

Contributions to Global and Regional Agreements

Review of GEF International Waters Program

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Foreword

The GEF Council, at its meetings in December 1999 and May 2000, requested a review of GEF operations prior to the next replenishment, which began in 2001.¹ This review, the Second Study of GEF's Overall Performance (OPS2) was carried out by a fully independent team and completed at the end of 2001. The OPS2 is the third major GEF-wide review to take place since the Facility was created.² Among the broad topics the OPS2 team assessed were:

- Program results and initial impacts
- GEF overall strategies and programmatic impacts
- Achievement of the objectives of GEF's operational policies and programs
- Review of modalities of GEF support
- Follow-up of OPS1

To facilitate the work of the OPS2 team, GEF's monitoring and evaluation team, in cooperation with the implementing agencies, decided to undertake program studies in the biodiversity, climate change, and international waters focal areas. The role of these program studies was to provide portfolio information and inputs for the OPS2 team's consideration.

The present report was prepared by Andrea Merla, program manager in the GEF Secretariat land and water resources team, as a background document to the International Waters Program Study. The report of that study has been published³ and is available on the GEF website or from the GEF monitoring and evaluation team.

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¹ Joint Summary of the Chairs, GEF Council Meeting, December 8-9, 1999, and GEF/C.15/11.

² The first two studies, respectively, were *Global Environment Facility: Independent Evaluation of the Pilot Phase*, UNDP, UNEP, and World Bank (1994) and Porter, G., R. Cléménçon, W. Ofosu-Amaah, and M. Philips, *Study of GEF's Overall Performance*, Global Environment Facility (1998).

³ Bewers, J.M. and J.I. Uitto, *International Waters Program Study*, Evaluation Report #1-01. Global Environment Facility (2001).

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Introduction

Existing legal agreements related to the protection of international water bodies establish a continuum—from general norms of conduct for all nations and private actors, to specific commitments to achieve broad goals and targets, and agreements on more detailed sector-by-sector rules, standards, and recommended practices.

Fundamental global norms for the conservation of marine resources and preservation and protection of the marine environment are established in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which entered into force in 1994. Detailed rules and standards exist at the global level to control pollution from ships, including at-sea waste disposal, and to protect whales, a target species that migrates worldwide. Other global approaches include non-binding codes of conduct, e.g., for managing fisheries responsibly. Otherwise, the legal frameworks on marine pollution and fisheries are mostly regional, in keeping with the scale of coastal marine and marginal sea systems.

A similar situation prevails in fresh water. There are hundreds of international agreements focused on particular transboundary systems. On May 21, 1997, the global Convention on Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses was opened for signature. It establishes a framework and provides benchmark norms for nations to negotiate specific agreements resolving transboundary freshwater environmental problems.

Global norms, through general principles and objectives, establish goals and mechanisms for all national

and collective action. These are translated, through specialized agreements at national and regional levels, into more specific goals and commitments. Recognizing the need to respond to site-specific circumstances and the particular mix of problems in a given water body, specific geographic instruments enable policymakers to determine priorities and comprehensively address them. Thus, for land-based sources of marine pollution, including the riverborne transport of substances to the sea, the UNCLOS framework calls on governments to elaborate more detailed rules and guidelines and to harmonize policies at the regional level to account for regional differences. Numerous regional seas conventions⁴ have specific protocols on land-based pollution.

The world community took one step closer to acknowledging that nations must address water-body issues in a site-specific manner, regionally and nationally, by concluding the Global Program of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA) in late 1995. Its comprehensive and logical approach to national and transboundary waters issues should help nations adopt new institutional arrangements linking freshwater basin management with downstream marine and coastal impacts, such as the revised 1996 protocol on land-based sources and activities for the Mediterranean Sea. This linkage is reinforced by the 1997 International Watercourses Convention.

