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GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

Opening Remarks

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Global Environment Facility

GEF/FAO Discussion Meeting on
Marine Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction
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Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for coming to our discussion on Marine Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Or to use a quick acronym ABNJ.

But before we begin I want to recognize the UN Food and Agriculture Organization for helping plan this discussion and for serving as co-chair today.

We are here because our oceans as well as the people who depend on the sea to survive are seriously threatened. FAO, as one of our GEF agencies, has the mandate to address fisheries and the oceans, and this complements a core mission of the GEF which is to protect our planet's rich diversity, both on land and in water to ensure sustainable development. So again a sincere thank you to all of you who came here today at the end of the workweek to help us take stock of what we are doing now and what we could do in the future to expand what we do [for ABNJ].

Clearly we are at a crossroads and with your help we can make a real impact.

Just last month at the Biodiversity Convention Conference of the Parties in Japan, many countries expressed a keen interest in open oceans. In fact, the COP resulted in an historic decision to raise the target for coastal and marine protected areas from the existing 1% coverage to 10% by 2020. This is an important target and we hope that a GEF-supported program for ABNJ can help countries meet that goal.

To that end our fifth replenishment is now underway. In pledging resources for the next four years, governments adopted a strategy that for the first time explicitly includes open oceans in both our International Waters and Biodiversity focal areas.

So today we want your strategic advice and counsel on how to meet donor expectations: for that we need to know lessons learned from what has already taking place: examine what has worked and what hasn't so we can be in good position to use what limited resources we have in a smart , synergistic way. While GEF has undertaken a few scattered projects in ABNJ, it is still a relatively new area for us. That's why we are here today.. We need to understand what your organizations are doing now in these areas and what future programs are planned. GEF will benefit from understanding what is really needed so that the biodiversity of the high seas, the sensitive habitats such as seamounts, and fisheries like tuna can be conserved and sustained instead of being rapidly depleted. And we think the private sector through the entire chain of fisheries businesses needs to be better leverage to level the playing field so that conservation measures will sustain our oceans and provide benefits for communities and industry alike.

Think of the GEF in this way. GEF provides incremental cost financing. Your programs in what we call the baseline provide a foundation for GEF supported-measures above and beyond the existing situation to work on a global scale, in

different ways, and with developing countries toward conservation and sustainable use of the high seas. The FAO has a comparative advantage in marine fisheries to lead this work with other GEF agencies and coordinate development of a GEF program encompassing the two focal areas of international waters and biodiversity. GEF agencies, in line with their own comparative advantages, could work with some of your programs to raise the management and conservation of ABNJ to a new level needed for sustainability.

So today, we are here to listen and learn about your current and planned baseline activities. Depending on our discussions today and the information we receive, GEF may initiate a global pilot program. This could be focused on marine biodiversity, habitat protection and sustainable use that could complement GEF's focus on increasing marine protected areas coverage and institution building in areas under national jurisdiction.

We obviously cannot do it all but after today we hope to build momentum to focus in on just one or two things we can accomplish in a relatively short time frame.

We cannot make these decisions lightly. If we do support such a marine program, it would be at the expense of other priorities in the biodiversity area. Any such program then comes at a high price and will truly have to be

transformational in impact. GEF will not study the oceans or do research, but instead, we will support REAL action and help develop institutions to conserve and protect these waters. Our job is to help mobilize the business community and consumers to speak up for sound management and sustainable incomes for coastal communities. To make the challenge even greater for all of us, our donors expect, and right so that we have initial results within 3 years. If we are to get more funding for coasts and oceans, we need to be able to illustrate effective use of the funding and progress toward real results within 3 years as we undertake our next GEF replenishment cycle.

Al Duda from my staff and Kevern Cochrane from FAO will co-chair the discussions. You have a draft agenda that we will follow that focuses on information transfer and discussion, not long-winded speeches. If you are working in this area, you should know the institutional set-up, so please focus on your actual programs and describe what more is urgently needed globally so that we can determine what type of program for ABNJ would make sense for GEF. I have other meetings today, but I will return here this afternoon to hear of progress that you have made in your discussions. Once again, I thank you for participating at a meeting that is vital to our mission and I look forward to hearing from you again this afternoon.