

**35<sup>th</sup> LDCF/SCCF Council**

**February 8, 2024**

**Washington, DC**

**Opening of the Meeting**

**Introductory Remarks by**

**Carlos Manuel Rodríguez,**

**GEF CEO and Chairperson**

**As Delivered**

Dear friends,

Welcome to the 35th LDCF/SCCF Council meeting. As you all know, this Council focuses on the GEF's two funds for adaptation to climate change: the Least Developed Countries Fund or "LDCF" and the Special Climate Change Fund or "SCCF".

Dear colleagues, a few months ago 10 countries in Asia and Europe all experienced severe flooding in a span of a couple of weeks. And in November, weeks of torrential rain displaced hundreds of thousands of people in East Africa by what was termed a "once in a century" flooding event. Thousands of farms were underwater, and crops destroyed. This massive flooding

actually came immediately after the worst drought that same region had experienced in 40 years. Scientists are linking the unusually extreme weather with “El Niño”, and they say that climate change could increase the frequency of extreme El Niño years from one-in-twenty years to one-in-ten years. This would be truly devastating to societies and livelihoods. And that is precisely why the topic for today’s meeting is so important.

After this gloomy introduction, I am happy to say that we have some good news to share regarding the LDCF and SCCF! Today we are presenting to you one of the largest work programs for the LDCF. Also, the last time we saw an SCCF work program of this magnitude was 12 years ago, back in 2012. The total LDCF/SCCF resource request today is \$203.4 million! I am so pleased to see how far we have come in terms of being able to enhance delivery of critically needed adaptation funding for LDCs and SIDS. And this is thanks to many of you in this room and online today.

At the past three UNFCCC COPs, the GEF has been organizing pledging events for the LDCF and the SCCF, and we are very grateful to the donors who have been making generous contributions. I am also so thankful to our LDC and SIDS partners,

the LDC Group and Alliance of Small Island States, who have been championing these funds and expressing the need for increased funding.

A key observation of this work program to me is the immense demand we see for the newly focused SIDS window of the SCCF, which is requesting \$23 million in resources today, to address the adaptation needs of eight vulnerable SIDS in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean.

My colleagues, dear Council members: it will be critically important for us to secure additional funds in order to keep up with the very high demand. As you know, there was much discussion at COP28 on the Global Goal on Adaptation as well as the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance, which call for the urgent need to dramatically raise the level of ambition with regard to resources for adaptation . Among all these positive decisions, the key message from the COP was clear: we cannot afford to slow down on adaptation funding, and we need to redouble our efforts to support adaptation priorities in the world's most vulnerable countries, such as LDCs and SIDS. The LDCF and SCCF are well-positioned to be a catalyst for adaptation

action, and have worked to be the partner of choice for LDCs and SIDS.

This is why it is extremely heartwarming for me that COP 28 guidance to the GEF highly recognized the work of the LDCF and SCCF. I was also delighted that the report of the LDC Expert Group presented at COP28 included special appreciation for the GEF.

And now, I would like to hand over the mic to our esteemed new Chair of the LDC Group, from Malawi, Mr. Evans Davie Njewa, who is Chief Environment Officer at the Environmental Affairs Department of Malawi. Congratulations to Evans, and we look forward to further enhancing our partnership with the LDC Group. Evans is also the GEF Alternate Council member for the Southern African constituency. Evans, thank you so much for joining us. Over to you.