Another example of the relationship between global frameworks and specialized agreements may be found in the fisheries sector. A call for selective fishing gear

⁴ The Abidjan, Barcelona, Bucharest, Cartagena, Jeddah, Kuwait, Lima, Nairobi, and Noumea Conventions (UNEP Regional Seas Program)

and practices and a precautionary approach to fisheries management at the global level was set out in the 1995 UN Agreement on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. Implementing UNCLOS leverages application and elaboration in particular regional fisheries agreements. As specific improvements are developed and applied at national and regional levels, they may be adopted elsewhere and provide the basis for agreement on more detailed global rules.

Existing international agreements go only part of the way toward achieving comprehensive problem diagnosis and specialized solutions. Agreements on freshwater systems rarely integrate water quality with predominant water allocation concerns, nor do they embody the idea of allocating water for environmental services, such as groundwater recharge or freshwater flow to maintain downstream ecosystems. Although the 1997 International Watercourses Convention now remedies this situation in principle, it has not been applied at the level of specific transboundary agreements. For the most part, regional marine agreements have not linked consideration of pollution with habitat modification and international fisheries, nor with eco-

system-based and adaptive management approaches.

Non-binding soft law complements binding legal arrangements, helping countries overcome barriers to action. Examples range from Agenda 21 (chapters 17 and 18) and the GPA to the Barbados Action Program for Small Island States. The great value of non-binding documents is that they work around the edges of binding commitments to expand, guide, and influence action.

Completing this common global understanding are important links to other global conventions such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), and the Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). In fact, these initiatives provide a new opportunity for cooperating nations to link many different programs and instruments into comprehensive regional approaches to address international waters issues. Joint multicountry initiatives tackling transboundary freshwater, coastal, and marine issues are essential for achieving the goal of a collective response to these important conventions.

Regional Review

This chapter will review GEF actions that have contributed to the development and implementation of water-related global and regional environmental agreements. The review will be regionally based to emphasize linkages between global frameworks and regional responses, and between general principles and the specificities of the transboundary issues of each region. Abbreviated references will be made to conventions and agreements. GEF projects will be identified in general through their geographical focus.

Southeastern South America

The continental shelf of southeastern South America is one of the largest and most productive globally. Its width increases progressively from a minimum at the mouth of the São Francisco River in Northeastern Brazil to the huge expanses of the Patagonian shelf of Argentina. Its ecosystems and living marine resources are threatened by both over-exploitation and ship- and land-based sources of pollution, including sediments. A major area of degradation is the Rio de La Plata estuary, where two river basins, the Paraná and the Uruguay, drain into the shallow coastal sea. As the source of an increasingly large load of contaminated sediments and chemical pollutants, the Paraná basin, one of the world's largest, and endowed with unique wetland ecosystems (the Pantanal), contributes heavily to degrading estuarine and marine ecosystems. The discharge of untreated municipal and industrial wastewater from greater Buenos Aires into the Rio de La Plata is the single main source of pollution in the region.

⁵ *Uruguay Marine Management Project*

⁶ *Argentina Coastal Contamination Prevention and Sustainable Fisheries Management*

⁷ International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 (MARPOL 73/78)

Eight GEF international waters projects have been developed in this region, each addressing different ecosystems, water bodies, and transboundary threats. While all of these various projects respond to specific country requests and facilitate the solution of a whole array of transboundary problems, the clustering of these projects is beginning to show a coherent pattern. Clear synergies are emerging, together with an opportunity to develop a coordinated solution to the problems threatening the whole region's transboundary environmental resources. Furthermore, these international waters projects are supporting and facilitating, in each country and the region, a collective response to the requirements of all relevant global environmental treaties and programs of action.

