

**GEF/2****Beijing Declaration Adopted**

The Second Assembly of the Global Environment Facility (GEF),<sup>1</sup> which met from 16–18 October 2002 in Beijing, China was attended by over 1200 participants, representing 127 States, 24 intergovernmental organisations and 134 non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Ministers and high-level officials from GEF Member States exchanged views on the policies and operations of the Facility.

During the Assembly, participants considered the Second Overall Performance Study of the GEF, the Chair's Report on the Policies, Operations and Future Development of the GEF, Proposed Amendments to the Instrument, the Report on the Third Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund, and the Report on Membership.

A roundtable of ministers and other heads of delegations, together with several panels were also convened.

At the close of the Meeting, participants adopted the Summary of the Second GEF Assembly, which included the Beijing Declaration (see page 302) and a summary of the decisions of the Assembly.

At a GEF Council Meeting convened from 14–15 October in Beijing, preceding the Second Assembly, Mohamed El-Ashry, the Chair of the GEF and its Chief Executive Officer, formally announced his intention to leave office in July 2003 (see also Editorial).

Following is a very brief summary of the Meeting. For more details, please see (<http://www.gefweb.org>).

**Opening Plenary**

Mohamed El-Ashry noted the GEF's outstanding third replenishment, and its designation as the interim financial mechanism for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), together with its growing influence in the Desertification Convention. Regarding the emphasis for future GEF action, he underlined partnerships, streamlining the GEF's processes and focusing on results.

The Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Klaus Töpfer, spoke on behalf of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. He highlighted the UN's role in addressing global problems that require collective resources and multilateral cooperation. He stressed the GEF's important role in delivering the World Summit on Sustainable Development's (WSSD) Plan of Implementation and called for sustainable development based on responsibility.

**Chairman's Report**

The Chairman stated that since its formation in 1991, the GEF had committed approximately US\$4 billion in project resources and had mobilised an additional US\$12 billion in financing through over 1000 projects in 160 countries and approximately 3000 small grants.

Mohamed El-Ashry gave as examples of the international community's increased confidence in the Facility the success of the third replenishment; the support of the WSSD for the GEF, and the decisions of the UN Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which requested that the GEF manage its three new funds.

**Third Replenishment of the Trust Fund**

The Governing Council of GEF had approved US\$222.29 million in grants for 33 new projects. These included initiatives to eliminate stockpiles of obsolete pesticides in Africa, protect coral reef biodiversity in the Indian Ocean, reduce Slovenia's share of Black Sea and Dan-



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ube River pollution and combat land degradation in western China. With co-financing of US\$459.26 million, the total value of these projects is US\$681.54 million.

This work programme follows the August 2002 agreement by representatives of 32 governments to contribute \$2.92 billion to fund GEF operations over the next four years. Since then, additional voluntary contributions from member governments have brought the total to approximately US\$2.97 billion.

This replenishment will finance activities in the Facility's existing focal areas in biodiversity, climate change, international waters, and ozone layer depletion. The funds will also provide additional support to projects that address persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and land degradation, which have now become part of GEF's mandate

following the Assembly's decision on 18 October to add these to its focal areas.

## Panels

### *Integrating Global Environment and Sustainable Development*

The Heads of Implementing and Executing Agencies (IAs and EAs) discussed, among other topics, funding for countries and environmental issues, such as recycling, that do not attract private sector investments. Also, the need to incorporate environmental dimensions into poverty eradication strategies, and the cost and feasibility of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Further, the accessibility of GEF funds for addressing desertification and the means of promoting participation of local communities in land degradation projects.

### *The GEF and Environmental Protection in China*

The Panel consisted of seven presentations, each delivered by the government minister or official responsible, which were followed by a commentary and a discussion session.

China's Vice-Minister of Finance outlined China's efforts to strike a balance between the need for economic reform, sustainable development, and stability both at the national and global levels.

The Minister with responsibility for the environment, informed participants on the progress of environmental protection in China.

Recognising China's large population and economic objectives, the presentation from the Energy Research Institute stressed the need to explore new ways to achieve economic advancement and decrease per capita energy consumption.

Discussions later focused on ways to promote recycling, control desertification and increase NGO involvement in GEF projects. Participants also discussed cooperation between neighbouring countries, and the applicability of carbon taxes and emissions trading in China. Another discussion focused on building awareness of climate change issues in rural populations.

## Science and the Global Environment

The Panel's mandate was to analyse the links between land degradation, climate change and global biodiversity.

In particular, the need was underscored for GEF operational programmes to consider integrated and ecosystem approaches, and to develop pilot projects of local, regional and global scales.

## Eminent Persons

This panel was chaired by Maurice Strong (Canada) and consisted of six distinguished environmental experts who deliberated on the role of the GEF for the next ten years.

Mostafa Tolba, International Centre for Environment and Development and a former Executive Director of UNEP, said that the GEF should affirm its identity and become a more independent institution.

Henrique Cavalcanti, Intergovernmental Forum on

Chemical Safety, stressed the need to define a strategic approach to the international management of chemicals by 2005.

István Láng, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, highlighted the Facility's new role in promoting sustainable development and pointed out the need to develop country- and regional-level strategies for transitioning to a sustainable society.

Thomas Odhiambo, African Academy of Sciences, underlined that the GEF should link environmental and social issues, involve local and indigenous communities, and consider moral values when addressing global environmental problems.

## The Parliamentary and NGO Panels

In the parliamentary panel, discussions focused on the environmental regulations, programmes and problems in the various countries. In the NGO panel participants discussed, among other things, the linkages between GEF projects, the engagement of Major Groups in the GEF process and the importance of the GEF responding to the request of the Conference of the Parties to the Biodiversity Convention to address indigenous peoples' rights.

## Closing Plenary

The Summary of the Second GEF Assembly was endorsed by the Assembly. It was prepared in consultation with the Bureau and the Secretariat and included the Beijing Declaration and an appendix containing the decisions of the second GEF Assembly (see also GEF/A.2/CRP.2).

The Assembly expressed, *inter alia*, its commitment to:

- The GEF's availability as a financial mechanism of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Assisting in the implementation of the results of the August 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) through GEF's work, taking into account the situation in the least developed countries and the small island developing States.
- Integrating GEF's activities into national strategies and programmes for sustainable development.
- Helping to strengthen the capacity of developing countries so that global environmental issues may be addressed effectively and integrated into sustainable development activities.

The Assembly also identified measures to improve the Facility's effectiveness as a cutting-edge, country-driven global organisation.

In conclusion, the Assembly expressed its gratitude to Mohamed El-Ashry for the excellent work he had done as Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the GEF since its inception.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Created in 1991 to finance actions to address threats to the global environment, the Global Environment Facility consists of 173 Member Countries.

