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FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND MECHANISM

Executive summary of the report of the independent evaluator for the review of the effectiveness of the financial mechanism

Note by the Executive Secretary

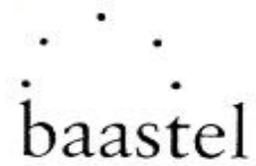
1. Article 21, paragraph 3, of the Convention on Biological Diversity provides that the Conference of the Parties shall first review the effectiveness of the financial mechanism not less than two years after the entry into force of the Convention. At its second meeting, the Conference of the Parties decided to undertake the first review the effectiveness of the financial mechanism at the fourth meeting of Conference of the Parties, and thereafter every three years. At its fourth meeting, the Conference of the Parties adopted a decision IV/11 on the review of effectiveness of the financial mechanism, in which it asked the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to take action identified in an annex to the decision with a view to improving effectiveness, and to report to the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

2. At its fifth meeting, the Conference of the Parties determined the terms of reference for the second review of the financial mechanism and decided that it should be conducted by an experienced independent evaluator in time for the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The terms of reference for the review were set out in the annex to decision V/12.

3. The second review of the financial mechanism has now been completed, and the executive summary is annexed to the present note. The process undertaken to complete the review is described in detail in section III of the progress report on mechanisms for implementation (UNEP/CBD/COP/6/13), which, in its section VI, also contains recommendations for action by the Conference of the Parties in response to the review. The full report of the independent evaluator is being circulated in the language of submission as an information document (UNEP/CBD/COP/6/INF/4).

4. The executive summary is being circulated in the form in which it was received by the Convention Secretariat.

* UNEP/CBD/COP/6/1 and Corr.1/Rev.1.



**SECOND REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FINANCIAL MECHANISM FOR
THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

SUMMARY REPORT

Pre-session Document

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1. INTRODUCTION

The review team was mandated by the Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity to carry out the Second Review of the Effectiveness of the Financial Mechanism. This review is being conducted in accordance with Decision V/12 of the Conference of the Parties (CoP) to the Convention. It covers the period of November 1996 to June 2001. For the purpose of this Review and as specified in Decision V/12, effectiveness includes the following issues:

- (a) The effectiveness of the financial mechanism and its institutional structure in providing and delivering financial resources, as well as in overseeing, monitoring and evaluating the activities financed by its resources;
- (b) The conformity of the activities of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), as the institutional structure operating the financial mechanism, with the guidance of the Conference of the Parties; and,
- (c) The efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the GEF-funded activities on the implementation of the Convention and in the achievement of its three objectives.

More specifically, Decision V/12 points out to the following evaluation criteria to be taken into account by the review:

- (a) The steps and actions taken by the financial mechanism in response to the actions requested by the Conference of the Parties at its fourth meeting to improve the effectiveness of the financial mechanism, as set out in the annex to its decision IV/11;
- (b) The actions taken by the financial mechanism in response to the guidance of the Conference of the Parties, as contained in decisions I/2, II/6, III/5, IV/13 and V/13
- (c) The findings and recommendations of the second Overall Performance Study of the GEF
- (d) Any other significant issue raised by the Parties

The CBD Secretariat conducted the first Review as an in-house exercise. It covered the period of inception of the financial mechanism from July 1994 to June 1997 and presented recommendations, in line with criteria spelled out in the annex to decision III/7 of the CoP. The present review builds on that report and assesses progress in meeting its recommendations, as part of a broader analysis. The present executive summary outlines the methodology as well as all the key conclusions and recommendations. It should be seen in conjunction with the report providing the Analysis of the Findings, listed as information document UNEP/CBD/COP/6/INF.4, which presents a detailed analysis of the issues that led to the main conclusions and recommendations presented herein. It was the intention of the COP and CBD that this review be an independent exercise, leading to impartial results.

This final version of the report benefited from helpful comments on a draft version from the CBD Secretariat, the GEF Secretariat and the Implementing Agencies and we would like to acknowledge them for their timely contributions. It should be noted that this final version contains a wide array of recommendations for consideration by the CoP in accordance with the process agreed to. The CoP should then elect which recommendations it will retain and communicate to the GEF.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Approach

This review was conducted by a team of nine consultants (five Canadians and four local consultants) over the period May-November 2001. From the beginning, the team focused on establishing a review framework that was impartial, transparent, systematic and comprehensive, and that integrated the views of the GEF and CBD Secretariat regarding data collection and other methodological choices.

2.2 Review coverage and evaluation matrix

The review covers the period 1997-2001, and the operational programmes of the CBD financial mechanism, which are relevant to the guidance, provided by the Conference of the Parties (CoP). After a

thorough review of the CoP guidance, the Review team devised a comprehensive evaluation matrix built around the five core evaluation criteria promoted by the OECD/DAC and widely used in evaluation methodologies. These include: Relevance (adapted to Responsiveness), Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability. Specific topics covered by CoP guidance were grouped under each criterion, and key review questions were devised for each topic, along with appropriate indicators, data collection tools and information sources. Both the CBD and the GEF Secretariat had the opportunity to comment on the evaluation matrix early in the process. The evaluation criteria and matrix, provided in Appendix E, became the organizing framework for data collection, analysis, and the structure of this report.

2.3 Sources of Information and Data Collection Instruments Used

Four data collection instruments were used to respond to the information requirements identified in the evaluation matrix, and ensure that results could be crosschecked, including:

Desk studies: These were conducted by the review team throughout June-August 2001, in part, as preparation for the field visits. Sources were diverse and included CBD, GEF and Implementing Agency (IA) documents among others. Given the large scope and limited budget for this review, it was understood from the start that the Evaluation team would have to make extensive use of secondary sources of information, such as GEF and IAs' monitoring, evaluation reports and program studies. Throughout the report, detailed references are provided and quotes from various documents are used to exemplify more generally points that came across strongly in the vast body of literature reviewed. In many cases, given the large body of evidence available from these secondary sources, the evaluation team chose to let the quotes 'speak' rather than provide its own narrative. As required in the Terms of Reference, the review team, with the cooperation of the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Division, was able to receive the Interim and Final OPS2 Report and integrate its results into this review. A complete bibliography is provided in Appendix D.

