

GEF Council
June 29-July 1, 2010

Agenda Item 8

ANNUAL COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION REPORT - 2010

(Prepared by the GEF Evaluation Office)

Recommended Council Decision

The Council, having reviewed document GEF/ME/C.38/1, “*Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report – 2010*,” document GEF/ME/C.38/2, “*Management Response to the Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation – 2010*,” and having taken note of the two Country Portfolio Evaluations in Turkey and Moldova (GEF/ME/C.38/Inf. 1 and GEF/ME/C.38/Inf. 2) requests:

- (1) The GEF Agencies to systematically involve operational focal points in M&E activities by sharing M&E information with them in a timely manner;
- (2) The Secretariat to consider provision of specific M&E training to the national focal point mechanism through the Country Support Programme;
- (3) The Evaluation Office to strengthen, in collaboration with the Secretariat on monitoring issues, the role of Operational Focal Points in monitoring and evaluation in the proposals for revision of the M&E policy.

The Council also encourages the GEF Agencies to give stronger support to environment issues outside their GEF supported projects, and promote up-scaling with partner governments.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This third *Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report* provides a synthesis of the main conclusions and recommendations coming from two country portfolio evaluations finalized in fiscal year 2010:¹ Turkey and Moldova. Both country portfolio evaluations were conducted between September 2009 and April 2010. Drafts of the two reports were presented and discussed and comments were received from GEF stakeholders at consultation workshops in each country. Chapters 1 of both reports include the main conclusions and recommendations and are provided as Council information documents. The full reports are provided on the Evaluation Office website and will be published at a later date. The responses provided to the evaluation by the respective government are annexed to these two reports.

2. GEF support to these two countries started during the pilot phase of the GEF for Turkey and after the GEF restructuring (1994) for Moldova.

Table 1.1 Project Coverage of each Country Portfolio Evaluation

Country	GEF funding (US mil.)	Number of projects included in the evaluation				National completed projects
		National FSPs and MSPs	SGP	Enabling activities	Regional/global projects	
Turkey	36.33	8	Yes	5	11 of 20	6
Moldova	21.72	8	No	6	14 of 16	9

3. This synthesis report focuses on: the relevance of the GEF support to the GEF and to the countries; the efficiency of GEF support; the role and responsibilities of GEF stakeholders and the result and sustainability of GEF support, particularly at the global environmental benefits level.

Conclusions

4. The following conclusions were reached on the results of the GEF support:

- 1) GEF support in biodiversity has built robust foundations for the achievement of significant results in Turkey and Moldova. Further progress toward impact is limited by unresolved institutional barriers and socio-economic factors.
- 2) GEF support in climate change has produced limited but promising results in Turkey and Moldova.
- 3) International waters initiatives strengthened the countries' commitments to regional cooperation for reducing nutrient discharge and fish overexploitation. It is still too early for observable improvements in the water bodies to materialize.
- 4) GEF support to Persistent Organic Pollutants has been of strategic importance in both countries and facilitated up-scaling in Moldova.

¹ July 2009 to June 2010.

- 5) Land degradation did not receive the attention and support that countries were expecting, including through multifocal area projects.
- 5. On relevance of GEF support the following conclusions should be noted:
 - 6) GEF support in Turkey and Moldova has been relevant to national sustainable development and environmental priorities, to international conventions, and regional processes as well as to the GEF mandate. Other national priorities such as land degradation have not been addressed.
 - 7) National ownership of the GEF portfolio is limited, but improving in both countries.
- 6. The efficiency of the GEF support was assessed as follows:
 - 8) Duration of project processing and implementation compares well to average figures for GEF projects. However, mixed perceptions on complexity and length of the GEF Activity Cycle remain in both countries.
 - 9) The GEF focal point mechanism has not been fully effective in its coordination and strategic guidance roles, including sharing of information and M&E.

Recommendations

- 1) Operational Focal Points involvement in M&E activities should be increased by sharing M&E information, supporting country portfolio level M&E and providing M&E training.
- 2) GEF Agencies should be encouraged to give stronger support to environment issues outside their GEF supported projects, and promote up-scaling with partner governments.