Four projects, *Integrated Management of Land-Based Activities in the São Francisco Basin*, *Environmental Protection of the Rio de La Plata and Its Maritime Front*, *Uruguay Coast*⁵ (under preparation), and *Argentina Patagonia Shelf*⁶, address the problem of land-based sources of pollution along the region's coast, linking freshwater basin management with downstream marine and coastal impacts. Thus, this activity aligns well with the requirements of the Global Program of Action. The same projects contain components dedicated to establishing a common approach to the solution of problems related to navigation (i.e., MARPOL⁷), fisheries (Straddling Stocks), and the protection of coastal biological diversity (the Convention on Biological Diversity-Jakarta Mandate). Three projects (*Strategic Action Program for the Binational Basin of the Bermejo River*, the *Strate-*

gic Action Program Implementation for the Bermejo River Basin, and the *Integrated Watershed Management Program for the Pantanal and Upper Paraguay River Basin*) focus on sub-basins of the Paraná and deal primarily with the problems of accelerated erosion, land degradation, and wetland protection (UN Convention to Combat Desertification, Ramsar Convention, Convention of International Watercourses, and Convention on Biological Diversity). Finally, a project aimed at the protection of the international freshwater resources of the Guaraní Aquifer⁸ (among Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, and Paraguay) has been recently approved. Its conceptual basis responds to the principles contained in the Bellagio draft treaty⁹, and activities will be included to promote a multi-country joint management body as a way to ensure protection.

In the absence of regional environmental agreements, these projects tend to enhance the role of multicountry river commissions and waterbody-related treaties to incorporate transboundary and biodiversity considerations. The Bermejo River projects have brought environmental issues into the binational commission between Argentina and Bolivia. The Rio de La Plata project supports the two commissions between Uruguay and Argentina created under the Treaty of the Rio de La Plata and its Maritime Front and assists them sorting out overlapping responsibilities. These efforts may bring about more comprehensive frameworks for collaboration.

Caribbean Sea

The main factors affecting Caribbean ecosystems, and the regional environment as a whole, are intense maritime transport, especially of oil; nutrient and other chemical introductions from the surrounding land masses; and aggressive coastal development. The vulnerability of many small island developing states (SIDS) to transboundary threats, unsustainable resource use, and climate change is seriously hindering their development potential.

Since the GEF Pilot Phase (1991-1994), the Caribbean region has been a focus of GEF international waters projects. Seven projects are now in the portfolio; some completed, others in preparation or implementation. Two early projects were dedicated exclusively to the problems of pollution from ship wastes and oil spills, thus representing responses to UNCLOS, MARPOL, and the Cartagena Convention. Following the establishment of the GEF Operational Strategy in 1995, five additional projects are underway, all adopting a more holistic ecosystem approach. Upon the request of most Caribbean SIDS, a major project¹⁰ is being prepared to address, in an integrated fashion, coastal management, nearshore fisheries, and freshwater resources protection. Through this project, countries will respond to the criteria laid down in the Barbados Program of Action, the GPA, and the regional Cartagena Convention. The Caribbean Bays project¹¹ (addressing the discharge to the wider Caribbean of the Havana harbor) will demonstrate the effectiveness of nutrient reduction technologies, in line with the requirements of the GPA and Cartagena Convention (and its Land-Based Sources Protocol). The other three projects are addressing the Central American Caribbean coast and watersheds. The *Formulation of a Strategic Action Program for the Integrated Management of Water Resources and the Sustainable Development of the San Juan River Basin and its Coastal Zone* project promotes both binational management (between Nicaragua and Costa Rica) and protection of the biodiversity of the coastal environment (Convention on International Watercourses, GPA, Convention on Biological Diversity) through integrated basin management. The project entitled *Reduction of Pesticide Runoff to the Caribbean* addresses issues in conformity with the POPs Treaty, the GPA, and the Cartagena Convention in a number of Central American countries and Colombia. The *Environmental Protection of the Gulf of Honduras and Maritime Transport Control* project involves activities to protect ecosystems from navigational hazards (MARPOL), overfishing (Straddling Stocks), and land-based sources of pollution (the GPA and Cartagena Convention).