Questionnaire: A questionnaire based on the evaluation matrix was developed to solicit information from CBD Focal Points and GEF Operational Focal Points on issues where local perceptions were especially relevant for the evaluation. This questionnaire was reviewed by the CBD and GEF Secretariats prior to mail out, and adjustments were made. Extensive discussion took place on the wording of the questionnaire to ensure that all parties viewed the tool as balanced, unbiased, and structured so as to yield relevant information. The English version was translated in Spanish and French and one questionnaire was sent to the focal point for each developing country party. The review team also attended an international GEF-supported conference in Cuba, where they were able to directly elicit many questionnaire responses. Confidentiality was guaranteed to the respondents in order to encourage frank responses.

In total, 61 responses were received from developing country parties out of a possible 148 GEF-eligible countries, representing a 41% response rate in terms of country coverage: 17 responses were received from Africa, 17 from Asia Pacific, 15 from Latin America, and 12 from Central and Eastern Europe. The final breakdown offers broad representation, good regional balance, and an excellent overall response rate for this type of survey. Responses were compiled and analysed and are presented both in the text of this report and through summary graphs. When regional differences are significant, regional breakdowns are provided. It should be noted that to elicit more honest responses, confidentiality was guaranteed to the respondents. The large size of the sample and its overall representativeness provides for a high degree of statistical validity and precision in those findings. Furthermore, the questionnaire was addressed to a well-informed and concerned population, which allows us to use this primary source of information with confidence as one (of the several) basis for our analysis.

¹ All Appendices can be found at the end of the information document UNEP/CBD/COP/6/INF.4, Volume II of this Review.

Interviews: To complement questionnaires, thirty semi-structured interviews (using standard questions) were conducted with key informants from various stakeholder groups. These included: a sample of representatives from Implementing Agencies (UNDP, UNEP and World Bank), Regional NGO Focal Points, STAP, bilateral donors, CBD and GEF Secretariats, and the OPS2 Evaluation team. Care was taken to ensure representative coverage from each group and region (where applicable). A list of interviewees is presented in Appendix A. Here again, interview questions were based on key issues extracted from the matrix, which were of particular relevance to each group. All except two interviews were conducted in person in Montreal, Washington and Cuba, or by telephone. Again, all interviewees were assured of confidentiality. Given the nature of the respondents to this interview process (key informants, well aware of the activities of the GEF and the CoP Guidance), the findings from these interviews clearly represent an additional reliable primary source of information. Furthermore, it should be noted that when a particular quote from a particular interviewee is used in the report to support a point, it is meant to exemplify a point more generally raised by a variety of sources and can thus not be considered as anecdotal.

Field Visits: Four country visits (one per CBD developing country region) were conducted to ensure that the review team had direct primary sources of information from the field. Issues of particular interest for field visits were also identified in the Evaluation Matrix (Appendix E). The goal here was not to conduct project evaluations, as the scope of this review did not require this, but rather to use field visits and case studies to confirm, inform and complement other information sources. Field visits included: review of project documents and interviews with key informants from various stakeholder groups, including: Government, Civil Society, Research Institutes, Implementing Agencies. The candidate countries and projects for field visits were carefully selected according to criteria in the terms of reference for the review and after extensive consultation with the CBD and GEF Secretariats. Criteria included a representative range of: (i) type of CoP guidance measures (ii) types of execution modality; (iii) geographical distribution over the developing regions of the CBD (including one small Island developing state); (iv) Operational Programs; (v) Implementing Agency involvement; (vi) project size, duration and stage of implementation, (vii) levels of co-financing, and (viii) coverage of other recent and on-going program studies in order to avoid duplication. The portfolio was reviewed and a selection matrix was used to identify candidate countries and projects for submission to the CBD and GEF Secretariats. Their comments were integrated into the final selection. Based on discussions with country authorities on their availability to participate, the following field visits were conducted from August-October 2001: in Africa - Seychelles; in Asia/Pacific - Jordan; in CEE - Russia; and, in Latin America - Ecuador. The schedule and list of the projects visited during field visits is presented in Appendix C. The findings from the field visits are integrated throughout the report.

2.4 Evaluation constraints and opportunities

This review has been challenging; the main challenge was to address the wide scope of the CoP guidance on the one hand, while keeping the task manageable from both a time and financial perspective, on the other. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, the limited resources put at the disposal of the review team to conduct such an ambitious review implied that the team had to rely on the use of secondary sources of information (monitoring, evaluation reports and program studies from the GEF and its IAs). The validity of the findings from secondary sources used in this report is however ascertained through the use of evidences coherent across the vast body of secondary sources reviewed. Furthermore, care was taken through the evaluation process as well as throughout this report, to further cross-validate the findings from the analysis of the secondary sources through the use of direct sources such as questionnaires, interviews and field visits.

The diversity of actors also complicated the planning and implementation of the review. Add to this the desire of the review team to make sure the process was understood and supported by all parties, and was transparent and unbiased. However, from the Review team's perspective, these challenges also opened promising avenues. The final product provides an opportunity for all parties to have a

constructive and independent look at the GEF's BD work and how it can be improved to further the implementation of the Convention. It also provides a tool to identify constraints on the GEF and how the CoP in its future guidance and other work can address these.

Given the wide scope of CoP guidance, there was a need to prioritize issues to be covered in the review. For this purpose, the review team agreed with the CBD and GEF on a preliminary table of contents before starting the drafting process, in order to bring more focus to the analysis. This report reflects this agreed-upon focus.

3. MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REVIEW

3.1 Overview of diversity of CoP guidance generated and challenges related to this diversity

The guidance to the GEF at CoP I (Decision I/2) was generally at a broad program level, calling for projects that promoted conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Since the first review and up to CoP V, many new CoP decisions have been added to a growing list of issues. They have in general become broader in nature, looking at more integrated approaches to the implementation of the convention (e.g. ecosystem based approaches), and nuancing some earlier CoP decisions. The CoP is an evidently political process, and as such some CoP decisions are generated by specific national and regional agendas and therefore, do not have the same relevance for or support from other countries. At the same time, the decision-making framework of the CoP process has limited the potential for prioritizing issues. As new guidance is added with each CoP, these factors, over time, have made for a long list of sometimes somewhat unfocused and/or repetitive (albeit sometimes more nuanced) guidance. This makes for a challenging task in terms of reviewing guidance measures, but also in terms of implementation. Our research suggests that many, from all parties, are aware of these difficulties.

In light of this analysis, the review team recommends that: **the CoP instruct the CBD Secretariat to search for ways to compile and present CoP guidance in a simpler, more coherent format, which can be more easily understood, operationalized, monitored and evaluated. This could involve instructing the CBD Secretariat to further refine the Strategic Plan in development and encourage the introduction of targets, and possible timelines in relation to the Guidance.**

3.2 Responsiveness

Communication

A variety of effective communication mechanisms, both formal and informal, exist between the CoP and the GEF. In addition, over the past two years, there has been an increased willingness at the highest levels to better use these channels. However, in order to further improve communication, and help to ensure swifter and more effective responsiveness to the guidance, the review team recommends that **the CoP investigate the appropriateness of broadening the consultations between the CBD Secretariat, the GEF Secretariat, and some key developed and developing countries representatives prior to each CoP. This could also serve as a mechanism to increase discussion and interpretation of CoP Guidance**

Interpretation of CoP Guidance

Differences in perception and interpretation of CoP guidance were noted between the CBD and the GEF Secretariats, as well as among the GEF Coordination Units of the Implementing Agencies and their field offices. In view of these challenges, the CoP may want to impress on the GEF the need to: Reinforce communication efforts now underway through country dialogue workshops; Identify additional

ways to enhance the responsibilities of the IA field officers for ensuring compliance with CoP guidance during implementation of the GEF Operational Programmes; Ensure greater capacity among staff of GEF and IAs (especially in field) to understand and communicate the technicalities of CBD guidance and GEF Operational Programmes. The GEF Secretariat should also ensure that OPs are written in clear and unambiguous language for easier comprehension. The review team recommends that **the CoP instruct the GEF and CBD Secretariats to undertake further efforts to clearly communicate to all stakeholders what is eligible or not for funding, based on CoP guidance and the GEF Operational Strategy. There is also a need to enhance understanding of CoP Guidance at all levels.**

Responsiveness of the GEF and conformity of operational strategy, programmes, policies, procedures and projects

At the programme and policy level, it appears that the 13 programme priorities designed and approved in 1995 by the GEF are broad enough to allow any CoP Guidance to be integrated. However, the Operational Programme may in fact not be specific enough, sometimes leading to an overlap in operations and lack of strategic direction to address priorities. Thus, the Operational Strategy appears to suffer from the same lack of focus as the CoP Guidance. If the process of strategic planning for the CoP guidance is further developed and targets are identified, it could also help focus the GEF Operational Strategy. The review team recommends that **the CoP instruct the CBD Secretariat to communicate the results of this rationalization effort to the GEF so that it can adjust and better focus its Operational Strategy accordingly.**

The CoP has asked that the financial mechanism be flexible enough to respond to the thematic long-term program of the CBD. Although the GEF is making efforts, further progress will require planning instruments that have longer-term orientation and are embraced by Implementing Agencies and partners. The review team recommends that **the CoP support the GEF efforts to move towards a programmatic approach in support of the thematic longer-term programme of the CBD and encourage it to develop appropriate instruments and capacities to bring this approach to maturity.**

Responsiveness to developing country parties' priorities

Overall, our data suggests that in general terms, focal points are satisfied with the GEF Operational Strategy and its manifestations in the field. Indeed, most projects seem to be responding to country priorities, however, detailed knowledge of the GEF's strategy, direction and the procedures among stakeholders remains uneven. The review team recommends that **the CoP instruct the GEF Secretariat and its Implementing Agencies (IAs) to better communicate the GEF programmes, directions, priorities and current opportunities at the country level. This could include communicating them in the native language, to all interested parties.**

The recent completion of biodiversity strategies and plans for many countries should help guide the GEF, IAs, and country stakeholders in addressing a broader range of country priorities, as long as prioritization of actions in the plans is clear. Communication among all GEF and developing country partners and stakeholders, is of central importance to ensure local ownership and better reflection of country priorities. The continuation of Country Dialogues workshops, if designed to reach out to diverse stakeholders, should also help broaden national portfolios to address a wider range of BD issues, and ensure that projects reflect national priorities. Our research indicates that stakeholders are indeed consulted during identification and planning phases for most projects. The GEF Secretariat and its IAs has made efforts along these lines. The review team recommends that **the CoP encourage the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to sustain its efforts to enhance communication with developing country stakeholders, with an increasing role and a broadened audience for Country Dialogue Workshops, which can enhance cooperation among all parties at the country level.**

Responsiveness/support of developing country parties

Political commitment and “country driven-ness” of projects helps to ensure that projects are more successful and increase buy-in on biodiversity issues by developing country authorities. The review team recommends that **The CoP should instruct the GEF and developing country Parties to ensure that all possible steps for enhancing political and civil society commitment and having BD projects be country-driven are taken, and steps already being taken on this front are continued and improved. This can include having stakeholders demonstrate and clearly articulate commitment early in the process, and broadening the scope of which groups to seek commitment from in society.**

