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REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF GEF-8 COUNTRY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Overview

1. At its 63rd Session in November 2022, the GEF Council approved the new GEF-8 Country Engagement Strategy (CES) Implementation Arrangements for GEF 8. As indicated in the Country Engagement Strategy approved for GEF 8, the CES provides the strategic framework to deliver an expanded and coordinated approach to the GEF’s effort to empower countries in the ownership of their portfolios, and in turn, maximize the impact of GEF resources through a coordinated approach. The CES builds on nearly three decades of dedicated country engagements and includes several dedicated funding initiatives to deliver this objective . . . [see below]

2. This document provides information on the implementation of the CES, including details of how financial resources are being utilized.¹

Implementation of CES – Fiscal Year FY23

3. Following the Decision of Council to approve the CES Implementation arrangements, the Secretariat, together with the Trustee, updated the relevant budget line items to align with and support the CES. This was completed in early 2023 and the categories are listed in the Table below. The Table below summarizes funding for CES implementation during FY23 and the first half of FY24 (as of December 2023). The Table also reports on additional unused funds from the CSP, due mainly to restrictions of the pandemic. The text which follows summarizes the activities supported during the reporting period by each of these budget line items.

Implementation of new GEF Country Engagement Strategy as of December 2023 (in US\$ millions)				
Fund	GEF-8 Amount approved by Council	Amount disbursed in FY23	Commitment/ disbursed (FY24 to date)	Available balance
Country Engagement Strategy - Part I (Totals)	27.000	3.636	2.625	20.739
Upstream Technical and National Dialogues	2.100	0.961	0.197	0.942
Constituency Workshops**	11.736	2.500	0.593	8.643
Intro Seminars**	0.264	0.029	0.000	0.235
Constituency Meetings	4.000	0.143	1.785	2.072
Building Execution Capacity of Stakeholders	1.100	0.000	0.050	1.050
Financial Support to GEF Operational Focal Points	5.800	0.000	0.000	5.800
Knowledge Exchange/Learning	2.000	0.002	0.000	1.998
Country Engagement Strategy - Part II (Totals)	13.200	0.305	0.106	12.788
Gustavo Fund	10.000	0.000	0.041	9.959
Site Visits for Council Members	1.200	0.252	0.000	0.948
Support to Attend COPs & Related Meetings	2.000	0.053	0.066	1.881

- **Upstream Technical and National Dialogues**

¹ See Highlights of 63rd Session of GEF Council, linked [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2023-03/HIGHLIGHTS_63%20Council.pdf]

4. These initiatives aim to provide technical and strategic support to GEF stakeholders and recipient countries with the objective to establish a common understanding of the GEF-8 Strategies and commitment to delivering Global Environmental Benefits.

5. In FY23, \$961,000 was used to fund and support these upstream technical and national dialogues. In the first half of FY24, an additional amount of \$197,000 was used for these purposes (see Annex 1). This supported activities in 20 countries spanning all GEF regions.

- **Constituency Workshops and GEF-8 Regional Roll-Out Workshops**

6. This includes Expanded Constituency Workshops (ECWs), Stakeholder Empowerment Series (SEs) events and Thematic Workshops. The purpose of the workshops is to provide training and knowledge exchange of GEF business to the major stakeholders of the GEF partnership. In the period covered by this report, this outreach has included the very important GEF-8 Roll-out Regional Workshops and many ECWs as seen in Annex 1.

7. During FY23 the amount of \$2.5 million was used to fund and support these workshops and activities. In the first half of FY24, an additional amount of \$593,000 was used for these purposes (see Annex 1). This supported activities in all regions, and a large number of GEF-8 Regional Roll-Out Workshops that were critical in ensuring that all countries and regions were aware of the major priorities and opportunities associated with the GEF-8 Strategies. This has been directly responsible for the success and interest of countries to participate in the GEF-8 Integrated Programs.

- **Introduction Seminars**

8. These provide training and relevant information for an enhanced understanding of the GEF, its policies and operations to new Agency staff, Operational Focal Points, selected stakeholders as well as new Convention Secretariat staff. The Secretariat normally organizes two virtual Introduction Seminars a year.

9. During FY23 the amount of \$29,000 was used to fund and support these Seminars mainly for interpretation services. In the first half of FY24, no funds have yet been disbursed.

