

## **4th GBFF Council**

**June 6, 2025**

**Washington, DC**

### **Opening of the Meeting**

#### **Introductory Remarks by**

**Carlos Manuel Rodríguez**

**GEF CEO and Chairperson**

*Checked against delivery*

Let me welcome everyone to the 4th GBFF Council meeting, let me give you a very warm welcome.

It is great to see you all here in DC. Your commitment to the work of this GBFF Council is as appreciated as it is crucial.

The GBFF represents a powerful tool to move us all towards the vision of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, a future of life in harmony with nature.

Dear friends, you will see today that the GEF Secretariat responded effectively and energetically in the first year of the GBFF.

Using the \$211 million raised for the first tranche of funds, over three selection rounds, the Secretariat has approved 40 project preparation grants in 41 countries worth \$200 million.

This rich portfolio of projects is on the way to achieve so much in support of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

As you will recall, the GBFF is expected to direct at least 20% of its resources to support actions by IPLCs [Indigenous Peoples and local communities]. The fund has exceeded this, with plans for 32% of resources to support IPLCs.

Directing resources to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) has always been an important target. In this regard, the GBFF has come very close, achieving 36% of programming. And we are committed to go higher, to meet the plus 3 percent, of the 36% + 3% goal that we agreed in Brasilia. More than half of the GBFF projects, 22, will take place in LDCs and SIDS.

But we have additional work to do.

As you recall, the fund was meant to channel at least 25% of its funds through IFIs [international financial institutions]. We have so far realized 20% of this.

IFIs generate strong impact and co-financing, so we will continue to encourage strong engagement with them.

We also would like more recipient countries to consider working with IFIs in their own programming.

We have been able to achieve all of this thanks to the donor community that on a voluntary basis has been able to provide us with the funding for this biodiversity fund.

At this time when international resource flows are tight, our donors have stepped up and delivered. Of the \$386 million raised, Canada set the bar with its 200 million Canadian dollars initial funding for the GBFF, to be followed by important resources from 10 other sovereign donors,

With the mobilization of \$1.4 million from the agreement of the government of Quebec, the GBFF has now realized the participation of non-sovereign states in resource mobilization.

Our next step is to increase this, not only by governments, but also by the private sector and philanthropies. And we are making progress on this front.

One of the elements you will review in your deliberations today is the evaluation of the Independent Evaluation Office, and the response by the management team of the GEF Secretariat.

This thoughtful and complete review by the IEO provides important recommendations that, once implemented, will enhance the GBFF.

You will hear the details later today, but we need to increase coherence and complexities with all GEF funds.

So, we need to be fully supportive of the resource mobilization targets of the KMGBF, and we need to enhance our communication around project selection criteria for the GBFF.

Let me turn now to the governance bodies of the GBFF, and in so doing, thank you all and recognize your important contributions.

In May, both the Auxiliary Body and the Advisory Group held meetings to review council documents and get ready to support the GBFF's work.

I was pleased to see that the first meeting of the Advisory Group was held, with the participation of the Province of Quebec, and we look forward to welcoming additional members to this group.

I would also like to recognize the expertise and diverse regional perspectives that members of the Auxiliary Body bring to the GBFF, essential to supporting effective GBFF programming.

I am also very pleased to see that one of the Auxiliary Body co-chairs, and several GBFF observers are attending this Council meeting in person. Your role in strengthening the inclusiveness and effectiveness of the GBFF cannot be overstated.

To conclude, I want to go beyond listing these accomplishments and remind us all why the GBFF is important.

The focus of the GBFF on supporting the KMGBF is singular, ambitious and important – this shows how the GEF family of funds and its partnership is a crucial instrument for achieving the 2050 vision of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The GBFF spearheads innovation for biodiversity protection, by taking on risk with an ambition to test and scale up transformative solutions.

In turn, these projects-at-scale can help close the biodiversity funding gap. We need a greater level of resource mobilization – from sovereign donors, but also an expanded base of non-sovereign partners who we know are increasingly engaged in nature finance around the world.

We need to work together for greater results and an accelerated pace even though this comes at a challenging time for ODA. We are exploring also a variety of options that are aligned, coherent with and complementary to the resource mobilization needed for GEF-9.

We also need to look at the recipient side. In this regard, the involvement of IPLCs in projects will remain a key priority. Working with Indigenous Peoples and local communities continues to be a tremendously important area of work for the family of trust funds.

You will see from the documents for this meeting that through the GBFF and the GEF Trust Fund, the GEF family of funds offers a range of fit-for-purpose, tailored solutions to the global biodiversity financing gap.

It is these kind of mechanisms that are needed by the CBD and the entire biodiversity community.

I look forward to productive and forward-looking discussions today.

So, thank you so much.