1. INTRODUCTION

7. This third *Annual Country Portfolio Evaluations Report* provides a synthesis of the main conclusions and recommendations of the two Country Portfolio Evaluations finalized in fiscal year 2010 in Turkey and Moldova.² Support from the Global Environment Facility to those countries started in 1992 in Turkey and in 1994 in Moldova. These two countries were selected through a process established by the GEF Evaluation Office in 2006 and used for its current series of country portfolio evaluations, which includes a random selection of countries at the regional level and then a selection according to a number of criteria. These included the long history both countries have with the GEF, their large and diverse portfolio, the nature of the GEF country allocation under the Resource Allocation Framework (individual in the case of Turkey, and group in the case of Moldova), and their participation in a number of regional projects in international waters. The influence of the European Union accession process on Turkey's environment and sustainable development agenda was also considered. As with previous CPEs, consultations were held on these two CPEs with all major GEF stakeholders, particularly those residing in the country. Several visits to project sites have also been undertaken.

8. The Evaluation Office has prepared separate reports for each evaluation: *GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: Turkey (1992–2009)*, and *GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: Moldova (1994–2009)*. Chapters 1 of both reports include the main conclusions and recommendations and are provided as Council information documents. The full reports are provided on the Evaluation Office website and will be published at a later date. The responses provided to the evaluation by the respective government are annexed to these two reports. The Turkey and Moldova CPEs implemented in Fiscal Year 2010 build on and supplement the CPEs conducted in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 of Costa Rica, Samoa, the Philippines, Benin, Madagascar, South Africa, Cameroon, Egypt and Syria. All previous CPEs have been a direct input into the 4th Overall Performance Study of the GEF recently completed by the Evaluation Office.

9. The ACPER 2010 begins with a short background description of GEF involvement in Turkey and Moldova, followed by a chapter on objectives, scope and methods used in the two CPEs. The conclusions are presented here according to the three dimensions of the evaluations: that is, in terms of the results of the GEF support, its relevance, and its efficiency. Recommendations are offered to the Council in the closing chapter of the report.

1.1 Background

10. Turkey's participation in the GEF started during the GEF pilot phase in 1992 with the preparation of the World Bank–implemented In-Situ Conservation of Genetic Diversity project. Since then, Turkey has been involved in an additional ten national projects plus two national components of global projects. The Turkey GEF portfolio

²July 2009 to June 2010.

totals \$36.33 million, with \$82.63 million of cofinancing. Additional \$3.65 million support was provided through the Small Grants Programme. About 47 % of GEF funding in Turkey has gone to support projects in the biodiversity focal area, 32% to climate change, 19% to international waters and 1% to each of Persistent Organic Pollutants and multifocal area projects. The level of cofinancing has been the largest for international waters (46%), followed by climate change (42%), and substantially lower for biodiversity (12%). In addition, Turkey participates in 14 regional and 6 global GEF projects, addressing international waters, biodiversity, and climate change.

11. Since 1994, the GEF has invested in Moldova about \$21.72 million, with about \$23.34 million in cofinancing. 14 national projects compose the portfolio, namely five in biodiversity, four in climate change, two in international waters, two in POPs, and one multifocal project. The World Bank, with eight projects totaling \$18.65 million, has been the main channel for GEF support in Moldova; followed by UNDP (four projects totaling \$1.58 million). Moldova has participated in 16 initiatives financially supported by the GEF with a regional or global scope. Most of the regional projects involving Moldova are international waters projects for the Danube River and Black Sea.

1.2 Objectives, Scope and Methods

12. The Turkey and Moldova CPEs were conducted following the standard Terms of Reference for country portfolio evaluations developed by the Evaluation Office in 2006. The TOR were adapted to each country using the information collected and the feedback received during the first scoping missions to the countries conducted in October 2009. Evaluation work was conducted from September 2009 to May 2010 by staff of the Evaluation Office and consultants with extensive experience with each individual country.

13. The two CPEs were undertaken with the same overall objectives, derived from the standard TOR for country portfolio evaluations. These are:

- 1) to independently evaluate the relevance and efficiency of GEF support in the country from the points of view of national environmental policies and processes, the GEF mandate and achievement of global environmental benefits, and GEF policies and procedures;
- 2) to assess the effectiveness and results of completed and ongoing projects in each relevant focal area; and
- 3) to provide feedback and knowledge sharing to (1) the GEF Council in its decision-making process to allocate resources and develop policies and strategies; (2) the country on its participation in the GEF, and; (3) the different agencies and organizations involved in the preparation and implementation of GEF support.