- **Constituency Meetings**

10. These meetings continue to be the main tool for Council Members and Alternates within a constituency to prepare for decision making at the GEF Council. Each constituency may request two meetings per calendar year, to be held before the Council meetings. The Secretariat will organize up to two annual in-person Constituency Meetings, at the request of Council Members. Virtual Constituency Meetings can also be organized, in case a constituency requests additional meetings to discuss specific issues of interest.

11. During FY23 the amount of \$143,000 was used to fund and support these workshops and activities. In the first half of FY24, an amount of \$1.785 million was used for these purposes. This

supported a total of 12 constituency meetings including in conjunction with the 7th GEF Assembly in Vancouver, as has been done in the past, while also enabling a higher and more diverse participation in the Assembly (see Annex 1).

- **Building the execution capacity of stakeholders**

12. This includes support to National Executing Agencies to improve GEF portfolio results, enhance portfolio management and promote South-South twinning exchanges and peer-to-peer learning; and Civil Society Organizations to build their capacity to partner in GEF projects through the transfer of knowledge, experiences and lessons from CSOs which have gained experience in the execution of GEF projects.

- In the first half of FY24, an amount of \$50,000 was used to support an initiative to bring together leaders from legislatures at an ICCF Parliamentary Conference on 23-25 October in Washington, D.C., with an aim to enhancing national capacity for policy coherence at the domestic level, in alignment with the GEF's objectives to enhance policy coherence through GEF operations as discussed at the 65th Council.² The insights from country experiences in aligning policies and frameworks and coherent policies, the main challenges, and the lessons learnt, will support the advancement of this critical agenda. **Financial Support to GEF Operational Focal Points**

13. This initiative aims to enable GEF OFPs to effectively oversee and monitor their GEF portfolio. Access to these dedicated funds is optional and flexible.

14. No funds have yet been disbursed for this initiative. Planning for rolling out this support to OFP is underway and we anticipate funds to be disbursed in the next reporting period.

- **Knowledge Exchange and Learning**

15. This funding line is dedicated to support implementation of the GEF Knowledge and Learning Strategy approved by GEF Council at its 65th Session in October 2023, with the aim to enhance knowledge capture, exchange and learning amongst all GEF Partners and Stakeholders, including recipient countries.

16. The Strategy has just been approved and no funds have yet been disbursed for this initiative. An implementation plan is currently be prepared to guide specific tasks to be undertaken for each of the action areas starting in the second half of FY24. During FY23, an amount of \$1,633 was used from this pre-existing fund to support the earlier GEF Country Support Program for interpretation services, and there was a commitment of \$65,000 to support GEF's investment in geo-location and mapping of project information to improve sharing of knowledge and information about GEF's project portfolio.

- **The Gustavo Fonseca Youth Conservation Leadership Program.**

17. This Program is focused on ensuring a pipeline of young professionals in developing countries that have access to the resources for competing their formal training, have resources to keep them active in

² GEF/C.65/04, [Enhancing Policy Coherence through GEF Operations](#), September 10, 2023

the field and remain in the conservation sector, and finally get exposed to the International Events and Fora that bridge the science-policy nexus . . .

18. During the period covered by this report, an amount of \$41,000 was used for the purposes of building the program through a geographical and thematic assessment of existing partners that can be brought in to support the implementation of the various components of the program. The full set of activities have now been identified and we are processing agreements with several partners to launch this program in the first months of 2024.

- **Site Visits for Council Members**

19. This initiative is designed to enable GEF Council Members and Alternates to benefit from a personal in-depth knowledge and understanding of activities, results, and stakeholders of GEF projects, including through field visits with participation of Developed and Developing countries' Council Members and Alternates. The visits will be organized to all types of projects and programs and showcase successes as well as challenges.

20. During the period covered by the report, an amount of \$252,000 was used under this fund to support the field trip of Council Members and Alternates to the Amazon, in conjunction with the 64th Session of Council in Brasilia in June 2023.

- **Support for Country Delegations and Stakeholders to Attend COPs and Related Meetings**

21. This funding line reflects the fact that a reduction in the support for country delegations to participate in the Conference of the Parties (COPs) to the Conventions which the GEF serves as financial mechanism has led to an increase in requests from developing countries for the GEF to provide such support, compensating for this reduction. Without the GEF's support, a number of countries will not be able to participate in the negotiations in defense of their national interests.