Leveraging of funding

The GEF has improved its performance at catalyzing other sources of financing since 1997. With an overall investment of \$1.18 billion in BD conservation and sustainable use, the GEF has leveraged a further \$2 billion in co-financing. The most effective mechanisms for catalyzing other funds have been trust funds and the SGP. Yet the experience remains uneven and expectations in this regard are often unrealistic. The review team recommends that **in view of the tremendous biodiversity conservation needs, the CoP recommends to the GEF to continue to further and build its role as a catalyst and lever of additional funding.**

3.3 Effectiveness

Overall, the GEF Secretariat has been responsive to the guidance of the CoP concerning the policy, strategy, program priorities, and eligibility criteria relating to access to – and utilization of – financial resources by Developing Country Parties. The GEF, through its OPs, is effectively addressing the priority areas of concern for the CoP. However, there are some indications that funding factors are playing an increasing role in project selection and reducing the effectiveness of the GEF’s policies and programs in responding to the CoP. Interviewees noted that, while funding was not formerly a factor in project selection, there are now cases where funding concerns have been raised during project selection, as competition for funding between a growing number of priorities and players increases. In addition, our research suggests that the flexibility of the Operational Strategy is likely to be impeded in the future due to increased competition for available funding. It is worth noting that two out of the three funding scenarios presented at GEF Replenishment Meetings indicate that the BD focal area will receive fewer resources in GEF-3 than it did in GEF-2. In view of these indications, the review team recommends that **the CoP request an increase in funding levels for implementation of the CBD through the GEF.**

A critical issue for effectiveness is whether or not projects are actually achieving objectives set forth during the design. This is a precondition to ensuring compliance with the guidance. Our review suggests that improvement is needed, and several data sources, such as previous BD studies and our questionnaire data, point out that about two thirds of GEF projects are believed to be meeting their objectives in a way that could be considered appropriate. The following are key factors affecting success, as identified during this review: Participation of all stakeholders, especially national and local ones, in both planning and implementation; Provision of financial support, funding and advice; Government support and involvement; Close cooperation and coordination of all parties (including IAs); Good project management (including a degree of administrative and financial independence); Good planning and realistic design; Good educational, technical and scientific expertise (national expertise, and foreign when necessary) of project participants; Country-driven-ness and ownership of projects, including compatibility with national priorities; Appropriate choice of IA for management, support, flexible implementation and responsiveness; Good communication and clear objectives and vision; Transparency of procedures; Capacity development, and; A focus on sustainable development and preserving ecosystems. The review

team recommends that: **The CoP instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to place greater emphasis on ensuring that the criteria for project success identified in this report are explicitly addressed early in the design and planning stages of GEF projects, and are monitored throughout implementation, with adjustments as required.**

Although certain factors impeding project success might be outside the control of the GEF, other factors can be tackled in project design, especially through greater emphasis on capacity development, and further efforts to streamline the project cycle. The review team recommends that **the CoP instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to put more emphasis on sound project design, and planning, including better situation analysis of factors which will affect project success, stronger needs assessment for capacity development, and more realistic goal-setting.**

Synergies among the GEF family of institutions

There is a strong rationale to support improved cooperation and coordination among IAs to increase their effectiveness in responding to the CoP Guidance. This coordination is especially key when moving from a project approach to a programmatic or thematic approach. Our research suggests that there has been improved cooperation, and collaboration amongst IAs, especially at the policy/strategy level, and/or early in project planning. However, data suggests that there are few formal mechanisms to support such cooperation. As the GEF moves towards a programme approach, actions must be taken to improve mechanisms for strengthening national capacity to coordinate donor input. Enhanced IA collaboration and better donor coordination in general will increase the effectiveness of the financial mechanism in meeting convention objectives. What is needed are more common and harmonized approaches to key topics such as incremental costs, co-financing, and aspects of the project cycle, such as approval, stakeholder participation and monitoring and evaluation. Differing interpretations of these have confused both Operational focal points and project proponents. The review team recommends that **the CoP:**

- **instruct the GEF Secretariat to put more emphasis on the development of a more harmonized system of reporting and communication among GEF IAs (and government) to allow for more effective project implementation, coordination and exchange of lessons learned.**
- **support efforts of the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to help develop the national government capacity for donor coordination in the field of biodiversity.**

Synergies across conventions

Synergies across conventions can raise overall effectiveness in addressing biodiversity concerns. This was recognized by the CBD. The GEF also recognizes this issue and supports multi OP projects, although these are still considered to be in their early days. The review team recommends that **the CoP:**

- **instruct the CBD Secretariat to continue to act in favour of collaboration with other Global Convention Secretariats.**
- **recognize and continue to support the efforts of the GEF in promoting multi OP projects in order to increase potential synergies between conventions.**

3.4 Efficiency

GEF Flexibility in Applying Operational Strategy and Procedures

Our research results point generally to adequate flexibility of the GEF in applying its Operational Strategy. This is evidenced through its ability to initiate new initiatives, such as the taxonomy and invasive species programmes. New operational programmes such as the agro-biodiversity and integrated ecosystem management also demonstrate flexibility. Examples of such flexibility and room for innovation were also found in the field. In relation specifically to procedures, the Review found that the GEF has taken stock of the challenges related to the incremental cost concept and how it can impede both efficiency and access

to the financial mechanism. The GEF Secretariat is working on a simplified version of the incremental cost principle. Efforts in this direction should continue to enhance overall efficiency. The review team recommends that **the CoP supports the efforts of the GEF Secretariat in simplifying the application of the incremental cost principle and urge it to adopt a procedure that would allow for more transparent and straightforward negotiations with developing country parties.**

