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GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

Speech

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Celebration of WWF's 50th Anniversary
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It is an immense pleasure to be here celebrating half a century of phenomenal work by a true thought leader among conservation NGOs -- that is WWF, in case you were wondering!

At the GEF we are not quite there yet, but we too are celebrating our anniversary -- our 20th! And at every step of the way, WWF has been with us as a trusted and effective partner.

WWF was at the center of countless GEF-funded projects distributed across all continents. It would have taken me hours to go over all these initiatives that conserving threatened species, habitats, ecosystems, and the livelihoods of people everywhere. Instead, let me simply highlight a few to give you a snapshot of what we are talking about.

In partnership with the Brazilian government, WWF conceived and guided the implementation of the largest tropical forest conservation initiative ever. With a \$30 million dollars grant from the GEF, complemented by \$59 million from other donors, Brazil established the ARPA Program to enhance protection of the Amazon. ARPA has so far established 44 new protected areas and expanded the area of another 18. This resulted in the expansion of forest protection by an

astonishing 25 million hectares! I am about to endorse the second phase of ARPA that will take this goal to 35 million hectares, which corresponds to 9 times the size of Switzerland! This means there is a good chance that your country could get lost inside a WWF project...

WWF plays a central role in the Coral Triangle program supported by the GEF and carried forward by the private sector, international agencies and other civil society partners, another landmark initiative that is safeguarding the Coral Triangle's marine and coastal resources.

Another example is WWF's prime role in our project to conserve Borneo's forests. WWF is also supporting a pioneering initiative dealing with the serious problem of overfishing in the high seas, and helping the GEF frame an ambitious program for restoring the forests of the Greater Mekong region in Asia. Ok, I better stop now before I run out of breath, but the list goes on...

And it is not all. WWF has advised GEF in the science and practice of biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation. For example, it was on the basis of solid conservation science generated by WWF that the GEF produced its resource allocation system that rewards countries according to their capacity to

generate benefits in the protection of globally relevant biodiversity. This feature leapfrogged the GEF into the realm of the leading multilateral institutions that embrace a results-based framework in making decisions where and how their resources will be programmed for highest impact.

All in all, we are proud of our work with WWF – and also with numerous other NGOs, at the global, regional and national levels. The GEF was 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.

We have found that the most robust and long-lasting alliances are those with civil society and community based organizations, particularly when it comes to biodiversity. CSOs are vital because they stimulate needed local action and strengthen participatory governance over natural resources. The GEF has supported more than 1,500 projects worldwide, the majority involving CSOs at various phases of implementation. To date 13 percent of our projects have been granted directly to CSOs, and involved \$543 million in grants that leveraged over \$1.5 billion in co-financing. Through the Small Grants Programme, we have supported over 12,000 projects in 122 countries.

CSOs are also at the table helping shape the future of the GEF. Through the GEF NGO Network they participate in stakeholder consultations and add their voice at GEF Council meetings. Through information dissemination and consultation, the Network reaches out to an extensive membership of CSOs worldwide. Moving forward, we want to strengthen our ties with CSOs— they are the people on the ground who see first-hand what works and what doesn't. And we need this independent voice to ensure the recent reforms we put in place stay robust and current.

Next month the GEF will host its 40th Council meeting and I invite you to join us to continue this conversation. On the evening of May 23 we will host a special event in which we will celebrate with our partners our past successes and promise for the future. As part of the festivities several CSOs will be hosting interactive exhibits and hands-on demonstrations. The idea is to offer our councilors and partners a unique opportunity to experience the impact GEF has made helping countries meet global environmental challenges within the context of national sustainable development. So I would welcome your participation.

Regarding the next GEF council meeting, I saved the best for last. One of the key reforms I have been fighting for over the last couple of years is that designed to

broaden the access to GEF resources by organizations beyond the UN agencies and MDBs. I am confident that the council will approve a new route that will enable organizations like WWF and capable others – those that abide to independently audited fiduciary standards – to access resources directly without an intervening agency. This will be truly revolutionary and can open up incredible opportunities for us to work much closer together.

I was also asked by Jim Leape to say a few words about the future of global environmental finance. This is, of course, the *raison d'être* of the GEF. The GEF has been a financial mechanism of 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. Thanks to the reforms I introduced in the past few years, notably the simplification of procedures to access resources and increasing country ownership, I firmly believe that the GEF will continue to have a central role in providing financing to developing countries for many years to come. GEF remains the ONLY financial institution that works with the UN agencies and the Bretton Woods Institutions, using the comparative advantages provided by each for specific projects and programs. 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 and conservation for climate change mitigation and adaptation, for biodiversity and for livelihoods, is just one example. Therefore, our mandate remains strong and current.

But do I believe that the GEF will continue to be the only mechanism for these conventions and for the global public goods? Of this I'm not sure. You have all heard of the decision to create the Green Fund. We are, of course, involved in that process, and I am convinced that the GEF is the right choice to become the Secretariat to the Green Fund. The GEF is already a financial mechanism for the major international environmental agreements, and its unique network design, balanced by an innovative governance structure; provide the right ingredients to build this new initiative from. Moreover, its broad role would ensure that duplicative and overlapping financing is minimized. One example: as the secretariat to both the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Adaptation Fund, the GEF has been able to foil attempts to bring projects that have failed review in one fund to the next for a second bite at the apple.

Moreover, 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. De-emphasize another, and you will reveal crippling

trade-offs. 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.

The past 20 years have also demonstrated clearly that the GEF's network structure offers tremendous advantages. The Facility's expertise and ability to move resources to the field is as great as the sum of all of its partners. The neutral GEF Secretariat can optimize these varied and complementary talents and capacities by stimulating a creative competition among partners.

The financial resources of the international community have been severely strained over the past months. Do you really believe that, against this backdrop, it would be in our collective interest to resort to the fragmentation of mechanisms and aid? There are currently 230 funds and programs for international aid, far outnumbering the beneficiary countries! Do we want to follow the same path for the global environment? Faced with the risk of fragmentation, I remain confident that the choice will be made in the run up to Rio to build a Global Environment Facility afresh. 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 with mounting environmental problems, we need to hit the ground running. Only GEF offers us this possibility today. In conclusion, I believe is that we must construct a coherent architecture that builds on the advantages of each convention and mechanism and responds to the current political and financial situation.

The need to act together has never been greater – and the GEF has a unique role to play in strengthening the delivery channels to fund meaningful sustainable development. With your help and political support I hope that one day the GEF will also be deserving of celebrating its own 50th anniversary.

Thank you!