

GEF Council Meeting
May 25 - 27, 2014
Cancun, Mexico

Agenda Item 18

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE SECOND PEER REVIEW OF THE GEF EVALUATION FUNCTION

**(Prepared by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office in consultation with the
GEF Secretariat, the GEF Agencies and STAP)**

1. The Independent Evaluation Office, the GEF Secretariat, STAP and the GEF Agencies have received the report of the professional peer review of the GEF evaluation function with great appreciation and gratitude. The peer review has been undertaken by a highly professional and internationally exemplary panel and has delivered a report, which is highly relevant to the future of the evaluation function in GEF-6.

2. This professional peer review was the second; the first one took place in parallel with OPS4 and was presented to the GEF Council in June 2009. The general perspective of the first peer review was that independence of the GEF Evaluation Office appeared to be strong; the credibility of its evaluations was high; and evaluations were mainly utilized for decisions in the Council. It posed as a challenge that evaluations should also be useful for other partners in the GEF. The Office has focused on this in the GEF-5 replenishment period through additional efforts in knowledge management and communication, and through more intensive consultations with stakeholders before, during and after evaluations. The second peer review confirms the findings of the first peer review and judges that the efforts to increase the usefulness of evaluations for other stakeholders than the Council have overall not produced what was hoped for. The report of the peer review identifies the continuing challenge of increasing usefulness for all stakeholders as the major one for the GEF-6 period.

3. We fully concur with this conclusion. The challenge is to build “learning coalitions” around evaluations, including stakeholders that currently feel that evaluations do not deliver knowledge and learning opportunities to them. The GEF Independent Evaluation Office has achieved this in some of the Country Portfolio Evaluations, culminating in a joint evaluation with the Government of Sri Lanka, which built a learning coalition for how GEF support in Sri Lanka could be further improved and strengthened. Similar learning coalitions have been achieved with STAP for the impact evaluations of the Office, and for the interactions of the Office with the evaluation offices of the GEF Agencies. Other promising efforts have been undertaken with the Secretariat, through for example the focal area strategy evaluations and the interactions with the operations team in the Secretariat on project cycle issues, verification of GEF-5 results, and results based management in general. Consultations with the GEF coordinating units in the Agencies have so far been restricted to interactions in interagency meetings, which have often been perceived as pro-forma due to time limits that need to be met. It is clear that the greatest challenge lies in this area.

4. Increasing the usefulness of evaluations is not only a challenge for the GEF Independent Evaluation Office; it is also a challenge for all GEF stakeholders to engage seriously and to identify where evaluations could be helpful and useful, so that this can be taken up in a fruitful manner. The Office will need to play a strengthened role in learning and knowledge sharing in the GEF network and will look at the possibility of joint review exercises on specific topics with the participation of the Secretariat and the Agencies, as well as representatives of countries, to foster learning, without compromising the independence of evaluations.

5. The peer review report contains excellent suggestions on how the Independent Evaluation Office could interact with partners in the GEF to increase the usefulness of evaluations, from programming evaluations over a replenishment phase to interacting on key questions, approaches and the implementation of the evaluation. This may have implications for the productivity of the Office for the Council. Currently four annual reports are presented to the Council. The Council is invited to consider whether it could receive a reduced number of reports, so that evaluations

could be better focused on increased utility for the GEF partnership. In many multilateral agencies the evaluation offices prepare one annual evaluation report, focusing on overall achievements of the agency (without turning these reports into a reduced version of the Overall Performance Study). The Council could invite the Independent Evaluation Office, the Secretariat, STAP and the GEF Agencies to consider potential learning coalitions for GEF-6 and for the Independent Evaluation Office to take this into account in its programming proposals for GEF-6.

6. The Independent Evaluation Office, the GEF Secretariat, STAP and the GEF Agencies welcome the specific recommendations of the Peer Review Panel and look forward to working in a consultative fashion to prepare a relevant and useful programming of evaluations for GEF-6, which would be formulated under the direction and leadership of the new Director of Evaluation in the second half of 2014 and presented to the Council at its second meeting in 2014. We would like to express our gratitude and thanks to the professional peer panel for the time and energy they have put into this exercise.