Streamlining the Project Cycle

A broader efficiency issue, as signalled by the CoP, relates to the streamlining of the GEF project cycle to simplify it, reduce participants' transaction costs (time and resources), and increase transparency. This was a concern of central importance to respondents and reform of the project cycle remains a "work in progress". Although some GEF data suggests that project procedures have improved, when it comes to the "timeliness" of project approval, the evidence suggests a significant challenge. The review identified two key reasons for delay in project preparation and approval:

- *At the GEF and IA level:* lack of clarity among some project proponents and stakeholders, including some Operational Focal Points, on the relative roles of GEF Secretariat, IA headquarters and IA field offices in design and approval of projects; concerns about the number of specialists who must review proposals at the headquarters offices of some IAs and at the GEF; IAs need to respond to new GEF formats and requirements for proposals; and diverse interpretations of GEF requirements among IAs, complicating participants' work.
- *At the country level:* frequent lack of communication within and among government agencies, IAs, NGOs and other core participants; some overly ambitious projects with too many goals and activities (takes too much design and planning work); and, technical and administrative weakness of many Operational Focal Points, as well as lack of continuity of staff over time.

Recognizing that this is an area of difficulty for the GEF and IAs, the review team recommends that **the CoP:**

- **instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to take onboard or scale up their efforts to achieve more efficient project management generally, through continued efforts to reduce approval time, simplify procedures, and reduce delays in disbursement.**
- **Instruct the GEF Secretariat to continue efforts to improve guidelines for fund management to allow for longer term, more adaptive and flexible support but also promote more accountability and transparency at the national level.**

Medium size projects

As the MSPs remain one of the primary mechanisms through which the GEF can begin to simplify and streamline project approval and disbursements, enhanced efforts to improve MSP processes are necessary. It is important to note the positive contribution made by MSPs in achieving the objectives of the CBD. This mechanism provides an excellent opportunity to involve a broader array of local NGOs and the private sector and steps should be taken to ensure that this occurs. The review team recommends that **the CoP instructs the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to further simplify the IA – GEF approval, disbursement and reporting procedures for MSPs in particular, with a view to increase potential for smaller NGOs, the private sector and other NGOs with less BD experience to be involved in the GEF.**

Use of international consultants

There was general agreement that although often necessary and quite effective, the use of international consultants can often prove not to be cost effective, unless they are teamed up with regional or local consultants for specific purposes. Often, the preparation of projects requires the use of such consultants; the use of international consultants can be efficient if using them allows developing countries to meet other goals, like the transfer of capacity. In some cases national or regional capacity does not

exist, and in those cases, the use of international experts through twinning arrangement with local resources that have good knowledge of the local context can be part of an effective approach. It is suggested that the GEF make better use of the STAP roster of expertise, and enhance the link between STAP and SBSTTA. The review team recommends that **the CoP:**

- **encourage the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to favor twinning arrangements between local and international resources in cases where local capacity is restrained, with a longer-term view to fostering capacity transfer;**
- **instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to make more and better use of the STAP roster, and find ways to enhance the links between STAP and SBSTTA.**

Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

The GEF Secretariat has made efforts towards developing a framework to monitor its activities and has ensured competent staff. Notable progress is found at the level of monitoring the overall performance of the GEF. The difficulty arises in monitoring of results and impacts of GEF work. Our research suggests that project monitoring and evaluation has tended to emphasize inputs and outputs, with less focus on results and impacts. There is a need for M&E of GEF BD activities at the IA level to evolve so that results and impacts become more central elements of reporting. Monitoring of capacity development results also has to be improved. In addition, more attention is needed to identify specific capacity development needs, as well as intended results and qualitative impacts. The review team recommends that **the CoP recognize the progress made by the GEF, and instruct the financial mechanism to pursue overall improvement and harmonization for its system of M&E (GEF Secretariat and IAs). Project level M&E should be focused on impacts and results, in addition to inputs and outputs, and must include the use of appropriate baseline and indicators.**

GEF Support of Enabling Activities and National Biodiversity Strategies

This review found that the GEF has generally been instrumental in supporting processes for diagnosis, common understanding and planning for biodiversity conservation, in particular through support for NBSAPs. Our research suggests that there has been some flexibility in the GEF guidelines for enabling activities, yet the need for increased responsiveness to country needs has emerged as a crucial matter for developing countries. In particular, respondents would like to see greater provision for capacity development to support enabling activities. There is a need for greater follow-up and proper integration of the fruits of enabling activities through the implementation of NBSAPs. The review team recommends that: **the CoP recognize the significant progress made by the GEF in this area, and:**

- **further instruct the financial mechanisms to promote more effective follow-up to biodiversity plans, for example, by ensuring that national strategies identify implementation activities, timelines and responsible parties, and that stakeholder participation in plan preparation continue during implementation.**
- **further instruct the financial mechanism to consider extending funding for enabling activities into the early implementation phase of NBSAPs, if strategies include a detailed action plan, with defined participants, to provide bridge funding to take advantage of the momentum created during plan preparation and reduce time lags. This should not, however, supercede the need for longer-term implementation support from the financial mechanism.**
- **further instruct the GEF Secretariat to ensure that all GEF proposals continue to demonstrate how projects will respond to national biodiversity strategies as well as CBD objectives.**
- **further instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to continue to promote support for needs assessment and capacity development in support of implementation of the Convention, through the enabling activities mechanism.**

3.5 Impact

The difficulty in measuring progress in the areas of actual impact on biodiversity is linked to the fact that many BD projects do not collect baseline data on pre-project conditions, do not set impact-related objectives and indicators, and do not collect information on project impacts in the field.

