are complementing large existing infrastructure projects.

Q: Clarity was sought on the nature of the Development Marketplace Mechanism, eligibility, and processing timeframes.

A: The Development Marketplace Mechanism is available to NGOs, civil society and CBOs - *not* Governments. The perceived brief application time period when the mechanism was first introduced was due to time-bound difficulties (the cycle period had technically started, GEF Council still had to approve the mechanism, information on the application process had to be disseminated, etc). An expedited nine month mechanism/cycle (September/October to May) has been established - therefore the new cycle will begin in September/October 2006.

Q: Confirmation was requested with respect to the maximum amount of the SGP threshold and whether this new threshold is in effect.

A: The new maximum threshold of an SGP grant is \$150,000; this new limit applies to Strategic Projects which are impact oriented and can demonstrate sustainability and replicability.

Q: Several concerns were raised with respect to the catalytic role of GEF and whether GEF has effectively leveraged *new* resources beyond co-financing?

A: First, it is important to clearly differentiate between co-financing and leveraging. Securing of co-financing letters is a requirement and should not be viewed as funds leveraged since it often involves funds that the country would have spent/invested anyway. The 4.5 to 1 ratio comprises not only Government co-financing but also support from other partners such as World Bank loans and credits, the private sector, NGOs and bi-lateral agencies. Leveraging is seen as securing additional funds beyond what was originally intended to be secured as co-financing. As an example of successful leveraging, is the Namibia renewable energy project under which additional loans that were given to customers of solar home systems would not have taken place without GEF intervention. It was acknowledged that Africa as a whole is not as successful as other continents in securing co-financing and delivers 24% less co-funding than promised at project design stage. This shortcoming in the co-financing process has been analyzed by the GEF Evaluation Office which will report findings in this year's Annual Performance Report.

Q: Several concerns were raised regarding the average timeframe from project conception to when a grant is disbursed under the project, and the need to streamline the GEF project cycle, shorten it and make it more efficient. It was noted that a World Bank paper had cited that the average period for a project from conception to start-up in Africa is three years. Countries inquired as to what steps are being made to reduce this timeframe.

A: The GEF Evaluation Office is presently conducting a joint evaluation on the project life cycle. It was clarified that elapsed time as part of the GEF project

cycle should not be equated with delays in the cycle, and that several factors associated with extensions in the project cycle –i.e., civil disturbances, change in government, legislative procedures for approving projects, team composition, etc.- are also not inherent delays in the project life cycle per se. The GEF Secretariat and UNDP confirmed that in the event that an action plan already exists, e.g. the NCSA Action Plan or POPs National Implementation Plan, there is no need to start a project from conception stage but the country can go directly to the stage of MSP development in order to save time.

Q: Countries expressed frustration that they are struggling with day-to-day immediate and/or short-term development issues and needs whereas the GEF approach appears to focus on long-term environmental issues, and therefore inquired whether a separate mechanism could be developed to respond to the unique needs of Africa?

A: It was clarified that the GEF was not established in order to address all environmental issues, at national, regional and global levels. The nature of GEF incremental funding necessitates that countries first establish baselines. Nevertheless, the GEF strives to encourage cross-cutting approaches across various sectors, and capacity building through for example NSCA and other capacity building initiatives, in order to try to address more immediate issues. Significant efforts have been devoted by GEF to Africa; notably, Africa receives 52% of GEF3 funding in the focal area of Biodiversity.

Q: Concerns were raised regarding the role of the focal point as coming to a halt at project endorsement, and having no further involvement thereafter, particularly with respect to project monitoring and evaluation.

A: Currently there is no clearly defined role per se with regard to the role of the OFP in M&E, nor is there a requirement for the OFP to report on the overall country programme. It is up to the government also as to whether it would like to expand the role of the FP to extend to M&E.

Q: Clarification was sought as to whether STAP membership has been extended to SIDS and whether there are limitations on STAP members from providing technical expertise to parties other than IAs and the GEF.

A: It was confirmed that there has been SIDS representation in STAP, with the case of a Barbadian national mentioned as an example, and that STAP members are free to provide advice to other parties as they are free scientists.

