

36th LDCF/SCCF Council

June 19, 2024

Washington, DC

Opening of the Meeting

Introductory Remarks by

Carlos Manuel Rodríguez,

GEF CEO and Chairperson

As Delivered

Dear friends, colleagues:

- Welcome to the 36th LDCF/SCCF Council Meeting. As you know, this meeting focuses on the GEF's two funds for adaptation to climate change: the Least Developed Countries Fund – the 'LDCF', and the Special Climate Change Fund – the 'SCCF'.
- While we are all committed to the work of the LDCF and SCCF, sitting behind our desks and computers, focusing on policies and indicators, it can sometimes be hard to remember the very real impact our work has on people's lives around the globe.

- So I wanted to open this meeting with a few words and images from one of our recipient countries, Bhutan, that I had the honor of visiting earlier this year.

[VIDEO SCREENED]

- As you can see, the visit to Bhutan was an eye opener for me in many different ways and one of the very important ways has to do with the fact that this country has done a lot in terms of human development, and that is why they've graduated from the Least Developed Countries. But climate change can reverse that political and socio-economic effort in a matter of a few years. And I was really, really impacted by that.
- At the same time, I was very much energized by what I saw at the community level. It was great that I was able to meet the King and the Queen and the Prime Minister, but I was struck by the possibilities to really have impact as we work with communities. In this case, the work that UNDP is doing was an eye-opener for me, and I really came back inspired by the work that this small fund does in terms of climate adaptation and creating the resilient conditions

for communities and economies.

- The LDCF and the SCCF funds are growing thanks to your support. But we are mobilizing just a fraction of what is mobilized annually in climate adaptation. Around \$40 billion is being mobilized through ODA, through multiple mechanisms, and the GEF is able to access less than one percent of that. My commitment in the years ahead is to present the LDCF and SCCF as cost-effective options to donors and to the ODA community, because I strongly believe that there are. We have very strong roots established in the countries where we work, in the LDCs. And what we need to do is to really scale up on those investments; particularly what LDCF has been doing in the food security and resilience area at the farm level, and how we can use nature as a cost-effective way to make these communities and these societies more resilient to climate change.
- I'm very excited regarding the news from the LDCF. The work program you are asked to approve today is the largest work program in the history of the LDCF, requesting over \$203 million including agency fees.

- In my view, and based on feedback from recipient countries, a key foundation for the very large current LDCF work program is the extensive sub-regional consultations the GEF Secretariat has organized since last year, together with the LDC Group. These meetings were held in Mozambique, Senegal, Solomon Islands, Cambodia, Ethiopia, and the Dominican Republic. For Pacific and Indian Ocean SIDS that are not LDCs we held virtual consultations.
- I am also pleased to report to you that the LDCF work program continues to receive a large volume of co-financing from international financing institutions, in particular multilateral development banks. For this work program, the World Bank is actually the agency with the largest share of requested project funding. The work program has a good balance across agencies; eight agencies are included and no single agency has more than a 30 percent share of the requested resources.
- I therefore urge donors to step up and make new pledges for the LDCF as well as both windows of the SCCF, in line with the Council-approved financing scenarios for the LDCF and SCCF for GEF-8. You have my promise that your contributions will be programmed quickly, with maximum impact, to benefit the LDCs and their

vulnerable communities and ecosystems, to support SIDS to build their climate resilience, and to foster adaptation innovation and technology transfer.

- I am also very happy to inform you that the third round for the Challenge Program for Adaptation Innovation was recently announced, and the concept selections are currently underway. This initiative has led to support for some of the most innovative and interesting adaptation projects I have seen and expanded our partnership with very important actions in support of climate adaptation.
- Before I hand over to my dear colleague Evans Njewa, let me just make a reflection. The first time I heard the term 'climate adaptation' was about 30 years ago, I think it was around 1998 or 1999. And I heard this expression by someone who I really admired as a kid, he was a mentor to many of us. His name is Klaus Töpfer, former Minister of Environment of Germany and former Executive Director of UNEP, who unfortunately passed away a few days ago. I'm really saddened by that news, but he was a mentor for many young professionals like me and I will never forget his leadership as a minister and his wisdom in navigating inside the UN system, and

being able to bring UNEP to where it is, which is a unique and important position. To my dear colleagues from Germany, my condolences, and to everyone in this room. Also, my condolences because Dr. Klaus Töpfer was a key politician and a key leader around the world. So my condolences to his family and his friends, and on behalf of the GEF I wanted to make this very short but very important statement on his life and his legacy.

- With this, I would like to pass it over to the Chair of the LDC Group, Mr. Evans Njewa, who is Chief Environmental Officer of the Environmental Affairs Department of Malawi.