22. During FY23 an amount of \$53,194 was used under this fund to support participation by government officials and stakeholders in GEF-recipient countries to attend the IMPAC5 Congress on Marine Protected Areas in Vancouver, Canada in February 2023, in follow-up to the 30x30 target agreed as part of the Kunming-Montreal Convention on Biodiversity Framework adopted at COP 15 of the Convention on Biodiversity in Montreal in December 2022, and to support participation in meetings of a Subsidiary Body to the UNFCCC (June 2023). In the first four months of FY24, an additional amount of \$65,624 (as of December 2023) is being used to support participation by government officials and stakeholders to the UNFCCC COP 28 in Dubai from November 30 – December 13, 2023.

Annex 1: List of events

Region	Upstream Technical and National Dialogues	Constituency Meetings	ECW	Regional GEF-8 Roll-out meetings	Other
Africa	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tanzania (Feb 2023) 2. Mozambique (Mar 2023) 3. Togo (Apr 2023) 4. Benin (Apr 2023) 5. Ethiopia (Oct 2023) 6. Botswana (Oct 2023) 7. Eswatini (Oct 2023) 8. Lesotho (Oct 2023) 9. Uganda (with LTV) (Nov 2023) 10. Ghana (Nov 2023) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Virtual for North Africa and West Africa (June 2023) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Southern Africa ECW (Countries - Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Eswatini, Zambia, Zimbabwe) Held in Maputo, Mozambique (Mar 2023) 2. MENA ECW– Middle East and Northern Africa regions Afghanistan, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan, Syria, Yemen, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia in Amman Jordan (Sep 2023) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regional Workshop for North, West and Central Africa in Accra, Ghana (Oct 2022) 2. Regional Workshop for Eastern and Southern Africa in Kigali, Rwanda (Oct 2022) 	
Asia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mongolia (hybrid, Oct 2022) 2. Indonesia (Jan 2023) 3. Philippines (Jan 2023) 4. Thailand (Jan 2023) 5. Malaysia (May 2023) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Virtual for West Asia (Jun 2023) 2. India for South Asia (Jun 2023) 3. Virtual for Southeast Asia (Jun 2023) 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Asia regional - Virtual (Nov 2022) 2. Asia/Pacific Regional workshop in Indonesia (Jan 2023) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. China Training (virtual, Aug 2022) 2. China technical support mission (Jul 2023) 3. GEF CEO and technical delegation visit to OFF, ministers, Agencies and GEF-project site China (Oct 2023) 4. GEF CEO visit and technical delegation to OFF, ministers India (Jan 2023) 5. GEF CEO and technical delegation visit to OFF, ministers Indonesia (Jan 2023)
ECA		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In Tajikistan for Azerbaijan Kazakhstan Kyrgyz Republic, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan (May 2023) 2. Virtual for Eastern Europe (June 2023) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eastern Europe and Central Asia constituencies ECW for Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine, Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in Skopje, North Macedonia (Oct 2023) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bosnia & Herzegovina (Dec 2022) 2. Virtual (Jan 2023) 	

Region	Upstream Technical and National Dialogues	Constituency Meetings	ECW	Regional GEF-8 Roll-out meetings	Other
LAC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Nicaragua (Apr 2023) Honduras (Jul 2023) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Southern Cone (Nov 2022) Brazil, Colombia & Ecuador (Nov 2022) Southern Cone (Jun 2023) Brazil, Colombia & Ecuador (Jun 2023) Central America (Nov 2022) 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Colombia (Oct 2022) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> GEF CEO and technical delegation visit to OFF, ministers, Agencies and GEF-project site Panama (Nov 2022) Council Members visit to the Amazon (Jun 2023) GEF CEO and technical delegation visit to OFF, ministers, Agencies and GEF-project site Peru (Oct 2023)
SIDS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cook Islands (Apr 2023) Maldives (hybrid, May 2023) Timor-Leste (virtual, Oct 2023) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual for Pacific (Jun 2023) 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Caribbean & AIS SIDS – virtual (Oct 2022) Pacific SIDS - virtual (Oct 2022) Pacific SIDS - Indonesia (Jan 2023) Caribbean SIDS -virtual (Jan/Feb 2023) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> GEF CEO and technical delegation visit to OFF, ministers, Agencies and GEF-project site Maldives (Jan 2023)
Other				<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual country briefing on IP EOI process (Aug 2023) 	Introduction Seminar <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual (Feb 2023) Virtual (Nov 2023)