Presentation: “Introduction to the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF)”

Kiran Pandey, GEF Secretariat

The presenter pointed out the context for the presentation – the GEF Council had adopted a specific Resource Allocation Framework that applies to Biodiversity and Climate Change for the GEF4 replenishment period and had asked the Secretariat to consult with countries regarding its implementation. After a brief introduction of the origins and development of the RAF, the presenter provided details on the indicators used for

determining country and group allocations under the RAF. He also highlighted some specific features of the RAF and the enhanced role of Operational Focal Points under the RAF.

Key Points:

- Allocations to the country and the group for each 4-year replenishment period are based on a formula and subject to a ceiling and a minimum allocation.
- Allocation formula is based on Global environmental priorities and Country-level performance which are measured by the GEF Benefits Index (GBI) and GEF Performance Index (GPI) respectively.
- Focal area Envelopes for biodiversity and climate change are distributed to countries in a similar manner:
 - 5% for Global and Regional
 - 5% SGP and Cross-cutting capacity building
 - 90% Country and Group allocations (of which at least 75% to individual country and the remainder to the group)
- The ceiling for each country is 10% of the biodiversity envelope and 15% of climate change envelope.
- The minimum allocation for each country is \$1 million for each focal area for 4 years.
- Allocations to country and groups are not entitlements; they are only available for well developed projects.
- Only of 50% of the 4 year allocation may be disbursed in the first two years.
- The RAF will be reviewed independently by the Office of Evaluation:
 - Mid-Term Review after two years of implementation
 - A review in conjunction with OPS4.

Question and Answer for this presentation was deferred until after the following presentation

Presentation: “Managing Resources under the GEF RAF”

Kiran Pandey

The presenter highlighted the role of operational focal points in establishing national priorities and managing GEF resources under the RAF and the information support that the GEF would provide to focal points to carry out their roles.

Key Points:

- The CEO has sent OFPs guidelines on managing resources under the GEF RAF with a specific focus on the role of OFPs.
- The CEO has also sent OFPs a list of concepts currently under various stages of development in each country.
- OFPs are asked to reendorse concepts based on a national consultative process.
- Reendorsement of concepts indicates country priorities and that these concepts may utilize country/group allocations.

- Countries are encouraged to endorse a sufficient number of concepts to ensure that their allocations will be utilized. (Based on historical experience, GEFSEC recommends over-programming levels of 130-150% of 4 year allocations)
- GEFSEC will manage programming levels for the group at 150% of 4 year allocation.
- Countries that expect project approvals in first few work programs of GEF4 are encouraged to send initial list of re-endorsements by a target date of 15 September 2006.
- Countries need to confirm the amount to be allocated from the country/group allocation towards the regional project for regional projects; GEF agency implementing a regional project will work with participating countries to determine burden sharing across countries for these projects.
- The rules on Utilization of allocations
 - “50% rule” -- only 50% of allocations can be committed during the first two years.
 - Unused allocations from the first two years are carried over to the next two years;
 - all remaining unutilized funds at the end of four years will revert to GEF.

Countries made a formal request to meet in breakout groups to consult on and coordinate questions in response to both presentations on the RAF, before convening in plenary for the Q&A session.

Question and Answer to both RAF presentations:

- Q. Overall, countries expressed serious concerns that the RAF will not support Africa on the whole and that the spirit of the RAF is not in line with that of NEPAD. Countries indicated that such concern would be raised at a political level in various fora. Many countries expressed disappointment and frustration with the new RAF, suggesting that it reflects almost a step backwards as it signifies to countries, a loss of ability to access funding for national projects in line with international conventions that countries have strived to become party to. Countries expressed their frustration and feeling of disempowerment in being presented with a system fait accompli.
- A. GEF representatives acknowledged the frustrations of the countries. They mentioned that all countries are represented in the Council and the Council deliberated on the RAF over 3 years prior to reaching a decision on the RAF. The GEF Secretariat indicated they are here to explain the RAF as adopted by the Council and are not in a position to change the RAF system adopted by the Council. The Secretariat representative encouraged Focal Points to be forward looking and to use this meeting to determine how they can best utilize the new opportunities created by the new funding mechanism. Further, the Secretariat representative clarified that the Secretariat has some flexibility with regard to the implementation of the RAF, specifically with issues discussed in the second presentation, how resources are managed under the RAF. GEF encouraged a

close ongoing dialogue on the RAF among GEF, the IA/EAs and countries particularly in the lead-up to the GEF Assembly.