Impacts of GEF Activities on Biodiversity:

Our review found that positive impacts of BD projects were mostly in the following areas: choosing national priorities for BD conservation and sustainable use; developing national strategies and action plans; establishing legal frameworks and policies; establishing protected areas and conservation zones; establishing BD monitoring systems; building national capacity, especially among NGOs, and, improving conservation in specific zones of high priority such as forests and coastal zones. While it is premature to judge impacts on global biodiversity, the GEF has produced a broad range of results with significant positive impacts and laid the groundwork for even more substantial results. Future actions should build on lessons learned. Evidence suggests that the most effective and efficient projects are strategically focused on basic building blocks for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, avoiding overly broad and ambitious goals and complex design. This includes use of pilot projects/activities demonstration projects, and models that can be replicated once they are proven to work. It also includes projects, which are designed to be adaptive over time. The review team recommends that **the CoP instruct the GEF Secretariat to:**

- **ensure that lessons learned from successful past projects (as well as less successful ones) are disseminated as models for use by others.**
- **encourage projects which focus on basic building blocks, such as institutional and legal frameworks; plans and strategies; capacity development for key players; and practical field activities.**

Impacts on Mainstreaming Biodiversity

There is widespread concern that relatively few BD projects are being mainstreamed into sectoral and national policies, plans and activities. IAs are attempting to mainstream GEF and BD concerns into their own sectoral strategies, albeit with mixed results, according to our research. IA country dialogues, involving national sectoral ministries, can be an effective tool for integrating BD into other sectors and national development. Our review concludes that there has been considerable attention within the GEF portfolio to Protected Areas (PAs), with much less focus on BD conservation outside of PAs, sustainable use, and benefit-sharing/access to genetic resources. This is understandable during the first years of the GEF, as threatened national protected areas and a lack of government interest in – and resources for – PAs needed a response. Yet, while BD conservation tends to have a limited, dedicated constituency, sustainable use and benefit sharing offer the potential to bring BD issues into the mainstream of socio-economic life. These issues can be better addressed by reaching out to a broad set of project participants, who might bring new perspectives and skills. It may also be helpful to position GEF BD projects within an overarching sustainable development framework to facilitate cross-ministry and cross-sectoral integration of BD.

The review team recommends that **the CoP instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to:**

- **communicate more strongly to government authorities that the GEF supports biodiversity outside Protected Areas and provide more support to projects promoting the second two CBD objectives, sustainable use and benefit sharing of biodiversity products and services.**
- **root projects more strongly in a sustainable development context and, at the same time, develop and promote practical methods and concrete case studies of how to mainstream BD into sectoral and national policies, plans and activities.**

Impacts on capacity development

The GEF's most impressive results to date have been in capacity development. This faithfully reflects the CoP Guidance calling for capacity development on numerous topics, including: national

biodiversity planning; developing local capacities and increasing availability of local expertise; integrating local traditional/indigenous knowledge; access and benefit-sharing; global taxonomy initiative; coastal and marine resources; agricultural biodiversity; inland water ecosystems; forest biodiversity arid and semi-arid ecosystems, and; alien and invasive species. GEF projects have been most successful in the following areas of capacity development: Raising awareness of government agencies and local people about BD conservation; Disseminating knowledge concerning BD conservation; Building individual capacities in BD conservation and sustainable use; Improving co-ordination of BD conservation activities; Enhancing stakeholder participation in planning and implementing BD activities, and; Establishing Trust Funds for funding BD activities. The review team recommends that: **the CoP:**

- **Instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to support the systems approach to capacity development, as promoted through the CDI initiative and the mainstreaming of capacity development support within the GEF portfolio, supporting a wider scope of capacity development areas and recipients, at all levels.**
- **instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to support projects that build capacities for effective, participatory monitoring and evaluation into management systems, especially at the local level, to ensure adequate monitoring of biodiversity impacts.**
- **instruct the financial mechanism to put greater emphasis on the incorporating and integrating of local traditional and indigenous knowledge into BD projects.**
- **encourage the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to promote the effective involvement (not just consultation) of a whole new set of players in new kinds of projects in order to achieve the necessary results in sustainable use and benefit sharing.**

3.6 Sustainability

There was broad agreement among our diverse respondents about how to best ensure sustainability of GEF project results. Four interrelated factors stand out: participation and partnerships, sustained capacity development, national ownership and political commitment, and financial sustainability. Additional factors include: ensuring the appropriate length of time for GEF projects; enhanced Implementing Agency coordination, cooperation and harmonization of policies and procedures; and mainstreaming of biodiversity into national policies and plans. As noted earlier, ownership by key stakeholders (government and civil society), and capacity development for project participants, are also essential. Consultation is not enough; genuine participation is the best way to promote ownership, and hence, sustainable outcomes. Finally, long-term financial sustainability of activities is a crucial and somewhat neglected factor, despite some efforts in this regard.

Challenges in Achieving Sustainability

Several challenges were identified for the GEF in achieving sustainable outcomes, as follows: lack of national and local capacity; lack of ownership; inability to ensure financial sustainability; inability to generate BD-friendly, sustainable livelihoods; failure to mainstream BD into other resource sectors and economic development; insufficient adaptation to local circumstances – including the need to address poverty, promote support by local populations and minimise external controls; the need for better monitoring and evaluation of results, linked to goals and objectives (as outlined above); and the emphasis on global benefits, leading to projects which pay little attention to local benefits, though these are often accurately identified by local stakeholders. Finally, the GEF Secretariat has made great progress in developing its guidelines on stakeholder involvement, and these are increasingly being implemented by the IAs at the project level. Yet, in many cases, there has been extensive stakeholder *consultation*, but not enough genuine and widespread *participation* (direct involvement) to ensure the long-term buy-in needed for sustainability.

Are GEF Projects Sustainable?

