

Check upon delivery



**GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY**  
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

## **Opening Remarks**

**Monique Barbut, CEO and Chairperson**  
**Global Environment Facility**

**GEF 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala**  
**Indian American Museum**

Thank you, Andre for your kind introduction. Ladies and Gentlemen, council members, distinguished guests, welcome to our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

I believe this is one of the few times in our history we have hosted such a diverse cross section of our network -- among those with us tonight are local leaders in civil society, some of whom have traveled thousands of miles from villages, towns and cities to be here. Whether you slogged through a jungle or battled the Beltway we are happy you got here to share our story!

We started our journey 20 years ago this October; I remember because I was there at the beginning and it was a painful birth! It took more than a year of negotiations to get us started and even then it was seen as an experiment.

A year later, in 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), most well known as the "Earth Summit" was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and it was here that countries adopted the Biodiversity and Climate Change Conventions. The Conventions included provisions for a financial mechanism and it was decided the GEF fit the bill...no one had the appetite for a bunch of funds when one facility could serve the global environmental conventions without incurring more bureaucracy. This pilot phase ran from 1991 to mid 1994

and then a restructured Global Environment Facility was adopted that has over time blossomed into the world's largest environmental public fund we know today.

People who know my career as a public servant, first within the French government, then in UNEP and now as a CEO know me to be a rather blunt person. I like to speak my mind.

So believe me when I say I am very proud to be associated with the GEF. I feel lucky to have been there at the beginning of the journey, and now with my term ending shortly after the Rio+ 20 summit I want to share my perspective on what we have learned, what we have accomplished and finally what lies ahead.

A key lesson the GEF has learned is that **this network is stronger than the sum of its parts.**

What exactly do I mean? The GEF is a partnership for bringing together not just a Secretariat that approves projects, but it is also countries, donors and beneficiaries, civil society, indigenous people, and business. Operating as a network allows the GEF to draw on the expertise and capacities of each, giving the Facility a very broad set of competencies, as well as the ability to move as much money as the capacity of all the partners combined allows. Having a neutral secretariat that does

not implement projects means the GEF is free to select the best ideas partners can offer.

I mention a neutral secretariat. Another lesson we know is that it is important to have an equitable and inclusive governance structure. The GEF is made up of a roughly equal number of seats for recipient countries and non-recipient countries. This structure has allowed the GEF to shape policies and programming in light of the perspectives of BOTH donors and recipients.

This may be why the GEF will be a leader in providing direct access to its resources but doing so in a manner that incorporates high fiduciary standards.

The GEF was also one of the first international financial institutions to engage Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in its projects as well as in the shaping of its policies. Over time, the GEF has found that its most robust and long-lasting alliances are with civil society and community based organizations.

While I said to you that the design of the Facility has stood the test of time, the GEF has still had to mature over the years and has made mistakes, which we have worked hard to correct. There are more lessons to be taken from these experiences. During the course of my years at the GEF, I have seen the GEF

evolve in response to—and even to lead—progress that has been made in the sustainable development arena.

Of particular note have been the GEF's significant efforts to put the principle of country ownership into action and to shake off complacency that can lead to bureaucratic sclerosis.

The GEF listened and has responded with a resource allocation system that provides each country a specific allocation of GEF resources to use over the course of a given replenishment period. Moreover, countries can now directly access GEF resources to allow them to undertake consultative processes to determine how to program those resources. The GEF is also moving forward with a pilot, I hope to be approved this week, to allow countries to select among a range of qualified national, international, or nongovernmental institutions with which to design and implement GEF projects.

Another important evolution at the GEF has been to embrace results-based programming and management. In our new funding cycle we have introduced a results-based performance system. The issue is for example, not merely knowing that financing has been provided for 1,000 windmills, but also of ensuring that the

money invested will help avoid the emission of 1 million metric tons of CO<sup>2</sup>. Each dollar invested must have an impact. We have also strengthened the role and the independence of the GEF Evaluation Office to ensure we doing what we set out to do.

One huge benefit of our sharper focus to deliver measureable impacts has been a move away from financing individual projects in a piecemeal and uncoordinated manner to a greater use of regional or thematic programmatic approaches that allow projects to build upon each other for greater and more sustained results.

This results-based mindset translates to a sustained drive to increase efficiency and has made the GEF a more productive financial tool for countries looking to meet international environmental obligations . During my tenure as CEO for example, I introduced reforms that reduced the time required for a project to move from concept to approval from 66 months to 18 months. And now **65 percent** of all GEF project submissions receive a response from the GEF Secretariat **within 10 days**. Efforts are already underway to further simplify our project to maximize efficiencies there, too.

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished guests:

The world is a better place thanks to the GEF. Since its beginnings in 1991, the GEF has protected more than 10 percent of the earth's total surface area and helped countries avoid the emission of almost 3 billion metric tons of CO<sup>2</sup>, at less than US\$1 per metric ton. GEF investments have supported more than 30 climate-friendly technologies, and are expected to directly reduce 1.7 billion tones of greenhouse gas emissions. The environmentally sound disposal of at least 35,000 tons of PCB-related waste and 15,000 tons of obsolete pesticides are happening because of GEF and catalyzed investments. And in our international waters area we have worked with more than 150 nations on projects that cover 19 of the Earth's 64 large marine ecosystems, including half of those shared by developing countries.

These are just a few of the clear and measureable impacts of what GEF has been able to do.

Today, I consider the GEF to be an excellent instrument for providing financing to developing countries as we look to the future of global environmental finance.

This is, of course, the *raison d'être* of the GEF, and our mandate remains strong and current. The GEF operates as financial mechanisms for the principal environmental conventions, with a mandate that covers climate change,

biodiversity, combating desertification, the protection of international waters and elimination of persistent organic pollutants. The GEF is also the **ONLY** mechanism capable of building the necessary synergies when tackling global environmental problems in a more integrated way – forest management that conserves biodiversity, protects soils and mitigates greenhouse gases, while making people’s quality of life better.

With 20 years of hindsight, it is clear that climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable land management are integral parts of the same puzzle. Take one away and the castle collapses. Overemphasize another, and the edifice will tremble. Being the prime source of funding for the implementation of the Rio Conventions, the GEF is placed in an ideal position to understand how mutually-reinforcing strategies are emerging as the way of the future, with our projects and programs rapidly evolving to reflect this paradigm.

Now as we look to another anniversary, the 20<sup>th</sup> year of the Rio “Earth Summit” it is important to remember for the future that whatever we do, we must construct a coherent architecture that builds on the advantages of each convention and responds **realistically** to political and financial situations.



Faced with the risk of fragmentation, I remain confident that the choice made in the run up to Rio + 20 to bolster a Global Environment Facility will be viewed afresh and recognized as still relevant. We need to accord priority to integrated approaches for all global environmental challenges. We need mechanisms that draw on broad-based partnerships rather than poorly coordinated vertical interventions. And the GEF holds these comparative advantages.

The bottom line here is that the need to act together has never been greater – and the GEF has a unique role to play in strengthening delivery channels to allow countries to make meaningful investments in sustainable development. With your help and support I hope that one day the GEF will celebrate many more anniversaries. Thank you.