Q: Countries raised numerous concerns regarding the transparency of the RAF. Specifically, countries asked for a list of rankings and allocations for all countries and the regional and global level.

A: The GEF Secretariat responded that the final GEF4 allocations will only be available after the conclusion of the GEF4 replenishment negotiations. As requested by the Council, the GEF Secretariat is consulting with countries bilaterally on the implementation of the RAF. As part of this consultation, the Secretariat has sent each operational focal point the allocations for the respective country based on GEF3 amounts. It was mentioned that the Council decided at the November 2006 meeting against public disclosure of the allocations until the final indicative allocations for GEF4 are available. The Council has agreed to publicly disclose the final country/group indicative allocations for GEF4 and the GEF Benefits Index used to determine these allocations. In addition, the GEF Performance Index will be disclosed through a weblink to the relevant data at the World Bank. The 5% set aside for regional/global projects is small compared to historical amounts for projects. Many regional projects are expected to be funded from the joint contribution of countries from their allocations.

Q. Countries requested clarification on the information sources used to determine the allocation rankings.

A. The GEF Secretariat clarified that the data selection, analysis and approach used to determine the GEF Benefits Index, GEF Performance Index and country/group allocations was fully elaborated in last fall's Council documents and discussed by Council. These documents are available on the GEF website at www.thegef.org/raf.html.

The GEF Secretariat explained that GEF Performance Index contains three components. The portfolio component is based on the relative success of GEF projects under implementation in each country. Since not all eligible countries have GEF projects, this data has been supplemented by the information on the relative success of environment-related projects at the World Bank. The environment sector indicator which accounts for 70% of the GPI is based on an assessment of current policies and institutions related to the environment in each country. They explained that this assessment is done by the World Bank as part of its annual assessment of in each of its member countries which is used by the World Bank to allocate its resources for IDA (International Development Association) countries. Similarly, the Broad Framework Indicator, which is an assessment of governance in each country, is based on the World Bank Assessment.

The GEF Benefits Index for climate change is developed from data available from the World Resources Institute. The GEF Benefits Index for Biodiversity is developed from data available from IUCN, Conservation International, WWF, Birdlife International and Fishbase.

- Q. Countries questioned why data from non-governmental organizations was deemed to be the most reliable and credible. These institutions do not represent countries, and it is unclear how these organizations even obtained the data. Countries questioned the data gathering process in which information appeared to have been obtained in an anonymous manner that has resulted in reduced resources for countries.
- A. The Secretariat responded that the GEF Council determined that it is essential to have datasets that are comprehensive and comparable in order to allocate resources to countries. There has to be a basis for allocating to all countries. It was deemed not acceptable to allocate an arbitrary amount for countries with no data. Similarly, data that is not comparable to each other cannot be the basis for allocating resources. The datasets used are the most comprehensive and globally comparable datasets available. It was explained that while the level of government consultations in developing the datasets used in the GEF Benefits Index is not uniform, the datasets have been developed based on consultations with relevant technical experts in the respective countries.
- Q. Species richness is only one aspect of biodiversity and does not capture many other aspects of biodiversity. The GEF Benefits Index for Biodiversity undercuts these other aspects of biodiversity such as habitats and ecosystem services.
- A. It was explained that biodiversity is broader than species richness. However, the species richness provides the richest data descriptor among globally comprehensive indicators of biodiversity. The GEF Benefits Index for biodiversity also includes measures for richness of threatened species. It was elaborated that many factors leading to the threatened status of species are also related to other aspects of biodiversity such as habitat status or the level or quality of ecosystem services. In addition, recognizing that biodiversity is more than species, the GBI includes broad indicators of biodiversity such as ecoregions and threatened ecoregions which are related to other aspects of biodiversity.
- Q: Several comments/questions were raised regarding the issue of performance of countries: How is performance assessed under RAF; how much is tied to a country's governance, project and programme performance; how is the performance of Implementing Agencies reflected in the RAF.
- A: The Secretariat responded that the GEF Performance Index, which assesses the performance of each country, consists of three parts: a portfolio component, the environment sector, and broad framework. Assessment of policies and institutions in the environment sector account for the largest share (70%) of each country's