14. The main focus of the two CPEs is the projects supported by the GEF at all project stages (preparation, implementation, completion, or cancellation) within the national boundaries. In Turkey, the Small Grants Programme was assessed against the respective national strategy and not on the basis of each individual SGP grant. Project

ideas from either the governments or GEF Agencies included in the respective pipelines were not considered in the analysis. In addition to national projects, the GEF portfolios assessed include a selection of regional and global projects selected according to a set of criteria, including:

- 1) the presence in the country of a project coordination unit and/or project sites;
- 2) the importance of the project focal area to the country; and
- 3) the existence of a clear connection to national projects.

15. The stage of each project determined the CPE focus. For example, completed projects were assessed against the usual three evaluation criteria, namely results (outputs, outcomes and impact), relevance and efficiency. Ongoing projects were assessed in terms of relevance and efficiency. Projects under preparation, i.e. those with an approved Project Identification Form or Project Preparation Grant, were assessed primarily in terms of relevance, with some eventual limited assessment of efficiency. The results and sustainability of GEF support, particularly at the global environmental benefits level, were given special attention. Table 1.1 presents the portfolios of projects covered in the Turkey and Moldova CPEs.

Table 1.1 Project Coverage of each Country Portfolio Evaluation

Country	GEF funding (US mil.)	Number of projects included in the evaluation				National completed projects
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16. The methodology used in CPEs evolved over time and become more and more standardized. In Turkey and Moldova, a mix of qualitative and quantitative data gathering methods and standardized analytical tools were used. Various information sources were consulted to capture data and inputs at:

- project level (project documents, implementation reports, terminal evaluations);
- country level (documents relevant to the broad national sustainable development and environmental agenda, priorities, and strategies; strategies and action plans relevant to focal areas; GEF-supported strategies and action plans relevant to the global conventions; national environmental indicators), and
- GEF Agency level (country strategies and their evaluations and reviews).

17. Additional evaluative evidence at the country level was drawn from other Office evaluations. Statistical data and scientific sources were consulted, particularly with regard to national environmental indicators. Interviews were conducted with representatives of all GEF stakeholders, and a substantive number of field visits were made. Each of the CPEs included a national consultation workshop to discuss and receive feedback on the

respective key preliminary findings. The quantitative analysis used indicators to assess the efficiency of GEF support using projects as the unit of analysis (e.g. analyzing projects preparation and implementation durations and costs).

18. Important methodological additions, as compared with the previous CPEs, were made in the case of the two CPEs undertaken in Fiscal Year 2010. These include the conduct of two Reviews of Outcomes to Impact in each country. One ROtI was conducted on a full size project and another on an enabling activity. For the analysis of findings, both CPEs used a triangulation matrix derived from the initial evaluation matrix. In the case of Turkey, a field verification of a project Terminal Evaluation Review was undertaken. The results of this TER verification will also be used in the Annual Performance Report 2010. A key –and again, innovative for CPEs– element in the methodology was an on-line survey, suggested by Turkish stakeholders’ during the opening workshop. Both GEF Agencies and the national GEF coordination unit provided a complete list of stakeholders e-mail addresses allowing the successful conduct of the survey.

1.3 Limitations and Challenges

19. The CPEs face some limitations, which were also present in the CPEs for Turkey and Moldova. These include:

- Lack of GEF country or portfolio programs specifying expected achievement through programmatic objectives, indicators, and targets.
- Attribution/contribution dilemma. CPEs do not attempt to provide a direct attribution of development and even environmental results to the GEF, but assess the contribution of GEF support to overall achievements.
- Challenges in evaluating the impacts of GEF projects and how to tackle them. Many projects, especially the oldest ones, do not clearly or appropriately specify the expected impact and sometimes even the outcomes of projects. This was partially addressed by reporting results that emerged from triangulation of various sources, including meta-evaluation analysis and original evaluative research conducted through interviews, e-survey, TER field verifications and the two field ROtI studies.
- Intrinsic difficulties in defining the portfolio prior to the undertaking of the CPE. This was particularly the case for the Moldova CPE. How to establish a clear and reliable set of data on projects and project documentation, despite inconsistencies, gaps, and discrepancies contained in the initial available data, is a challenge in many other evaluations conducted by the Office.