⁸ *Environmental Protection and Sustainable Integrated Management of the Guaraní Aquifer*

⁹ An agreement concerning the use of transboundary groundwaters

¹⁰ *Integrated Catchment Area and Coastal Zone Management in Small Island Developing States in the Caribbean*

¹¹ *Demonstrations of Innovative Approaches to the Rehabilitation of Heavily Contaminated Bays in the Wider Caribbean*

Atlantic African Coast and Watersheds

The Atlantic coast of Africa is characterized by a narrow shelf prone to the influence of oceanic currents that produce some of the richest oceanic and coastal fisheries. The coast contains the estuaries of several major rivers (including the Senegal, Volta, Niger, Congo, and Orange Rivers) draining vast inland areas. Human activity, particularly overfishing and the release of contaminants, are affecting the otherwise pristine coastal and marine environments, while freshwater scarcity is a dominant concern in the vast expanses of the arid and semi-arid regions of the Sahel and Southern Africa. Conflicts among water uses, dam construction, and over-abstraction are exacerbating international relations and threatening valuable flood plain, wetland, and coastal ecosystems.

In response to requests from many African countries, the GEF portfolio has grown to encompass the region almost in its entirety. Projects based on the Large Marine Ecosystem concept are underway, or being prepared. They cover the entire Atlantic coast and its marine ecosystems: the Canary Current (*Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem*), the Gulf of Guinea Current (*Development of a Strategic Action Program for the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem*¹²), and the Benguela Current (*Implementation of the Strategic Action Program Towards the Achievement of the Integrated Management of the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem*¹³). The major focus of these projects is the protection of fisheries (Straddling Stocks), with other components addressing land-based sources of transboundary pollution (GPA) and habitat protection (CBD). All contribute to strengthening national commitments to the implementation of the Abidjan Convention.

Freshwater projects are concentrated in arid and semi-arid West Africa (*Senegal River Basin Water and Environmental Management Program, Integrated Management of the Volta River Basin, Reversing Land and Water Degradation Trends in the Niger River Basin*, and *Integrated Management of the Lake Chad*

Basin), and are intended to ease conflicts and facilitate integrated land and water management to protect freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity. An integral part of these projects is supporting the existing basin organizations and commitments to global treaties (CCD, Convention on International Watercourses, Ramsar Convention, and CBD) and regional freshwater conventions (Fort Lamy and Niger).

Mediterranean Sea

There is a marked difference between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. The former are highly populated, industrialized, and characterized by relatively high rainfall, intense agriculture, and numerous rivers discharging contaminants. In contrast, the less densely developed southern coast features arid and semi-arid climates and the absence of major rivers¹⁴. Nutrient over-enrichment, habitat loss, overfishing, and ship wastes affect this semi-enclosed marginal sea. Although the major sources of these agents of environmental degradation can be traced essentially to European Union countries, intense development in segments of the southern and eastern coastal areas, isolated centers of industrialization, and major shipping traffic represent significant threats to habitats and living resources.

The GEF has undertaken two major efforts in the Mediterranean. One addresses the risks of oil spills along the high-density traffic lanes of the southwestern Mediterranean, by strengthening the response capabilities and harbor facilities of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia¹⁵ (MARPOL, Barcelona Convention). The second¹⁶ is an ambitious attempt that involves all the littoral countries, including those of the EU, in an effort to implement a jointly agreed program of priority actions to address land-based sources of marine pollution (GPA, Barcelona Convention). This project will also facilitate agreement on a second program of action dedicated to protecting the living resources and habitats of the region (CBD-Jakarta Mandate, Ramsar, Barcelona Convention). The project has been very successful in fostering effective collabo-

¹² Follow up to a now-completed project on the Gulf of Guinea

¹³ In addition, the Benguela project addresses the effects of fluctuating climatic regimes on oceanic fisheries as part of the sustainable management of the large marine ecosystem.

¹⁴ The contribution of the Nile is presently negligible due to the Aswan High Dam.