GPI. It was explained that the broad framework indicator which reflects governance related issues accounts for (20%) of GPI. The portfolio component accounts for 10% of the index and largely reflects the progress in implementing projects. They are not as significant a factor now. The performance of IAs is not explicitly included in the GPI. The results of an evaluation of GEF Implementing and Executing Agency performance will be available next June. UNDP also expressed its commitment to strengthen the weaker UNDP Country Offices in the sub-region.

- Q: Countries were concerned about the expanded role of Focal Points. Of particular concern was the fact they were being asked to adapt to a highly complex new programme that took three years to develop in a very limited amount of time and without the resources necessary to do so. Concerns were also raised that the RAF may simply be un-implementable in many countries. It was felt that support to OFPs has been inadequate to date and that proposals on the table for future support to OFPs do not fully recognize the real requirements of OFPs.
- A: It was requested that capacity building and support activities to the FPs be addressed in the next session, which would be focused on those issues.
- Q: Countries sought clarification on the September 15 deadline for project re-endorsement.
- A: The GEF Secretariat representative clarified that the target date of September 15, 2006 is not a “drop-dead” deadline for country endorsement of projects. The country/group indicative allocations are valid for the duration of the 4 year replenishment period and countries that do not meet the target date will not lose their allocations. It was clarified that projects that are confirmed/endorsed by September 15, 2006 will be processed expeditiously; therefore, countries that expect projects to be ready for approval in the first few work programs are encouraged to meet this target date.
- Q: The presentation encourages countries to endorse a total of proposed concepts and projects greater than the indicative allocation by 15 September 2006. Countries inquired who decides what needs to be dropped or approved or if all proposals are approved.
- A: It was suggested that Operational Focal Points will facilitate a national consultative process which includes all relevant national stakeholders and the Implementing and Executing Agencies and that Operational Focal Points will transmit the decisions of these consultative processes as project endorsements.
- Q: Countries sought clarity on what projects will be considered under GEF4 versus and GEF3. Countries were concerned because for example, a project submitted in earlier years and still included on the country project list, could now effectively consume a large proportion of limited resources under GEF4 thereby precluding

introduction of new projects. Countries also perceived the 50%/50% rule as an additional constraint on planning and implementation; they inquired as to whether the 50% rule will apply to projects submitted to GEF3 that have gone through Technical Review because if so, this would necessitate changes to the project document.

- A: The GEF Secretariat explained that all projects that have not been approved in GEF3 that are biodiversity and climate change has to be funded based on the RAF. Once a project has been approved for a project, they will not be taken away because the funds have not been disbursed. The list of projects provided to countries includes some projects that may be funded in GEF3. The expected work programme entry date and the technical review status indicated for a project provides a status about the when the project is expected to be ready for approval. They explained that for a number of countries that have been active in the GEF, concepts currently under development may account for a significant portion of their four year allocations. Since it takes time to develop projects for approval, countries are encouraged to continue planning and developing new projects beyond their allocations to allow for delay and cancellations. Many of the concepts that are initiated towards the end of each replenishment period will come up for approval at the beginning of the next cycle. The 50% rule applies to all GEF4 approvals without regard to when the project was initiated or the technical review status of projects. They said that this may necessitate changes in the project document in some cases.
- Q. Is the minimum allocation of \$1 million for each year or for a replenishment period? Do the allocation amounts sent to countries include the IA fees?
- A. It was explained that the US\$1 million minimum allocation applies to the entire four year period. Allocations indicated in the country tables are net of IA fees (9%). It is the amount that is available for projects.
- Q. Various concerns were expressed regarding the apparent disincentives being created by RAF. It was suggested that the RAF provides a country allocation based on performance, but does not include any mechanism or recommendation as to how a country may improve its performance and country allocation in the future.
- A. The GEF Secretariat said that country performance and benefits assessments are done based on a well defined manner. Countries are not permanently locked into their allocation amounts. Instead reallocations done every two years using updated indicators mean country allocations can and will change based on these assessments. Countries can use their allocations for improving their capacity to generate global environmental benefits.
- Q. RAF is also perceived to create disincentives especially with regard to PDF-Bs. In particular, countries with low allocations wondered whether IAs would still be

interested to work with countries with small allocations, when transaction costs remain high. Also, there appears to be a disincentive to undertake PDF-Bs because they take away from projects funds.