2. CONCLUSIONS

20. The conclusions presented here are based on the two CPEs conducted this year in Turkey and Moldova. These countries were not selected to be representative of the vast and diverse East Europe and CIS region, but their experience could be relevant to other countries as well. While acknowledging experiences and conclusions from previous CPEs, the ACPER 2010 identifies common elements emerged from the Turkey and Moldova CPEs and tries to bring to Council new conclusions. The individual CPEs for the two countries present more specific conclusions and recommendations. Not all of these are presented here, as they are not considered representative enough of a broader context for the Council.

21. The conclusions are presented here according to the three dimensions of the results of the GEF support, its relevance, and its efficiency.

2.1 Results

22. Results are presented in terms of the outcomes and impacts of the various GEF-supported projects. Achievements are presented in terms of GEF contribution toward addressing global and national environmental issues as well as national level priorities, including raising awareness and building national institutions and capacities. The use of the ROTI methodology in two projects in each country allowed looking at progress toward impact, this including impact drivers and external assumptions.

Conclusion 1: GEF support in biodiversity has built robust foundations for the achievement of significant results in Turkey and Moldova. Further progress toward impact is limited by unresolved institutional barriers and socio-economic factors.

23. GEF support to biodiversity, provided through enabling activities and other projects, contributed to laying down the foundations for introducing modern biodiversity conservation policies, strategies, action plans, and legal frameworks. Both in Turkey and Moldova, institutional strengthening and capacity building was of strategic importance in moving forward the national biodiversity strategies and action plans elaborated with GEF support. In Turkey, this went up to the preparation of an innovative and comprehensive national law on the protection of nature and biological diversity. The preparation process of the law was highly consultative.

24. GEF supported national initiatives implemented in parallel or following this foundational support have been innovative and broke new ground. For example, they introduced in-situ and ex-situ conservation of Gene Management Zones as well as launched participatory approaches in the preparation of protected area management plans. Planned and unplanned replication of these new approaches has occurred in Turkey, where the proportion of land under some form of protection for nature conservation has increased from 4% to 6% since 2000. The 22 GMZ designated with support of the In-Situ Conservation Project allowed the creation of more than 20 new high yielding, drought

and disease resistant varieties of wheat, which are preserved ex-situ as well. New gene conservation forests are created year by year.

25. Significant efforts in awareness raising at national level and, in the case of Turkey, a high number of small local level initiatives proposing sustainable livelihoods/biodiversity conservation trade-offs, have also contributed in raising biodiversity conservation issues with the public at large. This includes both the SGP, which large majority of grants has been in biodiversity, and the small grants components of full-size projects.

26. Progress toward impact in biodiversity conservation is limited in both countries by unresolved institutional barriers and socio-economic factors. In Moldova, many impact drivers including an adequate and regularly updated information database, continued interaction among stakeholders, extensive dissemination of project results, have not been achieved. The main barriers are the limited existing capacities and institutional conflicts with other central authorities involved in biodiversity conservation and management, which led, for example, to the Parliament not having approved the establishment of the Orhei Protected Area supported by a GEF project. In Turkey, challenges are associated with people's participation and with government inertia vis-à-vis innovative approaches, institutional conflicts within the environment ministry as well as between different ministries, real problems of poverty at local levels, and threats to conservation from tourism, road construction, forest extraction, grazing activities, water resource use, and other economic activities. The biodiversity law and most of the protected areas management plans supported by the GEF are in stand-by since several years, waiting for approval. Implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan approved in June 2008 has not started. Only recently, Turkey's strong commitment to the EU Accession Process is bringing back these GEF supported products to the national environmental policy agenda.

27. GEF support has been strategic in the field of biosafety with relatively small funding. In Turkey, a biosafety law was prepared with the active involvement of more than 55 institutions, experts and academia. The biosafety law has been recently approved. Similarly, in Moldova a national biosafety framework is being developed, which is expected to result in the development of key legislation, capacity building and awareness raising both at national and local levels.

Conclusion 2: GEF support in climate change has produced limited but promising results in Turkey and Moldova.

28. Enabling activities in climate change helped in complying with the requirements of reporting to the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change through national communications. These have also contributed to capacity building in creating and maintaining Greenhouse Gas inventories and vulnerability assessments, including analysis of options for mitigation and adaptation. As a result, climate change has been put higher on the government agenda in both Turkey and Moldova, and is shaping ongoing

action, debate and future climate change policy, strategy and planning decisions. Turkey ratified the Kyoto Protocol in October 2009.