¹⁵ *Oil Pollution Management Project for the Southwest Mediterranean Sea*

¹⁶ *Determination of Priority Actions for the Further Elaboration and Implementation of the Strategic Action Program for the Mediterranean Sea*

ration among southern and northern littoral states, and represents the first comprehensive and concrete application of the principles and commitments of the Barcelona Convention.

Eastern and Southern Africa - Southwest Asia

This region is varied in climatic and geomorphologic conditions. It contains some of the world's most valuable freshwater and marine biodiversity and ecosystems. The previously pristine conditions of the water bodies (lakes, rivers, wetlands and coastal oceans) are seriously threatened by the ever-increasing degradation of adjoining lands. Increasing amounts of sediments and nutrients are being discharged by rivers into lakes (Victoria, Malawi, and Tanganyika) and coastal ecosystems (in Tanzania, Kenya, and Mozambique), endangering living resources and habitats. The introduction of alien species and aggressive growth of aquatic weeds are also widespread agents of degradation of the natural environment. In arid Southern Africa, excessive water abstraction from rivers and aquifers for irrigation and domestic uses pose concerns for the health of some unique freshwater ecosystems such as the Okavango Delta.

A number of international waters projects are being implemented or prepared in the region, most of them focused on transboundary freshwater ecosystems. Four projects, however, deal with marine issues. The *Implementation of the Strategic Action Program for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden* project, being implemented by the regional body PERGSA (Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment Program), established by the Cairo Declaration, is aimed at implementing agreed measures for environmental protection of the still largely unspoiled water ecosystems and living resources of the region (Jeddah Convention, CBD, GPA). As a complement to this regional preventive effort, the *Gulf of Aqaba Environmental Action Plan* project addresses the only major pollution hot spot of the Red Sea (GPA, CBD-Jakarta Mandate). The protection of globally valuable marine biodiversity (e.g.,

Aldabra Atoll) from navigational hazards is the object of the *Western Indian Ocean Islands Oil Spill Contingency Planning* project (MARPOL, CBD, Nairobi Convention), while the *Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries* project, now under preparation, will strengthen the capacity of countries to sustainably manage their fisheries resources (Straddling Stocks).

A second group of projects that deals with freshwater resources is focused on the Nile basin and Great African Rift lakes¹⁷. The *Nile Transboundary Environmental Action* project supports the Nile Vision process and addresses issues related to the Convention on International Watercourses, the CBD, and CCD. It is complemented by a medium-sized project aimed at assessing renewable groundwater resources in the Eastern Desert of Egypt, as possible alternatives to the scarce Nile surface flows¹⁸, and by the *Lake Manzala Engineered Wetlands* project, which will mitigate nutrient pollution in the Nile delta (GPA). The *Lake Victoria Environmental Management* project is ongoing, while follow-up projects are being prepared for Lake Malawi¹⁹ and Lake Tanganyika (given the recent completion of GEF Pilot Phase projects for both lakes). All these efforts address major transboundary problems, such as overfishing, sediment and nutrient loads, pollution hotspots, and aquatic weeds with the overall goal of protecting habitats and biodiversity within a sustainable development framework (CBD, CCD, Convention on International Watercourses). The Pilot Phase project *Pollution Control and Other Measures to Protect Biodiversity in Lake Tanganyika* was successful in facilitating the drafting of a lake convention. The second-phase project under preparation²⁰ will lead to its finalization.

In Southern Africa, GEF is working with SADC²¹ and various countries of the region to prepare two demonstration projects dealing with the prevention and eradication of aquatic weeds (Ramsar, CBD)²², with groundwater protection for drought management in the Limpopo basin²³ (Bellagio draft treaty, CBD, CCD), and integrated watershed and coastal manage-

¹⁷The *Water Quality and Environmental Improvement in the Jordan Rift Valley* project (CWI, Ramsar) is the only one dealing with Southwest Asia freshwater issues.

