



GEF CEO Introductory Remarks Screening of “Revealed: Himalayan Meltdown”

**GoodPlanet Film Festival,
Rio +20, June 20, 2012, 8pm, Cinema Odeon, Rio de Janeiro**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with pleasure that I introduce this excellent film on the ‘Himalayan meltdown.’ This is a wonderful and troubling documentary. The film identifies threats to our environment emerging from a part of the world we think of as pristine. In so doing it touches on some fundamental ideas about our place in the world, and it shows some of innovative solutions that we humans are developing to address problems that we humans have created. I am proud to say that the film documents a number of projects in which my organization, the Global Environment Facility, has had a role. And I will briefly describe how we have financed these projects through the Least Developed Countries Fund.

I have to say that, even though I was familiar with the subject matter of the film, I still found the story it tells to be profoundly moving.

What struck me immediately, watching this film, is the extraordinary beauty and majesty of the Himalayas. All of us, I think, have an image in our minds of this geological and geographic masterpiece, of the snow-capped peaks, the massive glaciers, and the streams and rivers that race down the mountain valleys. We think of an environment that is remote and, in a sense pure, and home to a variety of unique cultures that have evolved in and adapted to its conditions,

And what we are seeing in this film is an environment under threat because of climate change. On a very basic level, this spectacular formation is changing at a rate faster than we have ever seen or that we ever could have imagined.

A threat to the majesty of the Himalayas evokes a strong emotional response. But this film puts the Himalayas in a broader context, as the source of the major rivers of Asia, supporting life and

commerce for billions of people. It is in this broader context that the effects of climate change on this critical environment become truly frightening. So the scale of these massifs is matched by the vast expanse of an enormous area of Asia,, and the people who inhabit it.

People – this is what you will see throughout this film – people whose livelihoods are under threat, people who worry about their own safety, and the safety of their families, and their communities. And this is the part that is really moving because, in the end, we all share and can identify with these common concerns.

In this film there are stories that are a testament to human ingenuity and adaptability. These stories that will excite your imagination, amaze, and inspire you.

You will see one such story taking place right now in Bhutan. The Global Environment Facility has financed a project that is helping local peoples avoid the threat of catastrophic glacial floods. They are doing this literally one stone at a time at the highest work site on the planet. While the film does not say it – the funding came from the Least Developed Countries Fund, or LDCF for short. Later in the film, you will see the mangrove nurseries and newly forested river banks in Bangladesh that have benefited from LDCF financing. Let me say just a few words about this financing instrument.

The LDCF was established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to assist the world's 50 Least Developed Countries in adapting to the effects of climate change. Since then, the LDCF has contributed more than \$300 million of funding for adaptation in agriculture, water, disaster risk management, ecosystem integrity, technology transfer, coastal management and health. The underlying idea is that there are peoples and places in the world that cannot wait for well-intended programs to halt or reverse climate change to take hold. They must act now adapt to climate change so as to protect and preserve their precious natural resources against the threat of global warming.

The projects financed by the LDCF are having impacts all around the world. Remember that the enormous challenge of the Himalayas presented here is only one of the many challenges of adaptation. LDCF is also grappling with the effects of increasingly severe droughts in sub-Saharan Africa. The Fund is developing responses to the unique challenges faced by low-lying island nations that are at risk of submerging beneath rising seas. Developing countries are already under enormous pressure from all sides, politically, socially, and environmentally. Now add to that the additional stress of climate change. That is the challenge the LDCF is helping countries face.

I could go on discussing this film, but I think it is best to let you see it yourselves. Let me just say that, without adaptation, there is no sustainable development. Climate change is imposing new rules of the game and in many cases this means that the resources available from our environment are diminished. In the Himalayas, where flash floods are a risk, and in low-lying islands, where rising sea levels threaten existence, the threat posed by climate change is of too much water. Elsewhere, such as in the African Sahel, the problem is an increasingly acute shortage of water. That is why the story this film tells, and the stories that the Global Environment Facility is helping people write all over the world, are not just about pristine environments, they are about people.

I congratulate the film makers and I hope all of you enjoy the film and that you emerge with a sense of energy and optimism that, together, we can weather the climate change challenge.

Thank you.