GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

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PROGRESS REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF
THE NEW GEF PORTAL

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1.   As indicated to Council last year, the Secretariat has been taking steps to revamp its information technology platform in support of priority work activities.[1] These steps have included a major upgrade to the GEF Website, a new GEF intranet to enhance internal communications and knowledge sharing among GEF staff, improved social media channels and online communication material to strengthen the engagement with partners and stakeholders, and focused enhancements to support results and knowledge-based management.

2.   As an integral part of these efforts, the Secretariat has been working with Agencies and other partners to automate and upgrade its system to manage projects and programs supported by the GEF, and store data and documents related to their implementation. The new system, the GEF Portal, is planned to be operational at the onset of GEF-7, powered by a modern IT platform developed with the support of the World Bank.[2]

3.   The new Portal is being designed to provide a user-friendly on-line interface to allow direct entry by Agencies and technical review of projects proposed for funding by the GEF. It is designed to enable improved operational efficiency, better data quality, enhanced implementation of GEF Policies, and better capture of results, in support of the GEF-7 programming and policy agenda. It will also enhance transparency and public access to data and documents through its linkage to the GEF website.

4.   The steps taken to develop the Portal, and some of its key features, are summarized below.

DEVELOPING THE PORTAL

5.   In August 2017 the Secretariat agreed on a workplan with the Information Technology (ITS) office of the World Bank to develop and deliver the new GEF Portal, for a launch date of July 1, 2018. The task was to develop the Portal to support the full life cycle and workflow of GEF project processing, from design to implementation, with updated templates aligned to GEF-7.

6.   During this development process, the Secretariat has been in close contact with Agencies and other partners to seek feedback on system design, and to request a one-time "data dump" of key data points in each Agency's historical portfolio. The purpose of this data dump is to help fill any data gaps in the system, and support completeness and accuracy of the project data base going forward. The Secretariat appreciates the excellent cooperation from

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[1] GEF Business Plan and Corporate Budget for FY18, May 3, 2017 (section on Revamped Technology Platform, p. 20).

[2] The Portal will in due course fully replace the existing Project Management Information System, or PMIS. It is planned to upload all data from the PMIS into the Portal by June 29, 2018. As of June 29, 2018, all projects being processed under the PMIS will be transferred to the Portal for continued processing (the PMIS will then be "read-only"). As of July 1, 2018, all new project proposals will be entered into and processed under the Portal.

the Agencies and other partners during these extended discussions and in providing the requested data.

7.   The main features being developed for the new Portal, and anticipated benefits once developed, are summarized below.

Project Review and Processing – Operational Efficiency

8.   As of launch date on July 1, 2018, GEF Agencies and certain other partners will use the Portal to submit and review project proposals for GEF funding. Agencies will enter proposals and implementation reports directly into the Portal, rather than through email transmission as under the existing approach. All registered users will be provided a workspace to make and track entries, and to carry out internal project preparation and processing as needed.

9.   The Portal will use templates (entry fields) updated to GEF-7 to help ensure that information entered is in line with operational needs, agreed methodologies, and GEF-7 programming and policy directions. It will include built-in "alerts" to check data entries for alignment, accuracy and inadvertent errors, and on-line review of project proposals by the GEF Secretariat and other partners. The system will track each step toward final review and approval/endorsement.

10.   These features are designed to enhance efficiency and accuracy in the project review process, enable clear tracking of the project submission and review process at all stages, and facilitate correction of mistakes in real-time. They are also intended to support quality-at-entry of project proposals, accountability for information entered into the system at all stages, as well as agreed timelines and standards of service on both sides.

Accessibility of Data

11.   The Portal is designed to capture information and data in a consistent format, through entry fields that are readable and searchable by the system. In the case of project implementation reports, for example, the Portal will require direct entry of project results on applicable GEF-7 core indicators. This new feature will facilitate real-time oversight by the GEF Secretariat and the Council on delivery of results during project implementation compared to the expected results set out at an earlier stage (i.e., approval of the Project Information Form (PIF), and CEO Endorsement/Approval).

12.   The Portal also includes a taxonomy to enable agencies to "tag" project proposals according to their content, including by topic or focal area, and a new entry field for geo-referencing projects and their locations. The system will classify project-related documents and information updated to GEF-7, and enable data and reports to be generated building upon the experience of the existing PMIS.

13. These features will improve search and analytical capabilities across the portfolio, including the ability to aggregate and share data and reports from the database. The system will also generate a real-time corporate dashboard to track trends and outcomes in key areas.

Support for Programming Strategies and Policy Implementation

14. Following the example of the PMIS, the Portal will integrate key GEF programming strategies and policy requirements directly into the entry fields for submitting and reviewing proposals for projects and programs. This will provide a simple and instrumental means to help ensure effective implementation of the GEF-7 programming and policy agenda, including new policies on Gender Equality, Stakeholder Engagement and others.

Transparency and Access to Information

15. The information within the Portal will be accessible directly to registered users. In addition, the Portal project is working to enable real-time flow of project and results information to other partners and the public via the GEF website, while respecting any relevant needs of confidentiality. This will provide an enhanced means to ensure that information and lessons about the GEF's work, projects and programs is readily available to external stakeholders and the public in real-time.

PREPARING FOR LAUNCH

16. The work to develop the Portal is complex and multi-faceted. It is anticipated that there will be a period of transition to ensure that the new system is fully functioning and fit to purpose. Several steps are being taken to help in the transition, including development of a user manual and "tool-tips" (explanatory notes), and establishment of simple systems (e.g., a Help-line) to support a good start-up and quality-at-entry of project proposals. The Portal will be launched during the meetings of GEF Council and the GEF Assembly in Viet Nam at the end of June 2108, and its operational elements will begin functioning on July 1, 2018.