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**GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY**  
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

## **Opening address**

### **Civil Society**

**Monique Barbut, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman  
Global Environment Facility**

**Council Meeting  
28 June – 1 July 2010  
Washington**

Welcome to Washington and the 38<sup>th</sup> GEF Council.

As you know, spring 2010 was a busy and productive time. Last month, GEF resources were replenished at a historical level and a few weeks ago we celebrated that accomplishment during our Fourth Assembly in Punta del Este.

I have you to thank for this shared success: a replenishment that now enables us to turn our GEF-5 vision into reality. I thanked some of you personally during the CSO forum we held immediately before the Assembly in Uruguay but I wish to repeat here again that we could not have done this without you, especially in such a challenging financial environment.

But now that we have popped the champagne corks and made the toasts it is time to get back to work. I would like to begin by briefly recalling the outcomes of the Forum so that we are all equally informed.

- The Forum recommended, first and foremost, that CSOs and the GEF strengthen their outreach, both within the network and outside it. In particular, it is a question of reaching the indigenous peoples, who could stand to benefit more from GEF programs, especially the Small Grants Program.
- Another recurring theme at the Forum was equitable access to resources. I said then and I repeat here that CSOs should be more engaged in guidance and monitoring of national and regional large-scale projects.

- Finally, some of you have highlighted the need for new reforms in GEF-5, especially to simplify the project cycle and develop direct access to grants. You have also called for civil society to receive 20-25% of total GEF funding, through a new system of targets and incentives. This is clearly ambitious, but I am ready to hear what you have to say about what means could be deployed to increase civil society participation.

I would like us to take all this as the starting point for our discussion.

During the four years of GEF-4, the CSOs have lent their support to the GEF at the international level. Today, to ensure GEF-5 is a success, we all agree that our network still needs to deepen its ties at the local, national and regional levels.

In particular, it is essential that CSOs engage at a very early stage in dialogue with local community leaders in order to push grassroots projects and ensure that the authorities embrace them. You bring to the table a passion and credibility that policy makers respect. You can influence the preparation and implementation of better defined projects at the local level, which will deliver multiple benefits for the global environment. Now more than ever we are counting on you to spread the word, to act openly and transparently to promote the effective engagement of GEF with civil society, and to forge ties with elected officials.

I could list dozens of examples of how to make this partnership stronger. But, above all, I would like to show you how, exactly, GEF intends to commit to stronger engagement by civil society organization. Now that we are beginning our work in GEF-5, we are submitting three initiatives to the Council that will undoubtedly interest you. Each of these reforms provides an opportunity to further

strengthen civil society engagement at the country level with management of the global environment.

- First, we propose to put Article 28 of the GEF Instrument into effect. That will enable us to expand the GEF partnership so that more players — international organizations, national institutions, regional banks, civil society and even universities — can have access to GEF resources, without thereby adding to costs. In that way, countries will have access to more expertise and more options will be available to their implementing agencies.
- Second, GEF will offer interested countries the possibility of conducting an exercise designed to identify their project portfolio for GEF-5. That exercise will make it possible to establish or consolidate national GEF resource programming mechanisms. One of the priority objectives of this reform is to strengthen countries' ownership of GEF, by bringing to the table all the ministries concerned as well as the representatives of the principal players, including civil society organizations and the private sector. This will allow all of them to express their points of view during the preparation of programming decisions.
- Third, as part of its Country Support Program, GEF will defray the costs of participation in its constituency meetings of one NGO per country. That will enable CSOs to be better informed and better equipped to contribute to GEF work in their country. Their presence at those workshops will also facilitate communication among themselves and the sharing of their respective experiences.

I am convinced that these three reforms demonstrate GEF commitment to greater participation by CSOs. On all these points, I look forward to hearing your suggestions, proposals and constructive criticism to improve our work and further strengthen our relations.