A: The World Bank confirmed MSPs are viewed as part of a broader strategic medium-term framework and therefore the number of MSPs supported is very beneficial in serving a broader purpose. UNDP indicated that it has always maintained a healthy portfolio of small and medium size projects and that they will continue to do so as long as they can work to ensure that such initiatives are nested within a broader strategy (e.g, UNDAF and poverty reduction strategies). UNEP indicated that it remains committed to serving countries with smaller allocations. UNEP acknowledged that this may be challenging within limits under GEF4 and expects countries to come with a large number of small MSPs, but remains committed nevertheless.

Q: Countries also raised concerns about the level of funding for the Small Grants Programme and also inquired how its operations would change under the RAF?

A: It was explained by the Secretariat that the Small Grants programme will not change operationally under the RAF. During GEF3, the Council has approved approximately \$170 million for the Small Grants program in a number of tranches. These resources were managed by UNDP in each country in conjunction with national steering committees. The SGP program will continue to operate in a similar manner in GEF4. The introduction of the RAF only changes the modality of funding the SGP. The SGP program in GEF4 is expected to be funded from 4 sources as outlined in the programming document for GEF4 replenishment: (a) 5% of the biodiversity focal area envelope (b) 5% of the climate change focal area (c) share of the resources in the other focal areas and (d) additional voluntary contributions from country and group allocations of countries. UNDP will develop and propose each tranche of the SGP program and ensure that the SGP programs in countries that make additional voluntary contributions to the SGP includes these contributions in addition to the normal amounts.

The session concluded with GEF's reiteration of its commitment to listen, increase country awareness of GEF and RAF, and support FP capacity building initiatives.

Day 2: 25 April 2006

Presentation on "Briefing on the Country Support Program (CSP) for Focal Points" Stephen Gold, UNDP/GEF; Nigel Sizer, UNEP/GEF

Mr. Gold recounted the history of the development of the CSP, its objectives, components and budget. This project is implemented by UNDP and UNEP and is guided by an inter-agency advisory committee. Component 1 which comprises direct financial support to the FPs, is implemented by UNEP. Components 2 and 3 which address

training and knowledge management are implemented by UNDP. Of the US\$12 million budget, the majority of funds are allocated to Component 1 with US\$8,000 allocated annually per country in addition to funding for two travels to constituency meetings for each GEF focal point.

Mr. Sizer elaborated on Component 1 - direct financial support to focal points. Mr. Sizer encouraged countries to submit their workplan for the first year as soon as possible. Following agreement on the workplan, funds will be disbursed to the countries. Funding will also be made available for two constituency meetings. Additionally, Component 1 will support the travel of six new focal points to GEF familiarization seminars, generally held in Washington D.C.; the budget for this inception training is US\$120,000 for the life of the project.

Mr. Gold elaborated on Component 2 - training, knowledge management and information exchange. Activities will include the development of tools and methods including guidance material, manuals, case studies, etc. based on the outcome of NCSAs, surveys of existing tools, other needs assessment analyses at national and constituency levels, and this consultation. Mr. Gold referenced the document "GEF National Coordination – Lessons Learned" as an example of a reference tool of six country experiences and available in 5 languages, and indicated that a Handbook for Focal Points has been developed and will be made available in the coming weeks in multiple languages. Under Component 3, FPs will have the opportunity to participate in at least one regional consultation, exchange or workshop each year beginning in 2007.

Mr. Gold emphasized that the main objective of the working group sessions is for countries/focal points to self-assess capacity to implement the RAF and to convey their needs as FPs with respect to capacity building, information exchange and training, and that this feedback would be the basis for the detailed workplans under Components 2 and 3 of the CSP to be developed. He indicated that the results of the needs assessment from all of the Sub-regional Consultations would be presented during the GEF Assembly in August 2006.