¹⁸*Developing Renewable Ground Water Resources in Arid Lands: a Pilot Case - the Eastern Desert of Egypt*

¹⁹*Lake Malawi/Niassa/Nyasa Ecosystem Management* project

²⁰*Lake Tanganyika Strategic Action Program and the Convention*

²¹ Southern Africa Development Community

²²*Regional Project to Control Infestation and Translocation of Aquatic Weeds in the SADC Countries*

²³*Opportunities for Using Groundwater in Drought Prone Areas of the SADC Region*

ment in the Maputo basin²⁴ (CBD, CCD, and GPA). A major effort is also underway to ease water use conflicts in the Okavango basin and protect the Okavango Delta wetlands²⁵. Compliance with the Convention on International Watercourses, the Ramsar Convention, and the SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourses will be strengthened through this project. Finally, a project to harmonize and strengthen transboundary water legislation throughout the SADC region has recently entered the pipeline²⁶ (CWI, SADC Protocol).

Eastern Europe - Central Asia

In this region, major world rivers, draining vast areas with humid to semi-arid climatic conditions and several mountain ranges (the Alps, Carpathians, Urals, Caucasus, and Hindu Kush) flow into enclosed and semi-enclosed seas (the Black, Caspian, Aral and Baltic Seas). High densities of industrialization and population, intensive use of fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture and unsustainable water abstraction from rivers coupled with unregulated discharges of untreated wastes have contaminated the waters of the region that are now suffering severe environmental degradation.²⁷ Excessive nutrient discharges from agriculture and other point sources, together with problems related to maritime navigation (ballast and bilge water discharges, oil spills, and alien species introduction) and the adverse effects of highly toxic chemicals, have been identified as the major transboundary environmental threats to the waters of this region.

The GEF international waters portfolio in this region is concentrated on these highly degraded “enclosed” seas and their drainage areas: the Black Sea basin, in-

cluding the Danube and the Dnieper River basins (14 full projects and one medium-sized project), the Baltic Sea (three projects), the Caspian Sea (one project), and the Aral Sea basin (one project). The main objective of GEF action in the Black Sea basin is reducing nutrient discharges, which have been identified as the region’s main transboundary environmental problem. This is being attempted by establishing regional cooperation frameworks (several regional projects²⁸ encompassing the entire Danube, Black Sea, and Dnieper basins have enhanced compliance with the Danube Convention and facilitated agreement on a new Black Sea Convention), adopting new legislation and policies, and demonstrating new practices in the agricultural and industrial sectors²⁹. This response represents the largest coordinated multiproject effort to implement the provisions of the GPA. The projects also address issues relevant to the Ramsar and biodiversity conventions. Nutrients and the protection of living resources and habitats are the focus of the *Baltic Sea Environment* (Helsinki Convention), the *Poland Rural Environment*, the *Development and Implementation of the Lake Peipsi/Chudskoe Basin Management Plan*, and the *Lake Ohrid Management* projects (GPA, CBD, Ramsar, Straddling Stocks). The *Addressing Transboundary Environmental Issues in the Caspian Environment Program* has similar objectives (GPA, MARPOL, Straddling Stocks, Ramsar, CBD), and is facilitating the establishment of a legal multicountry agreement to protect this highly vulnerable water body. The text of a Convention for the Protection of the Caspian Sea is presently being negotiated. The *Water and Environmental Management in the Aral Sea Basin* project is an attempt to restore minimum ecosystem quality in the deltas and wetlands of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers (Ramsar).

²⁴ *Joint Integrated Management of the Maputo Basin*

²⁵ *Environmental Protection and Sustainable Management of the Okavango River Basin*

²⁶ *Integrating Transboundary Concerns into National Water Resources Management Legislation in the SADC Region*

²⁷ The demise of the Aral Sea is possibly the world’s most dramatic case of environmental degradation.