Results regarding sustainability of GEF BD activities are diverse, with notable positive and negative experiences. Evidence suggests that although many GEF projects have achieved a measure of sustainable success, sustainability needs to remain a paramount focus of the GEF and its activities and more efforts

are needed. **The CoP should recommend to the GEF that all four main areas of importance for sustainability of GEF objectives, namely: Participation, Capacity Development, Ownership/Commitment, and Financial Sustainability, be properly addressed in all cases, in order for chances for sustainability to be enhanced overall.**

The time factor

While all parties agree that BD projects and programmes, which are addressing long-term goals, need adequate time to achieve sustainable results, this review found that GEF projects time frames are often too short to do so. Projects should be less “time bound” and consider options such as adaptive project design (being used by the World Bank in other programmes); flexible, indicative budgets; and dynamic, responsive work planning to address emerging issues and changing circumstances. Key concerns included insufficient time to ensure financial sustainability and to carry out effective capacity development. The review team recommends that: **the CoP instruct the financial mechanism to be more flexible in adopting appropriate and feasible timeframes for projects to achieve sustainable results; in most cases, that will mean extending the current GEF project life span.**

Learning from experience and ensuring use of effective approaches

Also related to sustainability, there is a need for more effective ways to share and integrate lessons learned and to find ways to replicate and adapt the most effective approaches to BD conservation and management. The review team recommends that **the CoP instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to seek out and support adaptable and replicable approaches for projects, including, for example, creating/supporting “pools of expertise”, which could be critical in Small Island Developing States where there often is a shortage of qualified manpower.**

Promoting National and Local Ownership of Biodiversity

As noted earlier, better national and local ownership of biodiversity projects at national and local levels can be gained through: greater involvement of all stakeholders; stronger political support for biodiversity initiatives; and mainstreaming of biodiversity into national policies and plans. The GEF’s success in promoting long-term national buy-in for the biodiversity convention agenda has been uneven. The review team recommends that: **the CoP instructs the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to continue to work on the development of effective incentives to encourage national and local authorities and local communities to undertake biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. These can be tailored to national and local conditions.**

Enhanced Participation for Sustainability

GEF policies on public involvement have stimulated participation more successfully with communities and local organizations and less effectively with the private sector and NGOs and community groups outside the conservation community. . More needs to be done generally in order to reap the full benefit of participants’ contributions or to build a sense of ownership among these participants. The review team recommends that **the CoP instruct:**

- **the GEF Secretariat to review existing Stakeholder Guidelines and procedures with a view to broadening GEF’s outreach to a range of stakeholders, such as private sector associations and businesses; indigenous, poverty, women’s, labour organizations; and local NGOs. (This does not mean participation for its own sake, but rather strategic, targeted involvement by stakeholders who can help to implement the project and sustain results.)**
- **the GEF and its IAs to place more emphasis on appropriate private sector involvement, while adhering to country driven-ness as the guiding principle. Sample approaches include conservation in production landscapes, marketing of biodiversity products, economic instruments, and projects in ecotourism and agroforestry. (These should only be applied where appropriate to the specific context).**

Capacity Development for Sustainability and Mainstreaming of Biodiversity

Capacity development and mainstreaming of BD are essential to sustainability of project results. From this perspective, the recommendations on these two topics in the previous section have to be reiterated.

4 LISTING OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REVIEW

All the main recommendations contained in the text of the summary report are regrouped together below to facilitate consultation and discussion.

4.1 Recommendations addressed to the Conference of the Parties regarding its own performance

- a) The CoP should investigate the appropriateness of broadening the consultations between the CBD Secretariat, the GEF Secretariat, and some key developed and developing countries representatives prior to each CoP. This could also serve as a mechanism to increase discussion and interpretation of CoP Guidance

4.2 Recommendations addressed to the Conference of the Parties for further actions to improve the effectiveness of the financial mechanisms

4.2.1 Overall recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the financial mechanism

The CoP should:

- a) support the GEF efforts to move towards a programmatic approach in support of the thematic longer-term programme of the CBD and encourage it to develop appropriate instruments and capacities to bring this approach to maturity.
- b) instruct the GEF Secretariat to require that all GEF proposals continue to demonstrate how projects will respond to national biodiversity strategies as well as CBD objectives.
- c) instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to continue to promote support for needs assessment and capacity development in support of implementation of the Convention, through the enabling activities mechanism.
- d) while recognizing the significant progress made by the GEF in this area, further instruct the Secretariat of the financial mechanism to promote more effective follow-up to biodiversity plans, for example, by ensuring that national strategies identify implementation activities, timelines and responsible parties, and that stakeholder participation in plan preparation continue during implementation.
- e) while recognizing the significant progress made by the GEF in this area, further instruct the financial mechanism to consider extending funding for enabling activities into the early implementation phase of NBSAPs, if strategies include a detailed action plan, with defined participants, to provide bridge funding to take advantage of the momentum created during plan preparation and reduce time lags. This should not, however, supercede the need for longer-term implementation support from the financial mechanism.

