



THE GEF CEO FORUM ON INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP

## APPLICATION OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

December 18, 2013  
Washington, DC 20005

The objective of the CEO Forum is to solicit expert perspectives on enhancing the role of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in facilitating the use of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) to address global environmental challenges. The GEF is seeking to expand the discussion with private sector to identify new areas for collaboration and innovation, as the GEF moves forward into the new programming period. The GEF intends to use the forum as a platform to engage with the private sector representatives to discuss how their experience in development and application of ICT can bring new insights into areas relevant to the GEF. The forum also aims to identify partnership opportunities to enable GEF to address the ICT related gaps that exist within the GEF and its project portfolio.

The CEO Forum is organized by the GEF with support of the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP). It is hosted by IBM at its Institute for Electronic Government.

### BACKGROUND

The GEF is the largest public funder of projects with the mission to improve the global environment. The GEF, a partnership between 183 countries, international agencies, civil society and private sector, is well placed to address global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives<sup>1</sup>. As the financial entity for the Climate Convention, the Biodiversity Convention, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, and other environmental agreements, the GEF has the goal to achieve global environmental benefits (GEBs) while addressing the specific Convention mandates.

It achieves these goals by financing projects aligned with the focal areas of: Biodiversity; Climate Change; International Waters; Land Degradation; and Chemicals.

To date, the GEF has invested approximately US\$11 billion and has leveraged over \$50 billion in co-financing in projects from public and private sectors in the above areas. Understanding the linkages that exist among different focal areas, the GEF has made

<sup>1</sup> GEF/R.6/Inf.03 “Enhancing the GEF’s Contribution to Sustainable Development.” STAP. 2013.

efforts to direct resources strategically, in order to optimally leverage various environmental co-benefits and synergies. As GEF heads to its sixth replenishment period (GEF-6), which spans from 2014 to 2018, it is targeting complex environmental challenges that require a multifocal approach to ensure impact. With this in mind, innovative mechanisms and programming are being proposed to increase effectiveness and impact on the GEBs.

An independent advisory body, the STAP is assisting GEF in its endeavors.<sup>2</sup> The Panel consists of seven members and a Chairperson with expertise in the main focal areas of the GEF<sup>3</sup>. Panel members work on a part time basis for the GEF, typically on loan from their home institutions. In efforts to fulfill the STAP's mandate to "...provide objective, strategic scientific and technical advice on GEF policies, operational strategies, programs and on projects and programmatic approaches," the STAP has been accelerating its engagement with the private sector and has been integrating GEF in these efforts. Through this CEO Forum, the GEF Secretariat along with the STAP is seeking to expand the discussion with private sector, focusing on ICT and its role in the upcoming programming period.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Every GEF focal area has an overarching goal, and is structured around strategic objectives. Looking forward, the GEF is putting a clear focus on addressing drivers of change in attaining each of the focal area goals and the GEBs. There are a number of direct and indirect drivers of global environmental degradation.

GEF-6 focal area strategies cover the five focal areas, along with strategies for sustainable forest management and corporate programs. In addition, the proposed GEF-6 strategies include five Integrated Approaches that are anchored in the focal areas, with cross-cutting themes:

1. Taking Deforestation out of the Commodities Supply Chain
2. Sustainable Cities–Harnessing Local Action for Global Commons
3. Fostering Sustainability and Resilience of Food Production Systems in Africa

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<sup>2</sup> The GEF Instrument specifies that "UNEP shall establish, in consultation with UNDP and the World Bank and on the basis of guidelines and criteria established by the Council, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) as an advisory body to the Facility. UNEP shall provide the STAP's Secretariat and shall operate as the liaison between the Facility and the STAP." The Executive Director of UNEP appoints the STAP members, and seeks the GEF Council's approval for the STAP appointments.

<sup>3</sup> The six current Focal Areas of the GEF are Climate Change, Biodiversity, International Waters, Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)/ Chemicals, Ozone, Land Degradation. A single Panel member covers POPs/Chemicals/Ozone. The seventh Panel member acts as focal point for climate adaptation.

For an impactful and successful GEF-6, three priority areas have been noted:

- Characterization of drivers of environmental degradation,
- Determination of the optimal approach to address the drivers, and
- Suitable ways of measuring the results of the GEF interventions

Thoughtful use of ICT within a “systems of systems” approach is crucial for each of the steps mentioned above, as the GEF seeks to optimize the balance of drivers, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and protection of natural ecosystems with economic development. Opportunities exist to utilize ICT tools that will enable countries and the GEF to identify topics or sectors where GEF investments would result in the maximum benefits to the global environment. For example, combined use of satellite imageries, mapping, and data assimilation may help identify sectors within a country or region where GEF investments can bring out the highest benefits in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions or increase in sustainable food production.

Systematic inclusion of technologies may enable GEF to effectively tackle drivers of environmental degradation and deliver greater GEBs from its investments. For example, in reducing energy consumption in cities, in determining appropriate resource usage for agriculture and in using technologies in forestry value chain to reduce unsustainable practices.

The GEF projects have been predicated by use of proxy indicators, usually in an attempt to quantify ecosystem services including carbon benefits. There is a need to integrate indicators that provide direct and reliable measure of the results from the GEF interventions, so that impacts of the GEF financing can be evaluated and used for future decisions. The share of multifocal projects addressing cross-cutting themes is steadily growing in the GEF portfolio. State-of-the-art technologies that can determine and track parameters that can collectively show results applicable to multiple focal areas are needed. The GEF is actively seeking technologies that have the potential to reduce the burden of data collection and interpretation on the GEF partners and the countries.

## KEY QUESTIONS AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Effective partnership with the ICT-related private sector is expected to facilitate the achievement of GEF's goal to conserve and enhance the global environment. In parallel, the GEF decision-making process and resource prioritization would benefit from the generation of, access to and use of suitable data and information.

To meet the objective of the CEO Forum, a few key questions are proposed for discussion, focusing on the opportunities and gaps in the application of ICT within and across the GEF focal areas and at the corporate level:

- What ICT options can be utilized to characterize drivers of environmental degradation, to devise robust approaches to monitor and address them?
- Who can build effective partnerships with the GEF to advance the use of ICT and how can such partnerships be developed?
- How can ICT help measuring short term results and long term impacts? What ICT tools can guide priority setting processes?

Expected outcomes of the CEO Forum include the following:

- Improved understanding of usefulness of ICT in facilitating the achievement of GEF's overall goals and operations.
- Relevant ICT related interventions that may advance GEF-6 strategies and related goals identified.
- Suitable ideas formulated and potential partners identified to introduce ICT into GEF vision and operations.
- Communities of practice begin to form for relevant topics to further the discussion and ensure integration of ICT into the GEF programs.