29. Although relatively recent, GEF support in climate change analyzed with the ROTI methodology in both Turkey and Moldova has shown positive signs of progress toward impact, thanks to the foundational and demonstration activities successfully completed thus far. More is expected with the upcoming implementation of major investment projects in energy efficiency.

30. Climate change adaptation has not yet come forward as a national priority in both countries.

Conclusion 3: International waters initiatives strengthened the countries' commitments to regional cooperation for reducing nutrient discharge and fish overexploitation. It is still too early for observable improvements in the water bodies to materialize.

31. GEF support has been a major contributor to countries' involvement in agreements for coordinated regional and international management of marine resources and has helped develop cooperative networks for coherent regional response and action. The international waters projects have also significantly improved the scientific basis for regional prioritization of cooperative interventions in managing marine resources and land-based activities affecting these resources.

32. In both Turkey and Moldova, GEF support in international waters has a clear regional dimension, as it has been provided through regional projects targeting the Danube River and the Black and Mediterranean Seas. These initiatives have been developed and implemented in full compliance with the catalytic approach advocated by the GEF Instrument, where foundational and enabling activities are to be followed by demonstration and investment projects. Early efforts involved the elaboration of Transboundary Analyses Diagnostic and Strategic Action Plans. Starting in 2000, the demonstration and investment projects that followed were clustered in programmatic partnerships, which included major national full-size projects aiming at controlling agricultural pollution and reducing nutrient discharge. As these major initiatives are still ongoing today, outcomes and impacts are not yet observable.

Conclusion 4: GEF support to Persistent Organic Pollutants has been of strategic importance in both countries and facilitated up-scaling in Moldova.

33. The enabling activities related to the implementation of the Stockholm Convention on POPs supported Turkey and Moldova to develop a strategic and informed basis for analysis, prioritization and action for dealing with the issue of POPs. This allowed both countries to prepare a National Implementation Plan for the Convention.

34. In Turkey, this catalytic support was instrumental in the recent country ratification of the Stockholm Convention. In Moldova, a mixed and staged combination of further

enabling activities and a full-size project supported by GEF facilitated up-scaling and was complemented by various other donors financed projects leading to significant additional results, with sustainable outcomes achieved.

Conclusion 5: Land degradation did not receive the attention and support that countries were expecting, including through multifocal area projects.

35. The high demand for GEF support in combating land degradation emerged in recent CPEs was also found in this region. While in Turkey land degradation mostly relates to a high exposure to soil erosion and desertification risks, in Moldova huge land degradation problems are linked to overexploitation of soils from agriculture with a consequent decline in soil fertility.

36. Despite both countries being eligible for GEF funding in this area and both having established land degradation as a priority in their national strategies and action plans, the limited GEF resources in this focal area did not allow support during GEF-4. Project proposals submitted to the GEF by the two countries could not be considered.

37. An opportunity was missed to address land degradation through multi-focal area projects. Apart from the National Capacity Self-Assessments enabling activities, no other multi-focal area projects are part of Turkey and Moldova portfolios. No attempts have been made to address land degradation, climate change adaptation and/or biodiversity with an integrated holistic approach, one in which natural resources (land, water, forests, minerals, and the biodiversity that characterizes them) are considered as interconnected in their contribution to generating global environmental benefits.

2.2 Relevance

38. Relevance of GEF support is assessed against the country's national development and environmental agendas, the GEF mandate, and the country's responsibilities and obligations toward the global conventions.

Conclusion 6: GEF support in Turkey and Moldova has been relevant to national sustainable development and environmental priorities, to international conventions, and regional processes as well as to the GEF mandate. Other national priorities such as land degradation have not been addressed.

39. As concluded in previous CPEs, GEF support was found to align with national sustainable development needs and challenges, and to environmental priorities of the countries reviewed. GEF projects have supported national frameworks for developing environmental laws and policies in biodiversity, biosafety and climate change, and POPs. GEF support to fulfilling countries' obligations to report to international environmental conventions has been relevant as well.

40. Relevance is manifested either by GEF support provided through enabling activities, i.e. for prioritization and inventory exercises as well as communications to

Conventions, or GEF funding provided through demonstration and investment projects to an already established national priority, or it is applied within an existing framework (for protected areas, energy efficiency, and so on).

