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GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

Opening Remarks

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Global Environment Facility

Opening Remarks at the CSO Meeting

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Dear distinguished Council members, civil society representatives and colleagues,
Good morning and welcome to the 41st Council meeting consultations with Civil Society Organizations.

We are meeting during very challenging times, the world facing multiple simultaneous crisis; economic, social, and environmental. The world needs and wants all of us to take concrete and effective remedies to these crises.

In this context, the GEF has risen to the challenge. For example, the Work Program for this council meeting will for the first time, simultaneously benefit 99 recipient countries, the largest number ever included in a single work program. Not only does this reflect from our Member States an increasing awareness, desire and capacity to develop national, regional and global responses to environmental problems, but it also shows a real country ownership of the GEF supported programmes. This is most encouraging, and certainly an important step in the right direction.

We have made great progress since the first Rio conference, but there is a need for much more. Greater collaboration and synergy is essential to improve programme

efficiency and effectiveness, strengthen accountability, and to mitigate unintended adverse effects caused by interventions on single elements of multi-faceted environment problems.

You may recall, during our last council meeting we presented a GEF policy proposal on environmental and social safeguards. At the Council's request, we have revised the document after extensive consultations. It is essential that environmental and social safeguard standards are clear and sound and respond in the best possible manner to the concerns of the parties involved. Thanks to your numerous and thoughtful contributions, I believe we have now achieved this goal, taking the best from the suggestions received.

Linked to this is the need to continue to strengthen transparency, which we intend to address in sharing during this Council, the GEF practices governing the disclosure of all non-confidential information related to its operations and policy making processes.

On a similar note, I'm very glad to see the Network's first report presented to the Council. I would like to congratulate you for this initiative, and to underline the

importance of your work and the value of the close partnership that exists between the CSOs and the GEF.

As you know, by now we have almost completed all extended constituency workshops, always noting and appreciating your active participation whenever it was possible. This is why I encourage you to continue your efforts in expanding CSO membership wherever the Network's presence is still limited. Only then will our partnership with you become truly universal.

As the GEF evolves and continues its reforms, I believe the Network also needs to adapt to this period of changes. How can for instance, the Network structure coordinate more closely with the GEF Constituencies? Would the Network best benefit from a structural change or improved procedures? How can this be done, while maintaining the importance of IP representatives?

As part of our commitment towards greater participation of civil society, we have been supporting a process that will hopefully produce a new set of principles for engagement with indigenous peoples. This is a process that is being led by indigenous peoples representatives, and reflects their views on the highest priority issues that GEF could be considering in elaborating this set of principles. I am

very happy to see this initiative taking place, foreseeing a great potential for implementation as we move forward.

We are also very pleased with your inputs into the new guide for public participation in GEF projects, that will be published soon.

These initiatives reflect convergence and synergy between the GEF, the CSOs and Indigenous Peoples. This is how, together, we will be able to successfully face the new challenges that lie ahead. Therefore the GEF remains committed to working with you in order to further improve the effectiveness, transparency, accountability and efficiency of the GEF network as a whole.

I look forward to a robust debate today so let me stop now and take your questions.