



14th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
(20 April - 1 May 2015)

Item 6 - Comprehensive dialogue with United Nations agencies and funds on the post-2015
development agenda

23 April 2015 (10:00am - 1:00pm)

General Assembly Hall

Yoko Watanabe
Program Manager,
GEF Indigenous Peoples Focal Point
The Global Environment Facility
Washington, D.C.

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 participate in the UNPFII, and congratulates the members of the UNPFII on its many accomplishments.

As many of you know, the Global Environment Facility was established in 1991 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.

As financial mechanism of many Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UN Convention to Combat Desertification, Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, and Minamata Convention on Mercury, the GEF has been working closely with the Conventions' Secretariats and Conference of the Parties in addressing issues related to indigenous peoples based on their guidance.

The GEF believes in the strategic importance of partnering with indigenous peoples. As the global community is discussing the post-2015 development agenda, the GEF will continue to support sustainable development through conserving the global environment through integrated, innovative, and scalable initiatives. We have engaged with indigenous peoples in many of these projects. Inclusive, durable, and sustainable development benefits from the full involvement of indigenous peoples.

The 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 our operations fully respect the dignity, human rights, economies, cultures and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and their members. Since 1996, the GEF has had an independent policy supporting the effective involvement of civil society, including provisions for indigenous peoples and local communities, entitled the *Public Involvement in GEF-financed Projects*. This policy provides the basis for participation of indigenous peoples in all aspects of the GEF's work. The GEF has also recently adopted a set of guidelines to facilitate implementation and achievement of the principles of the Public Involvement Policy.¹

The GEF also has a set of Environmental and Social Safeguard Standards² that must be adhered to by all GEF projects. These standards include a designated standard, Safeguard 4, for Indigenous Peoples. And in 2013, the GEF adopted a specific set of Principles and Guidelines

¹ Guidelines for the Implementation of the Public Involvement Policy, GEF/C.46/Inf.06

² GEF Policies on Environmental and Social Safeguard Standards, GEF/C.40/10/Rev.1

on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples³ that consolidates and elaborates new guidelines to apply GEF indigenous peoples-related policies in GEF projects and operations. To implement the guideline, the GEF also established the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG) in 2013. IPAG is composed of a small group of self-selected indigenous peoples from across the globe, a GEF Agencies' representative, and an expert. Together, this group is providing advice and helping the GEF enhance its monitoring and evaluation processes, program strategies, alignment with the UNDRIP, financing approach, among other things.

Moreover, in order to reach out to the indigenous peoples and larger CSO communities, the GEF has prepared a publication on, *The A to Z of the GEF: A Guide to the Global Environment Facility for Civil Society Organizations*⁴, which provides guidance on how to access GEF project funding.

I would like to note that the GEF has also worked to better understand how it is performing internally with respect to the inclusion of indigenous peoples in its work. In 2005, the GEF conducted its first analysis of projects involving indigenous peoples to determine geographic coverage, level and types of indigenous peoples' participation, among other things. The GEF has continued to assess this data over time with its annual monitoring reviews of project portfolio and other systems. In 2014, the GEF updated the analysis to allow us to continue to monitor and support expanded opportunities for indigenous peoples' engagement in the GEF programs and projects. A copy of this updated publication, *Partnership in Practice: Engagement with Indigenous Peoples*⁵ is available at this Forum and at our side event.

To summarize, as of April 2014, the GEF has supported over 220 projects worldwide that involved indigenous peoples. Of those, about 70% were full-sized projects, while the remaining were medium-sized projects. The area of biodiversity conservation continues to dominate among projects with indigenous peoples (71%, or 159 projects). However, in recent years, indigenous peoples have been increasingly involved in many other GEF focal area projects, such as climate change adaptation and sustainable forest management. Outcomes from these projects include improving indigenous peoples-related policies; enhancing co-management of protected areas; sustainable and integrated natural resource management; and strengthening institutions, capacity and skills, and knowledge development.

I would like to also highlight the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP), a GEF funding mechanism managed by the United Nations Development Programme, which has engaged closely with the indigenous groups since its inception in 1992. The GEF SGP provides financial and technical support to smaller projects that address global environmental issues with a strong local livelihood element. The GEF SGP has financed more than 1700 projects that are directly managed by the indigenous peoples, under culturally appropriate and flexible procedures. The GEF SGP recently outlined plans for an Indigenous Peoples Fellows program, and a formal target that will seek to have 15% of its projects involving indigenous peoples. The GEF SGP is also embarking on a new initiative to further support the conservation of the indigenous peoples

³ Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples, GEF/C.42/Inf.03/Rev.1

⁴ https://www.thegef.org/gef/AZ_CS0

⁵ <https://www.thegef.org/gef/node/10539>

and community conserved areas and territories with additional finance from the German government.

The GEF has a long history of working with indigenous peoples through its projects and promotes a culture of partnership with indigenous peoples. The GEF continues to seek new and creative ways to enhance and expand our partnerships with indigenous peoples. We also seek to learn from our work and evolve to better conserve global environment on which we all depend on. We welcome continued dialogue and feedback from all partners.

Thank you for your attention.