41. Land degradation, a high priority for both Turkey and Moldova, has not been addressed. The only support provided was through the SGP in Turkey with 7 grants amounting at \$184,290 during 2003-2006. However, also this small support had to stop in GEF-4, as the SGP had to conform to the newly introduced RAF: from then on only biodiversity and climate change SGP grants could be approved in Turkey. Land degradation has been added to biodiversity and climate change in the new System for Transparent Allocation of Resources, which will replace the RAF in GEF-5.

Conclusion 7: National ownership of the GEF portfolio is limited, but improving in both countries.

42. Both in the Turkey and Moldova CPEs evidence was found of slow appropriation of project objectives by national stakeholders. In Turkey, GEF Agencies usually come along with an idea; it is initially not well understood, but over time support and understanding grows. Eventually national stakeholders (mostly government, but also civil society) take on the project, adapt it to their needs and context, and own and drive it. In Moldova, project offices, Convention focal points and GEF Agencies have been to varying extents the main drivers of projects. Although frequent changes in governments had a negative influence on ownership, in the case of POP projects the strong ownership and commitment triggered complementarities of donor support and enhanced cross-fertilization across projects.

43. Recent positive developments indicate a reinforcement of national ownership in both countries. In Turkey, since 2004 the Externally Supported Projects Division of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry was tasked to serve as GEF national coordination unit. This division was also tasked to serve, among others, as operational and administrative support to the national GEF focal point mechanism. Since 2006, GEF project ideas are discussed in a national GEF project evaluation committee chaired by the operational focal point and composed of eight to ten members representing various directorates of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. Since January 2010, the Externally Supported Projects Division is holding a series of workshops on the GEF in seven Turkish provinces on global environmental issues and the GEF in Turkey with wide participation of all stakeholders, including local government, civil society and the private sector. This demonstrates a more proactive ownership by Turkey. However, while the GEF national coordination mechanism has a good grasp on national projects, it has not yet been able to gather information on and coordinate GEF regional projects in which Turkey is involved.

44. In Moldova, the need for coordination and strategic planning has been recognized at a high political level and the Government has recently approved new legislation which addresses this issue. The regulation on coordination of foreign assistance sets new procedures, allocation of responsibilities and institutional restructuring. If fully and

efficiently implemented, this regulation could serve as the much-needed foundation for the country to play a more active role in initiating, implementing and evaluating projects. This new approach could enhance country ownership through the development of coherent national strategies and plans regarding donor's assistance, including the GEF.

45. The new policy on voluntary GEF National Portfolio Formulation Exercises which is being proposed for GEF-5 goes in the direction of further increasing country ownership.

2.3 Efficiency

46. Efficiency of GEF support is assessed in terms of time, effort, and financial resources needed to prepare and implement GEF projects; the different roles and responsibilities of the various GEF stakeholders (national, international, and local) and the synergies between projects and these stakeholders; and the role and functioning of the national GEF focal point mechanism.

Conclusion 8: Duration of project processing and implementation compares well to average figures for GEF projects. However, mixed perceptions on complexity and length of the GEF Activity Cycle remain in both countries.

47. On the whole, and in comparison to other countries, both Turkey and Moldova have done remarkably well in getting projects through the GEF Activity Cycle. This finding is in opposition with most if not all the evaluative evidence collected by the Evaluation Office so far on this thorny issue. It is interesting to note that the relatively short durations found in the efficiency analysis conducted in the framework of these two CPEs apply to the whole portfolios of projects since the early '90s to December 2009. Therefore, it cannot be attributed to the relatively recent reforms of the GEF Activity Cycle introduced in 2007, which are nevertheless expected to contribute further in this positive direction.

48. In Turkey, national full-size projects took an average of 2.1 years to move from project entry to implementation – less than half the GEF global average of 5.5 years. Implementation phases have also been relatively quick: the In-situ Conservation of Genetic Diversity Project took 5.5 years and had no delays, whereas the Biodiversity and Natural Resources Management Project took 8.2 years to implement, a delay of 1.8 years, which is in line with the GEF global average. In Moldova, the processing time span is comparable to average figures for GEF projects with regard to medium size projects, i.e. 11 months on average from entry into the GEF pipeline to project start-up, and to enabling activities, i.e. three months on average from the Chief Executive Officer approval to project start-up. For two full size projects, the time from pipeline entry to project start-up is comparable to average figures. The only outlier is constituted by a third full size project, which preparation time was exceptionally long as it lasted 6 years. This extensive duration was due to the particularities of this specific project.

