



15th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
(9 May - 20 May 2016)

Item 4 - Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

General Assembly Hall

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Chairperson, Members of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), colleagues and friends:

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) would like to express its appreciation for the opportunity to contribute to the Forum's discussion of Agenda Item 4, Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous Peoples' livelihoods, traditional knowledge and ecosystem management practices are recognized by the GEF as highly relevant to our mission. The Global Environment Facility was established as an independent financial mechanism to provide resources to developing countries and countries with economies in transition for projects that benefit the global environment and promote sustainable development. The GEF unites 183 countries—in partnership with international institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), the private sector, Indigenous Peoples and local communities—to address global environmental issues in the areas of biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and chemicals and waste.

Indigenous Peoples have a long history of engagement and partnering with GEF-funded projects. The GEF recognizes the importance of strengthening the existing engagement with Indigenous Peoples to effectively contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals and implementation of the Paris Agreement.

GEF's work is guided by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). We have a number of policies and guidelines in place to ensure that GEF operations fully respect the dignity, human rights, economies, cultures and traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, and the realization of the UN Declaration's provisions. Several years ago, in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, the GEF formally incorporated the UN Declaration, and our support for the realization of the provisions articulated in the Declaration, into the GEF's document on *Principles and Guidelines for Engagement of Indigenous Peoples*. We are pleased that all GEF

Agencies and their partners who implement GEF projects have this as a guide for project management.

Since the development of the *Principles and Guidelines*, the GEF, with support from its Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG), has undertaken several initiatives to expand and enhance its implementation of the provisions outlined in the UN Declaration. First among these initiatives is a targeted and collaborative effort to support increased funding and capacity development of Indigenous Peoples through GEF projects. For the past 2 years the GEF's IPAG has reviewed different modalities to expand financing to Indigenous Peoples to implement environmental projects. One outcome from these dialogues is the expansion of the GEF's funding support for Indigenous Peoples within the GEF Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP). The GEF SGP has also created an Indigenous Peoples Fellowship Programme that will provide needed capacity development for Indigenous Peoples in policy and project management at global and national levels.

The second initiative we would like to highlight is our work to enhance awareness and access by Indigenous Peoples on the various GEF funding modalities currently available to them. In addition to various outreach activities, the GEF has published a *User Guide for Indigenous Peoples on GEF Project Financing*. This User Guide, which will be launched this week, includes detailed guidance on the types of projects that the GEF supports, as well as the processes for Indigenous Peoples to apply for these financing opportunities.

Third, the GEF has strengthened monitoring and knowledge sharing related to the inclusion and engagement of Indigenous Peoples in its projects, particularly indigenous women and gender issues. The GEF has also disseminated information through publications and events on successful approaches and tools that have been applied to the GEF's sustainable forest management, biodiversity, climate change, and other projects actively involving Indigenous Peoples. Project templates have also been adjusted along with proper indicators to consistently track projects involving Indigenous Peoples. To GEF's recent annual monitoring exercise shows that an average of approximately 20 percent of GEF projects involve Indigenous Peoples.

The GEF would like to thank all the Indigenous Peoples who have participated in our meetings and consultations, informal dialogue, and especially the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG), who have dedicated considerable time to the GEF in enhancing our work with Indigenous Peoples. The GEF continues to seek new and creative ways to enhance and expand our partnerships with Indigenous Peoples. We welcome continued dialogue and feedback from all partners.

Thank you for your attention.