



GEF CEO Remarks Launch of Pilot Partnership on National Implementation of Synergies among Rio Conventions

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Rio Conventions Pavilion

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to help launch this pilot partnership to demonstrate and foster synergies among the Rio Conventions. Some years ago, I first discussed the idea with Ahmed Djoghlaif, the former Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biodiversity. We agreed that there were many examples at the ground-level of this kind of synergy being achieved through the Global Environment Facility's biodiversity project portfolio. But it seemed to us that very few high-level negotiators and politicians recognized this synergy, and the opportunity it provided for simultaneously advancing the objectives of the three Rio Conventions.

We hope that the pilot will not only build the capacity of the partner countries but that it will also serve to raise awareness of what is already happening on the ground. As this awareness spreads, we may be able to realize the latent potential that exists for the GEF to achieve the objectives of the three Conventions more quickly through integrated project investments.

Of the three Rio Conventions established here 20 years ago, the CBD has been particularly progressive in this regard. In the decisions of its Conference of the Parties, CBD identifies opportunities whereby Parties can jointly achieve the objectives of the CBD, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification through intelligently designed projects funded by the financial mechanism for each convention, namely, the Global Environment Facility.

Thus, I am particularly pleased that an initiative to pilot and showcase these kinds of projects has finally taken wing, and that a few GEF projects and GEF-recipient countries have chosen to join the partnership. And I could not think of a better partner for the GEF than the CBD. The Convention realized

many years ago that significant investment and outcome efficiencies and synergies could be realized through the integration of investments and projects.

At the GEF, we have seen a dramatic increase in this type of investment on the part of GEF-recipient countries during the first two years of our fifth replenishment – GEF-5 – and I want to highlight two projects that will take part in the partnership.

In Jamaica, the project “Integrated Management of the Yallahs River and Hope River Watersheds,” brings together US\$ 3.7 million of GEF resources and US\$ 8.9 million of cofinancing through the biodiversity, land degradation, and sustainable forest management programs. The funds will support an integrated approach to reduce pressures on the natural resources and biodiversity of the Yallahs River and Hope River Watersheds of the Blue Mountains. This area provides water for domestic, agricultural and industrial uses for 40% of Jamaica's population. It is also important for its high-value biodiversity, that is, high levels of endemic flora and fauna, particularly on the upper slopes of the mountains. The project complements Inter-American Development Bank loans with activities geared toward improved agricultural and forest management. And it incorporates biodiversity and ecosystem service values into land and spatial planning which defines land-use in the project area.

In Guatemala, the project “Sustainable Forest Management and Multiple Global Environmental Benefits,” combines US\$ 4.5 million of GEF resources with \$ 13.2 million in cofinancing through the biodiversity, land degradation, climate change, and sustainable forest management programs. The aim is to better manage threatened forests in mixed agricultural and forest landscapes in the southeastern and western regions of Guatemala. The project seeks to strengthen forest and land management practices to conserve biodiversity, enhance water flows, and increase carbon stocks within REDD-plus pilot projects.

Thus, both in Jamaica and Guatemala, projects once labeled “sustainable development” are really examples of GEF projects contributing to the “green economy,” which for most of our clients remains resource-based and rurally-driven.

The GEF has provided the funding for these projects. The CBD is providing added value to the partnership in the form of the training and capacity building activities that it will implement with the pilot partners. The aim is to help them better design and implement these projects. The challenge is considerable because these projects require more sophisticated approaches to monitor both economic and ecological trade-offs that ensue as part of integrated solutions to natural resource management problems.

At the GEF we conduct our own portfolio analysis to ensure that we clearly identify the trade-offs that accompany project investments that seek to generate multiple global environmental benefits. We intend to contribute the lessons-learned from this analysis to the capacity-building activities that the CBD employs during the pilot.

The GEF portfolio is replete with other examples of creative project designers building – from the ground-up – a response to multiple environmental challenges that have the potential to generate

multiple global environmental benefits. But as we all know there is no free-lunch. So these projects have to be designed, implemented and monitored with a technically rigorous focus on trade-offs, efficiencies, and benefits, so that we neither sell these approaches short, or overpromise their potential. I am convinced that the pilot we launch here today will make a strong contribution to that effort.

Thank you for your attention.