²⁸ Eight regional projects: *Danube River Basin Environmental Management*; *Developing the Danube River Basin Pollution Reduction Program*; *Strengthening Implementation of Nutrient Reduction Measures and Transboundary Cooperation in the Danube River Basin*; *Preparation of a Strategic Action Program for the Dnieper River Basin and Development of SAP Implementation Mechanisms*; *Black Sea Environmental Management*; *Developing the Implementation of the Black Sea Strategic Action Plan*; *Regional: Nutrient Reduction Program - Regional Project for the Black Sea*; *Building Environmental Citizenship to Support Transboundary Pollution Reduction in the Danube* (MSP)

²⁹ Demonstrations include the *Moldova Agricultural Pollution Control* project; *Hungary Nutrient Reduction* project; *Romania Agricultural Pollution Control* project; *Reduction of Nutrient Discharges and Methane Emissions in Rostov-on Don*; *Turkey Agricultural Pollution Control* project; and *Georgia Agricultural Research, Extension, and Training (ARET)* project.

Arctic

The plants and animals of the Arctic have adapted to its harsh climate, which is characterized by extreme variations in light and temperature and extensive snow and ice cover, creating rich but highly vulnerable ecosystems. In comparison with most other areas of the world, the Arctic remains a clean environment. Nevertheless, growing concerns exist because of climate change and the already detectable impacts of contaminants introduced from sources located both outside and inside the Arctic region. It has been demonstrated that persistent organic pollutants migrate to the north through water, air, and migratory species and are found at hazardous levels in human and animal tissues in the Arctic, very far from their origins. Hotspots of contamination with PCBs, heavy metals, hydrocarbons, and radionuclides are also present in the Arctic, especially within the Russian Arctic.

There are two GEF international waters projects in the Arctic addressing pollution originating within and outside the region. The two projects deal respectively with the Russian coastal and shelf environment and with the indigenous peoples of the Russian North. Both attempt to enhance Russia's role within the context of existing coordination and collaboration mechanisms established among the Arctic countries (the Arctic Council and its component programs). The project, *Support to the National Program of Action for the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment*, addresses the major pollution hotspots along Russia's coast to support rehabilitation measures and investments (GPA, POPs Treaty, LRTAP³⁰). The second project³¹ will assess the impacts of persistent toxic substances, including POPs, on the indigenous peoples of the Russian North and their traditional foods (POPs Treaty, CBD).

East Asian Seas

This area ranges from the northwest Pacific to the Indonesian seas in the south. It includes the South China Sea, one of the major centers of marine biological di-

versity globally³². Several major rivers, draining vast inland areas, discharge into the semi-enclosed seas of the huge continental shelf in China and Vietnam. Fisheries of global significance represent irreplaceable resources for the littoral countries. Degradation is affecting the freshwater and marine environment of the entire region. Aquatic ecosystems and marine living resources are seriously threatened by extreme population pressure in coastal areas, habitat destruction, hazards associated with maritime transport, and locally severe nutrient, sewage, and industrial contamination in the Bohai Sea, the Gulf of Thailand, and Manila Bay. The lack of regional agreements for the protection of the marine environment, largely due to territorial disputes, is a further impediment to coordinated preventive and remedial action. Unsustainable exploitation and pollution of surface and ground waters in China, which also affect the coastal and transboundary marine environments such as the Yellow Sea, have drastically altered natural regimes and pose serious threats to livelihoods and social and economic development. The Mekong River, shared by many countries and a source of life for downstream populations and wetland ecosystems, is also at risk because of conflicting uses and complex multicountry management issues.

The GEF response to problems in the regional marine ecosystems started in the Pilot Phase and developed since then into several major initiatives, some ongoing and some in preparation. The clustering of these projects, and the growing interest of the countries in exploring collaborative frameworks for the Yellow Sea, the South China Sea, and the Sulu-Celebes Sea, appears to provide opportunities for a more programmatic approach, like those demonstrated by GEF's efforts in the Plata basin-Patagonia Shelf area in South America and the Black Sea-Danube Basin in Europe.