- f) in view of the tremendous biodiversity conservation needs, recommend to the GEF to continue to further and build its role as a catalyst and lever of additional funding.
- g) support efforts of the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to help develop the national government capacity for donor coordination in the field of biodiversity.
- h) recognize and continue to support the efforts of the GEF in promoting multi OP projects in order to increase potential synergies between conventions.
- i) instruct the GEF Secretariat to encourage projects which focus on basic building blocks, such as institutional and legal frameworks; plans and strategies; capacity development for key players; and practical field activities.
- j) instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to root projects more strongly in a sustainable development context and, at the same time, develop and promote practical methods and concrete case studies of how to mainstream BD into sectoral and national policies, plans and activities.
- k) recommend to the GEF that all four main areas of importance for sustainability of GEF objectives, namely: Participation, Capacity Development, Ownership/ Commitment, and Financial Sustainability, be properly addressed in all cases, in order for chances for sustainability to be enhanced overall.
- l) instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to support the systems approach to capacity development, as promoted through the CDI initiative and the mainstreaming of capacity development support within the GEF portfolio, supporting a wider scope of capacity development areas and recipients, at all levels.
- m) instruct the GEF to put greater emphasis on the incorporating and integrating of local traditional and indigenous knowledge into BD projects.
- n) encourage the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to promote the effective involvement (not just consultation) of a whole new set of players in new kinds of projects in order to achieve the necessary results in sustainable use and benefit sharing.
- o) instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to place more emphasis on appropriate private sector involvement, while adhering to country driven-ness as the guiding principle. Sample approaches include conservation in production landscapes, marketing of biodiversity products, economic instruments, and projects in eco-tourism and agro forestry. (These should only be applied where appropriate to the specific context).
- p) instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to continue to work on the development of effective incentives to encourage national and local authorities and local communities to undertake biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. These can be tailored to national and local conditions.
- q) instruct the GEF to be more flexible in adopting appropriate and feasible timeframes for projects to achieve sustainable results; in most cases, that will mean extending the current GEF project life span.
- r) request an increase in funding levels for implementation of the CBD through the GEF.

4.2.2 Recommendations related specifically to GEF operations

The CoP should:

- a) instruct the GEF Secretariat to review existing Stakeholder Guidelines and procedures with a view to broadening GEF's outreach to a range of stakeholders, such as private sector associations and

businesses; indigenous, poverty, women's, labour organizations; and local NGOs. (This does not mean participation for its own sake, but rather strategic, targeted involvement by stakeholders who can help to implement the project and sustain results.)

- b) instruct the GEF Secretariat to put more emphasis on the development of a more harmonized system of reporting and communication among GEF IAs (and government) to allow for more effective project implementation, co ordination and exchange of lessons learned.
- c) support the efforts of the GEF Secretariat in simplifying the application of the incremental cost principle and urge it to adopt a procedure that would allow for more transparent and straightforward negotiations with developing country parties.
- d) instruct the GEF Secretariat to continue efforts to improve guidelines for fund management to allow for longer term, more adaptive and flexible support but also promote more accountability and transparency at the national level.
- e) instruct the GEF Secretariat to continue to ensure that lessons learned from successful past projects (as well as less successful ones) are disseminated as models for use by others.

4.2.3 Recommendations related to the GEF and Implementing Agency (IA) operations

The CoP should:

- a) encourage the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to sustain its efforts to enhance communication with developing country stakeholders, with an increasing role and a broadened audience for Country Dialogue Workshops, which can enhance cooperation among all parties at the country level.
- b) instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to better communicate the GEF programmes, directions, priorities and current opportunities at the country level. This could include communicating them in the native language, to all interested parties.
- c) instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to place greater emphasis on ensuring that the criteria for project success identified in this report are explicitly addressed early in the design and planning stages of GEF projects, and are monitored throughout implementation, with adjustments as required.
- d) instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to put more emphasis on sound project design, and planning, including better situation analysis of factors which will affect project success, stronger needs assessment for capacity development, and more realistic goal-setting.
- e) while recognizing the progress made by the GEF, instruct the financial mechanism to pursue overall improvement and harmonization for its system of M&E (GEF Secretariat and IAs). Project level M&E should be focused on impacts and results, in addition to inputs and outputs, and must include the use of appropriate baselines and indicators.
- f) instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to support projects that build capacities for effective, participatory monitoring and evaluation into management systems, especially at the local level, to ensure adequate monitoring of biodiversity impacts.
- g) instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to take onboard or scale up its efforts to achieve more efficient project management generally, through continued efforts to reduce approval time, simplify procedures, and reduce delays in disbursement.

- h) instructs the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to further simplify the IA – GEF approval, disbursement and reporting procedures for MSPs in particular with a view to increase potential for smaller NGOs, the private sector and other NGOs with less BD experience to be involved in the GEF.
- i) instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to seek out and support adaptable and replicable approaches for projects, including, for example, creating/supporting “pools of expertise”, which could be critical in small island developing states where there often is a shortage of qualified manpower.
- j) instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to communicate more strongly to government authorities that GEF supports biodiversity outside Protected Areas and provide more support to projects promoting the second two CBD objectives, sustainable use and benefit-sharing of biodiversity products and services.
- k) encourage the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to favor twinning arrangements between local and international resources in cases where local capacity is restrained, with a longer-term view to fostering capacity transfer;
- l) instruct the GEF Secretariat and its IAs to make more and better use of the STAP roster, and find ways to enhance the links between STAP and SBSTTA.

4.3 Recommendations addressed to the GEF and the Parties

The CoP should recommend to the GEF and its developing country Parties to:

- a) ensure that all possible steps for enhancing political and civil society commitment and having BD projects be country-driven are taken, and steps already being taken on this front are continued and improved. This can include having stakeholders demonstrate and clearly articulate commitment early in the process, and broadening the scope of which groups to seek commitment from in society.

4.4 Recommendations addressed to the GEF and the Convention Secretariat

The CoP should:

- a) instruct the CBD Secretariat to search for ways to compile and present CoP Guidance in a simpler, more coherent format, which can be more easily understood, operationalized, monitored and evaluated. This could involve instructing the CBD Secretariat to further refine the Strategic Plan in development and encourage the introduction of targets, and possible timelines in relation to the Guidance.
- b) instruct the CBD Secretariat to communicate the results of this rationalization effort to the GEF so that it can adjust and better focus its Operational Strategy accordingly.
- c) instruct the CBD Secretariat to continue to act in favour of collaboration with other Global Convention Secretariats.
- d) instruct the GEF and the CBD Secretariats to undertake further efforts to clearly communicate to all stakeholders what is eligible or not for funding, based on the CoP guidance and the GEF Operational Strategy. There is also a need to enhance understanding of CoP Guidance at all levels.