49. The average costs of project preparation in Turkey are estimated at 3.3% of total GEF contribution, which translates into an average of about \$100,000 for full-size projects. This corresponds to about one third of the amount officially available under the previous GEF Activity Cycle. Also in Moldova, average preparation cost across all national projects was found to be very reasonable in comparison with the costs identified in previous CPEs.

50. National stakeholder perceptions in both countries expressed negative views on the GEF Activity Cycle. In Turkey this is mainly related to delays experienced in approval the three recent full-size projects on climate change that are about to start implementation. In Moldova, several stakeholders considered that GEF project development procedures are difficult in comparison to procedures of other donors, and that the preparation of an FSP as overly time-consuming in particular due to the complexity of feasibility studies. As repeatedly highlighted by previous evaluations undertaken by the Office –including the recently completed OPS4– usually delays happen before projects enter the pipeline. This includes project idea development at national level and the frequent back and forth of Project Identification Forms between GEF Agencies and the GEF Secretariat.

Conclusion 9: The GEF focal point mechanism has not been fully effective in its coordination and strategic guidance roles, including sharing of information and M&E.

51. The national focal point mechanism is expected to play a key role in providing information and coordinating information sharing among the GEF national stakeholders. In this respect, diversities and commonalities in the two countries have been analyzed and are discussed below.

52. In Moldova, the environment minister position covers both roles of GEF political and operational focal point, which might negatively affect the efficiency of the GEF focal point mechanism. Moreover, this position has often changed in recent years. All these factors resulted in a lack of strategic guidance on how best to take advantage of GEF support. In Turkey, the national focal point mechanism and the Externally Supported Projects Division in Ministry of Environment and Forestry are effectively coordinating GEF support. However, M&E and information sharing between GEF Agencies have not yet been sufficiently addressed.

53. In Moldova, project offices manage other donor-funded projects in addition to the GEF ones. GEF projects are seen as a useful tool to maintain a core team of qualified experts, which have built expertise for preparing, managing, and implementing also other donor-funded projects. However, their existence is very much dependent on available funding and they often work in isolation. In Turkey, GEF Agencies often worked in a complementary rather than competitive way. However, many GEF projects operate as islands and not always information has been shared between projects implemented by different agencies. Moreover, the evaluation found limited evidence of GEF Agencies being corporately involved in their GEF activities. The country strategies and programs

of the World Bank and UNDP, the two main GEF Agencies in Turkey, don't give strong support to GEF issues outside of their GEF financed projects.

54. In both countries M&E, an important element for learning, mostly happened at the project level, and to date was mainly carried out by GEF Agencies. Completed enabling activities have neither been evaluated nor closed by a completion report. While no portfolio monitoring is carried out in Moldova, in Turkey it concerns only national projects basic data as project title, agency and focal area; financial information on GEF grant and cofinancing; and project cycle dates (entry into pipeline, approval and start up), project objectives, outcomes and implementation progress. Other substantive data as actual achievements at completion and lessons learned is not maintained.

55. Another related issue is the fact that M&E information does not always flow from GEF Agencies to national partners and vice versa. In Turkey, M&E is a matter of concern for the national stakeholders themselves, and during the scoping mission many of them explicitly asked the evaluation team to look into M&E issues. As a result, the evaluation found that often agencies have not fully involved the focal point mechanism project level M&E activities. On the national side, M&E information does not always circulate transversally among different ministries involved in GEF activities, and sometimes not even among different departments and divisions of the same ministry. The Externally Supported Projects Division in the Ministry of Environment and Forestry is not explicitly mandated for M&E activities, nor has specific M&E skills to satisfactorily perform portfolio level M&E and/or supervise the execution of M&E tasks at project level.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Operational Focal Points involvement in M&E activities should be increased by sharing M&E information, supporting country portfolio level M&E and providing M&E training.

56. GEF agencies should be encouraged to systematically involve focal points in M&E activities and share M&E information with them in a timely manner in order to ease country portfolio level M&E by focal points. Monitoring and evaluation of enabling activities should be strengthened.

57. Some M&E information and support for focal points is already provided by the CSP through its website and through its sub-regional workshops, with support of the GEF Evaluation Office. These activities should continue in GEF-5. In addition, provision of specific M&E training to the national focal point mechanism should be considered.

