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## Remarks

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Global Environment Facility**

**GEF NGO Network Meeting with  
Civil Society Organizations and Indigenous Peoples  
CBD COP11, Hyderabad, India.  
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Representatives of civil society organizations and Indigenous Peoples,

It gives me great pleasure to join you here in Hyderabad as the new CEO and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility at the the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

We at the GEF consider it a critical priority to engage in fruitful dialogue with the Indigenous Peoples and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) at the Conferences of the Parties of the CBD. Working with international institutions, the programs we support affect communities and peoples, and so I consider the continuation of this dialogue here in historic Hyderabad a matter of the utmost importance.

Let me emphasize this with you from the start: I am a strong believer in the role of CSOs and Indigenous Peoples in advancing both the development and environmental agendas. Indeed, one of my principal messages as CEO of the GEF is that there is really no separation between development and the environment. The two are co-dependent. Indigenous peoples and CSOs understand this, which is one reason why I place such strong importance on our partnership, and why I look forward to further strengthening our relationship.

Even in my first few months at the GEF, I have already visited a few recipient and donor countries and met with a variety of partners, including the leaders of CSOs and Indigenous Peoples who have long associated with the GEF. Already, in this short time, it is clear to me that we enjoy active

and positive engagement with many CSOs and IPs on GEF project and policy issues. I intend to build on these constructive partnerships, and today I want to discuss with you how we can further our collaboration to reach our mutual goals of safeguarding the global environment and benefiting communities.

As you are aware, the GEF is one of the first international organizations that developed a Public Involvement Policy during the early days of its operation. Since that time, we have developed a strategy to enhance CSOs engagement, the Environmental and Social Safeguard Policies, and Gender Mainstreaming Policy. Most recently, we prepared the Principles and Guidelines for the Engagement with Indigenous Peoples. The goal was to ensure that the GEF and its partners make appropriate efforts to include and promote indigenous peoples in applicable processes and projects.

Indigenous Peoples and CSOs play an important role in GEF policy, project, and process development as partners and stakeholders. This engagement, which dates back to the early days of the GEF, has produced a number of successful GEF projects involving local and indigenous communities and CSOs, including women's groups. The GEF Small Grants Programme stands out an example of innovative community-led projects. I believe that many of these demonstrate strong potential for being implemented on a much larger scale. Another example, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, has provided CSOs and local and Indigenous communities the power and capacity to protect the world's most biologically important places.

While we celebrate these successes, we continue to face unprecedented

challenges in protecting, maintaining and improving our environment, and recognizing the value of natural capital. Healthy ecosystems are essential to secure human health, food, energy and water, and ultimately sustainable development. As you are experiencing in your own communities, threats to these ecosystems are growing, resulting in the degradation of lands and forests, droughts and floods, water scarcity, the decline of fisheries, and others.

It is clear to me that under these increasing pressures, incremental environmental strategies alone will simply not suffice. We need a transformational change to the way global environment is managed. The answer requires bold measures and all of us, including civil society and indigenous peoples, need to play their part in finding solutions to the problems.

To confront these challenges and promote the interdependence of environment and development, I am developing a new vision and long-term strategy for the GEF based on the concept of collective leadership. This vision encompasses a transformational change focused on partnership and achieving results.

As part of the new vision, I see the GEF playing the following key roles with the CSOs and Indigenous Peoples:

- 1) The GEF should be an innovator and proponent of new ways of doing business: Civil society projects are incubators of such new ideas which can be leveraged through GEF's catalytic support;

- 2) The GEF should be a champion of global commons: GEF will utilize its convening power to bring diverse players on board, including the CSOs and Indigenous Peoples, and create the context within which good decisions can be made to confront destructive trends and to promote lasting change based on mutual trust.
- 3) The GEF should be a partner of choice: I aim to make the GEF a coalition of partners, which is greater than the sum of its parts. In this context, the GEF will continue to partner with CSOs and indigenous peoples to achieve its mission.
- 4) The GEF should be a financial catalyst: In order to bring transformational change to the global environment, the public and private sectors, including civil society, must identify new ways of working together and leveraging resources.

With these roles in mind, I encourage you to share your ideas, and invite you to be an active partner in the realization of this vision.

Thank you.