Questions and Answers

As in the case of the presentation of the RAF, there was frustration on the part of the countries that they are being presented with decisions that they are being asked to implement. On a general point, GEF encouraged focal points to be more proactive and to maximize use of Council member focal points so that voices could be heard and represented to the maximum. Funke Oyewole indicated that when the initial needs assessment for this project was sent out last year, there was a relatively poor response and no strong indication that significantly more resources were required. GEF emphasized that all parties must better communicate and that feedback is critical at this juncture in order to contribute to the design of the CSP Components 2 and 3. It was clarified that aside from stipulations as to specific items that cannot be supported under the annual allocation, countries otherwise have the latitude to spend as they wish under the overall allocation.

- Q: Multiple concerns were expressed regarding the annual allocation of US\$8,000 to each country under Component 1. Large countries noted that this allocation may only be able to fund activities -specifically, participant travel- in a city capital, thereby precluding participation of stakeholders from outside the capital. It was also felt that this amount does not take into consideration the actual (relative) volume of projects in a country; furthermore that the amount does not take into account the additional responsibility of FPs in light of the RAF. Countries inquired as how the figure of US\$8,000 was derived and questioned how this amount would be sufficient to cover stakeholder meetings and consultative needs, document production and dissemination, translation, etc. Countries inquired as to whether the allocation includes support to engagement of civil society and NGOs. Countries felt that the allocation should have been determined based on an initial needs assessment and that a needs assessment at this juncture seems to reflect a reversed order in the process. Overall, they were not pleased with the “one size fits all” model that assumes that the needs of FPs across all countries are the same.
- A: The IAs recognize that the “one size fits all” model is not ideal but that a simplified model would reduce transactions costs and expedite the process overall, thereby ensuring earliest disbursement of funds from UNEP to national institutions. It was clarified that the provision of \$8,000 and a travel budget for two travels, represents more than what was originally approved, and countries were reminded that the purpose of PDFs is project development so consultations in this regard should not necessarily come out of the \$8,000. In response to concerns regarding currency fluctuation and continued weakening of the US dollar, it was confirmed that in some cases, one benefits from currency exchange and in other cases, one loses in the exchange but that the annual allocation of \$8,000 is fixed regardless of currency fluctuation. With respect to engagement of civil society and NGOs, it was clarified that the \$8,000 does not include support to civil society and NGOs but that in June 2006 a paper will be submitted to Council in which the needs of NGOs and engagement of NGOs will be fully addressed. Finally, there was no objection in response to a query as to whether of the total four year allocation of \$32,000, funds could be transferred between years, provided that the adjustments are consistent with the broad objectives and workplan of the FP. The GEF will be flexible in responding to country requests under the program.
- Q: Several concerns were raised with respect to the feasibility of one person/one FP carrying out all functions in addition to assuming new functions now brought about by the introduction of RAF. FPs emphasized that they have regular duties within their respective institutions and that simply, one person cannot do everything especially with such limited financial and human resources. FPs suggested that perhaps assistance be mobilized from institutions to assist, or assistants be hired and be provided with an allowance. It was also suggested that to improve efficiencies, a small GEF Unit be established, comprising the SGP Coordinator, FPs, and an Assistant.

- A: Comments in this regard were noted.
- Q: Countries re-iterated concerns that the CSP seems to be void of support to two important players: civil society and private sector.
- A: It was clarified that civil society is engaged in many cases through national GEF consultations and under the SGP for example, and that the GEF is in the process of developing a strategy for the engagement of the private sector.
- Q: Countries expressed concerns regarding performance of IAs in supporting FPs.
- A: In response, IAs asked for specific cases to be looked into. With respect to the request that IAs could possibly be more helpful with national consultations, it was indicated that could be possible.

The plenary broke into working groups to discuss the Country Support Programme.