58. The Evaluation Office, in collaboration with the GEF Secretariat on monitoring issues, should consider how to strengthen the role of operational focal points in monitoring and evaluation in the revision of the M&E Policy.

Recommendation 2: GEF Agencies should be encouraged to give stronger support to environment issues outside their GEF supported projects, and promote up-scaling with partner governments.

59. When the GEF catalytic approach is properly pursued and implemented and when strategic information sharing between agencies occurs, positive multiplier effects can happen. This has been the case when the Turkish Government capitalized on the experiences of the GEF supported and UNDP implemented initiatives in the climate change focal area, and developed a proposal to benefit from the Clean Technology Fund of the World Bank. Similarly, in Moldova the relevant central authorities took full advantage of the positive results achieved by GEF supported projects, most of which implemented by the World Bank in the POPs focal area. This triggered up-scaling through the preparation of other two projects funded by UNEP and the Canadian International Development Agency. These positive examples should be encouraged.

60. Those GEF Agencies who have not yet done so could promote global environmental benefits with the partner government also outside their GEF supported projects. Given the comparatively small role the GEF can play, it has to be catalytic to ensure that any success will be replicated on a scale that can make a difference. The amount of GEF funding, compared with the major global environmental benefits it has been mandated to achieve, is clearly limited. Opportunities for further promoting with partner governments' environmental issues which go beyond GEF funded projects should be pursued whenever possible.

Annex 1. Main conclusions and recommendations to the GEF Council from the two Country Portfolio Evaluations included in the Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report 2010

Conclusions			Recommendations
Results	Relevance	Efficiency	
Turkey			
• GEF support to biodiversity in Turkey has contributed to achievement of significant results, including raising awareness and building capacity. • GEF support of marine international waters projects has contributed to strengthening Turkey’s commitments to global and regional cooperation to reduce the overexploitation of fish stocks and land- and sea-based pollution in the region. • SGP has been a major success in Turkey, providing many examples of how to meet both global and local objectives. • Results in other focal areas are limited, but in some cases, small funding has important catalytic effects.	• GEF support has been relevant to Turkey’s sustainable development agenda and its environmental priorities, with the exception of land degradation. • The GEF paved the way for implementing environmental aspects of the EU accession process. Turkish initiatives in this regard will now increase the sustainability of impacts started under GEF. • GEF support in Turkey has neither been fully nationally owned nor fully country-driven, but this has improved in recent years.	• GEF Agencies have worked in a complementary way. However, there are few synergies and little cross-agency learning. Recently the situation is improving. • The traditionally top-down approach to forest management in Turkey applied to nature protection and cases of insufficient coordination caused delays, which have decreased recently. • The complexity of the GEF Activity Cycle has not been a barrier to project development in Turkey. • There is little evidence that M&E is contributing to increased efficiency.	• Increase focal points’ involvement in M&E activities by sharing M&E information, supporting country portfolio level M&E, and providing M&E training. • GEF Agencies should be encouraged to give stronger support to GEF issues outside the GEF supported projects in which they are involved, and promote up-scaling with partner governments.
Moldova			
• In the biodiversity focal area, while bringing significant support to Moldova in fulfilling its obligations under the UNCBD, progress towards impact is modest. • In the climate change focal area, GEF support had limited results, but considering up-coming projects, there is potential to achieve meaningful impacts, provided that successful replication takes place. • In the international waters focal area, it is too early to assess the results of the two national FSPs, only one being completed recently. Results of other projects are limited. • Through a mixed and staged combination of enabling activities and an FSP, GEF support to the POPs focal area has been of strategic importance.	• Overall, GEF support has been relevant to national sustainable development and environmental priorities, to international conventions, and regional processes as well as to the GEF mandate, except for combating land degradation. • Country ownership is limited mainly due to the absence of coordination and clear strategy towards GEF support.	• Total processing time span is comparable to average figures for GEF projects. There are mixed perceptions on complexity and duration of GEF project preparation and implementation procedures although the general view is rather positive. • Project offices set up under the Ministry of Environment, GEF Agencies, and some Convention focal points play a key role in preparation and implementation of projects. • The dissemination of information and sharing of lessons learned is limited. • The GEF focal point mechanism has not provided sufficient strategic guidance and coordination.	• GEF should fully support the introduction of the SGP in Moldova. • GEF should provide guidance and set up requirements on dissemination of project results and lessons learned.