

Summary Report
Informal Dialogue: Secretariats of MEAs and GEF
Held at the margins of 50th GEF Council
8 June 2016

Context and Questions Explored:

The GEF organized an Informal Dialogue for the Secretariats of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) that the GEF serves as a/the financial mechanism and the GEF Secretariat. In light of the recent global negotiation milestones and the beginning of the implementation era for many MEAs, this dialogue was an opportunity to learn about the MEA perspectives and priorities, and to discuss how the GEF can assist countries in their implementation in the GEF-6 period and beyond effectively.

The dialogue was also an opportunity to explore engagement with the MEA Secretariats in regular consultations to identify key cross-cutting themes that may merit coordinated GEF response, recognizing the unique GEF mandate to serve multiple MEAs. Such consultations may provide opportunities across the MEAs to provide inputs for the overall GEF-7 strategy development, in addition to the individual MEA engagement in the focal area-based programming directions development. The dialogue explored three questions:

1. Is there an interest among the MEA Secretariats to engage in such consultations, possibly at the margins of the GEF Council meetings?
2. What are emerging themes that address multiple MEA objectives and implementation priorities?
3. What other topics may merit MEA-wide consultations for the GEF?

High level representatives of the five MEAs participated in the dialogue:

- Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary, CBD
- Kerstin Stendahl, Deputy Executive Secretary, and Frank Moser, Programme Officer, BRS Conventions
- Jacob Duer, Principal Coordinator, Interim Secretariat of the Minamata Convention
- Dechen Tsering, Coordinator, Finance, Technology & Capacity-building, and Alejandro Kilpatrick, Team Leader, Climate Finance Sub-programme, UNFCCC
- Melchiade Bukuru, Chief of the Liaison Office, UNCCD

The GEF Secretariat representatives participated, along with GEF Council members/country representatives (Canada, Sweden, Switzerland, and United States).

Discussion:

The GEF CEO, Naoko Ishii, opened the meeting, highlighting that 2016 is a seminal year to start the implementation of the key global agreements including the Paris Agreement, Ankara CCD COP decisions, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She noted the GEF's unique role of serving multiple MEAs as a/the financial mechanism, and thanked the MEA representatives for their engagement in exploring innovative ways to address the global environmental commons agenda in an integrated manner.

In the discussion facilitated by Gustavo Fonseca, GEF Program Director, the MEA representatives expressed their readiness to engage with the GEF to enhance integration in light of the evolution of the MEA emphasis towards implementation and changing global landscape of environmental finance. There was also consensus that dialogue and inputs across the MEAs would be an innovative contribution to help inform the GEF-7 replenishment negotiations.

All MEA representatives expressed that synergy and integration are crucial to address the MEA goals. Ms. Tsering and Mr. Kilpatrick of UNFCCC touched on the wide scope of the Paris Agreement and decision that merits collaboration with all MEAs as well as engagement of countries, non-state actors, and other stakeholders for successful implementation. The potential of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) as a platform to facilitate alignment of actions with multiple objectives was raised. Ms. Stendahl and Mr. Moser of the BRS Conventions highlighted synergy as a key theme for the chemicals-related Conventions, also stating that accountability to demonstrate contributions to the MEA goals and legally binding elements is important. Mr. Dias of CBD stated that the Aichi targets are directly related to goals of the other Conventions and cannot be achieved with the work of one Convention alone. The role of the CBD Secretariat to facilitate integration among other biodiversity-related Conventions was also mentioned. Mr. Duer of the Minamata Convention touched on the existing collaboration among the chemicals-related Conventions, and expressed his wish to enhance cooperation with the Rio Conventions. He also called to prioritize tangible projects on the ground and early implementation.

Another common theme was the MEA alignment with SDGs, and the need to help countries address the SDG political aspirations through the MEAs. The CCD has embraced the land degradation neutrality (LDN), SDG target 15.3, as a key guiding principle based on COP 12 outcomes. Mr. Bukuru of CCD indicated that LDN could serve as “an engine for synergies” because land stands as a common foundation for the MEAs. Others also indicated the need to identify the entry points for synergy and for SDGs. For CBD, the role of biodiversity as part of the solutions for the SDGs was highlighted. The BRS recalled the recent UNEA discussion on the need for the MEAs to work within the SDG umbrella, and suggested to focus on the most tangible targets and connections across the MEAs. The possible role of the GEF as a financial integrator and catalyst for the MEAs and the SDGs was raised. Further, the need to explore possible streamlining of reporting across the MEAs was presented.

Council members/country representatives present also shared their views. The US and Swedish participants expressed appreciation for the dialogue and the MEA perspectives shared on the importance of synergy. The Canadian representative reiterated the unique role of the GEF to serve multiple MEAs and importance of GEF’s bread-and-butter activities, to address legally binding elements. The Swiss participant identified GEF’s contributions for enhancing coherence and complementarity among global environmental finance as another unique advantage. The need to send consistent signals at the COPs, the GEF Council, and other arena was also identified. Looking ahead to GEF-7, a balanced approach to address individual Convention goals through GEF Focal Area project and programs while also facilitating integration was suggested.

The Focal Area Leads of the GEF Secretariat provided their perspectives, including: mapping the SDGs and MEA linkages; streamlining of reports and coordination of enabling activities;

utilizing the INDC as a platform for coordinated actions, among other observations. Other GEF participants encouraged the MEA engagement in the knowledge management, results-based management, and opportunities for the Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD).

Way forward:

Chizuru Aoki, GEF MEA Lead, thanked the participants for active discussion and MEA's enthusiasm for continued dialogue, and suggested to organize the next meeting at the October 2016 GEF Council. The emerging themes for further dialogue were summarized as follows:

- SDGs and MEAs: GEF's role as a catalyst/financial integrator
- Implementation of tangible action at country level (bread-and-butter of GEF)
- INDCs as an entry point to address multiple MEA priorities
- Addressing legally binding elements
- Accountability to MEA goals and objectives
- Reporting to Conventions - scope for common elements and process?
- Mobilization of domestic resources and private sector towards sustainability
- Getting the message out: MEA engagement in ECWs
- Additional topics that merit MEA-wide consultations: CCCD, knowledge management, results-based management, gender

Finally, participants elaborated on the importance of working on these issues across different spheres of influence such as the GEF Council, the MEAs, countries (both donor and recipients) and the COPs, to facilitate integration.