Working Group 1: Comoros, Djibouti, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles

A. Regarding coordinating and facilitating GEF activities and resources: The group proposed that the standardization of annual allocations be re-visited, taking into account specificities of countries; allocations should take into account new responsibilities of FPs based on new requirements under RAF; additional flexibility and discretion be afforded to FPs in the use of the funds to carry out his/her duties, e.g. the purchase of equipment as necessary to support information sharing and institutional memory through database or website development; establishment of a GEF Unit comprising the Small Grants Coordinator, Focal Point and an Assistant in Comoros.

B. Regarding institutional memory within national executing agency/government ministries: The group proposed the establishment of a database.

C. Regarding mainstreaming global environmental concerns into national sustainable development strategies: The group proposed that countries have wide consultation using existing national committees, creating them if they do not already exist, or establishing ad hoc committees.

D. Regarding collating knowledge and training needs of GEF project proponents and other key stakeholders: The group proposed training of focal points to enhance their role. The group asked that IAs fulfill their tasks within GEF, supporting FPs and providing technical support. There is a perception that sometimes IA priorities precede country priorities and that in some countries, IAs impose their own projects; countries emphasized that the IAs should provide technical support to and not substitute Governments.

Working Group 2: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda

Group 2 identified various challenges and priorities facing OFPs, and proposed the following courses of actions:

- (1) Serious knowledge gap and lack of knowledge among OFPs and PFPs -new and even more experienced- of GEF and IA operations. This knowledge gap is exacerbated by the frequent changes within the GEF and IA policy and operational environment.

Recommendation: The GEF Secretariat is requested to improve knowledge management systems especially in the dissemination of best practices (e.g. case study on Costa Rica).

- (2) Poor communication and coordination between OFP, national executing agencies (line ministries, CBOs, private sector) on the one hand, and the GEF Secretariat and IAs.

Recommendations:

- a. GEF Secretariat should build capacity for OPF to understand GEF and IA operational systems and the OFP's role in mobilizing national stakeholders (line ministries, CBOs, private sector) to embrace GEF activities.
 - b. GEF Secretariat and IAs should allow FPs to engage personnel on a part-time or full-time basis to assist OFPs to coordinate GEF national activities and support a national GEF Secretariat. Establish a permanent national/country GEF Secretariat to support institutional memory of GEF country activities particularly in light of changes in OFP, GEF and IAs
 - c. Said Secretariat can facilitate in training of trainers especially in preparation and execution of GEF programmes (national institutional arrangements, strategic planning, implementation, M&E, and also networking).
 - d. GEF Secretariat and IAs should facilitate National GEF Secretariat acquisition of basic office equipment (computers, photocopiers, telephone, fax and internet facilities).
 - e. Development and dissemination of operational manuals and guidelines of IAs.
 - f. Train OFP, line ministries, CSOs and private sector on operational guidelines and manuals of IAs.
- (3) Low institutional capacity with respect to coordination (by national agencies, OFP institutions and IAs); need to establish linkages among FPs and stakeholders; need to improve knowledge and skills

Recommendation: Need to build the capacity for IAs to become more efficient with respect to communications and funds disbursement. IAs to be more sensitized to circumstances of OFPs, PFPs and individual countries and their needs.

(4) Limited financial resources

Recommendation: GEF should increase funding levels according to the actual biophysical and socio-economic needs of each country. Case in point: Sudan as compared to = Comoros. There is need for flexibility in the GEF funding mechanism to allow front-loading for OFP to access more funds in the initial stages of implementation of the RAF.

(5) Poor or even in some cases, lack of close M&E by OFPs, PFPs, and even the GEF Secretariat and IAs.

Recommendation: Continuous GEF Secretariat and OFP engagement and consultations as new policies and approaches are developed and introduced. To foster harmony and goodwill are important for success.

Working Group 3: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe

A. Coordinating and facilitating GEF activities and resources: GEF projects comprise a variety of stakeholders including Government, NGOs, CBOs, private sector, academic institutions, UN Agencies, local authorities; their roles include research, implementation, execution and monitoring. Projects are governed by National Steering Committees tasked with overseeing development of GEF proposals. Project specific committees seem to be more successful than national committees. The Ministry of Finance needs to play a major role in the process; currently, the MoF comes in at the final stage. It would be preferable to involve them earlier in the process. Limited human and financial resources restrict capacity.

B. Building institutional memory within national executing agency/government ministries: The group reported that it is necessary for countries to have a “one-stop information shop” with all information on GEF and GEF activities –updated and user-friendly. Information in countries is available mainly in hard-copies but some countries have it available electronically. Level of dissemination of information varies among countries depending on resources. It is suggested to have a person dedicated to keeping abreast of changes and developments within GEF to better plan and generate projects; need resources in that regard.

C. Mainstreaming global environmental concerns into national sustainable development strategies: Countries felt that IAs could assist with respect to national consultations. Monitoring and Evaluation training, also part of a workplan/business plan. Endorsement of the project is required by OFP but once it is endorsed, the FP has no say and no role in monitoring. Making it an actual requirement. Difficult when FP in one Ministry is involved at endorsement stage but later other Ministries may be involved

D. Collating knowledge and training need of GEF project proponents and other key stakeholders: Based on NSCAs, identified needs will be part of the national dialogue

3. Core issues as part of 4-year workplan

Training, development of bankable projects, national consultations, workshops, capacity building, monitoring, lack of mandate, resources and authority for focal points in implementation and M&E.

4. Knowledge Management and Training needs to be potentially funded under CSP
Sharing of best practices in the region; support development of the RCU (Regional Coordination Units); strengthen network at SADC level, build linkages with SADC nodes

5. Concerns with regard to FP ability to carry our new role under RAF
Technical and financial constraints.

NGOs

The group noted the challenges introduced by RAF and that resources are limited and do not seem to take into account realities of the countries and execution of responsibilities. The group noted an apparent disconnect –lack of information and communication- among focal points and civil society groups – and the need to promote a true partnership, and requested that civil society groups be included in all national dialogues and that GEF FPs align themselves with GEF global policies of public disclosure and participation. The group requested that mechanisms be developed to assist the improvement of the performance of civil society in Eastern and Southern Africa clustered under the Regional Focal Points of the GEF. Finally, the group recognized that GEF is currently engaged with the GEF NGO network to enable the network to effectively perform its responsibilities.

Countries inquired as to when they will have feedback in this exercise, when it will be implemented, what are the next steps. It was clarified that funds are available immediately under CSP Component 1. The detailed workplans for Components 2 and 3 will be developed in the next few months, taking into account the feedback of the working groups.

Presentation: “Evaluation and Results in the GEF”

Rob D. van den Berg, GEF Evaluation Office

Mr. van den Berg elaborated on the mandate and scope of the GEF Evaluation Office, the role of GEF FPs with respect to M&E, project evaluation, and evaluation of the RAF.

Points of emphasis:

- GEF M&E office evolved into the GEF Evaluation Office as monitoring is more of a project management activity.
- There is no standard M&E tool among the GEF IAs. Respective IA M&E tools are applied at the project level but are compiled at portfolio level when being evaluated.

- M&E funds are included in project budgets and are generally 1% of full sized project budgets, 10% of MSP budgets.
- The RAF will be reviewed after two years of implementation. Comments raised at this consultation will be taken into account as the TOR are being developed for the evaluation.

Closing remarks

Mr. Aboubaker Douale Waiss, GEF Council Member and OFP for Djibouti, expressed appreciation to the host Government and satisfaction at the professional and honest approach during the two-day consultations, and encouraged close regular dialogue in the future. Mr. Waiss expressed satisfaction at this opportunity for delegates to have been able to learn more about the current status of GEF, trends, RAF, etc, better understand role of FPs, constraints and requirements, and facilities being offered to support the FPs.

Mr. Gonzalo Castro, GEF Secretariat, likewise expressed appreciation to host Government and to the participants for their frankness during the consultations on behalf of the GEF Secretariat, the Implementing Agencies and the Evaluation Office. Mr. Castro noted concerns expressed by participants regarding the past, present, and future policies and processes - particularly concerns regarding human resource and financial constraints. He also encouraged all stakeholders to be vigilant in listening to feedback as the RAF unfolds over the next two years.

ANNEX



GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
National Dialogue Initiative



**GEF Sub-Regional Consultations for
Eastern and Southern Africa
Pretoria, 24-25 April 2006**

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