Five international waters projects are dealing with the marine environment. A major Pilot Phase initiative³³ facilitated the building of ship waste disposal facilities in Dalian harbor in China (in the Bohai Sea), representing a response to MARPOL. The two phases

³⁰ Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution of the UN ECE

³¹ *Persistent Toxic Substances, Food Security, and Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North*

³² The Indo-west Pacific marine biogeographic province has been recognized as the global center of marine shallow-water tropical biodiversity.

³³ *China Ship-Waste Disposal Project*

of the East Asian Seas project³⁴ embrace the whole region and focus on issues of pollution and contamination by applying the tool of integrated coastal zone management, using demonstrations and public-private partnerships (GPA, CBD-Jakarta Mandate, various IMO conventions). The *Reversing Degradation Trends in the South China Sea* project is adopting an ecosystem approach to address a broader range of issues, including biodiversity, habitat protection, and fisheries. It is advancing multicountry cooperation in support of a number of international agreements (GPA, CBD-Jakarta Mandate, Ramsar, Straddling Stocks). The *Reducing Environmental Stress in the Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem* project is building a framework for cooperation among the littoral countries to tackle pollution and fisheries degradation (Straddling Stocks, CBD, GPA). A project to address the critical issue of navigational environmental hazards (spills, ballast water discharges, and alien species transfer) through the introduction of electronic precision navigation techniques (the “Marine Electronic Highway”) is under preparation³⁵. These innovative navigation tools will be tested on a pilot basis in the dense traffic area of the Malacca Straits with a view to subsequent expansion along the region’s high-traffic lanes (MARPOL).

Three projects deal with freshwater issues. One³⁶ will help the Mekong River Commission to incorporate environmental considerations into its water utilization framework in an attempt to secure the protection of downstream wetlands (Tonle Sap) and deltaic ecosystems (Convention on International Watercourses, Ramsar). A second project will address management of the over-exploited water resources of the Hai basin, draining to the Yellow Sea³⁷ (GPA). The third will complement the Tumen River Area Development

Program by focusing on the protection of aquatic biodiversity (CBD)³⁸.

Other Areas and Global Projects

This review of GEF’s contributions to the implementation of water-related global and regional environmental agreements would be incomplete without reference to some additional projects that—either because of their global or continental nature or their focus on geographically isolated areas—have not been covered in the previous sections.

Among them is an effort to prevent the frequently devastating environmental effects of the introduction of alien species through ballast water discharges (MARPOL)³⁹. The project will test various ballast water management schemes in six major harbors (in China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Ukraine, and Iran) and will assist the International Maritime Organization in preparing a new legal treaty, or protocol, on ballast water discharges.

The Small Island States of the South Pacific, threatened by climate change, overfishing, dwindling freshwater supplies, and coastal development, are the focus of another regional project⁴⁰. This initiative will strengthen regional cooperation on management of transboundary fisheries and will introduce integrated land and water management concepts and habitat protection through numerous demonstrations. The project will be implemented under the umbrella of the Noumea Convention, and will strengthen support for the Barbados Program of Action and compliance with the CBD-Jakarta Mandate, the FCCC, and the Straddling Stocks agreement. Another project⁴¹ now under preparation will improve the management of the

³⁴ The first, started during the Pilot Phase (*Prevention and Management of Marine Pollution in the East Asian Seas*), is now completed. It has been followed by a second phase concentrated on private-public partnerships, now under implementation (*Building Partnerships for the Environmental Management of the East Asian Seas - PEMSEA*).

³⁵ *Development of a Regional Marine Electronic Highway in the East Asia Seas*, with a first phase in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore

³⁶ *Mekong River Water Utilization Project*

³⁷ *Hai River Basin Water Resources Management*

³⁸ *Preparation of a TDA/SAP for the Tumen River Area, Its Coastal Regions, and Related Northeast Environs*

³⁹ *Removal of Barriers to the Effective Implementation of Ballast Water Control and Management Measures in Developing Countries*

⁴⁰ *Implementation of the Strategic Action Program for the Pacific Small Island Developing States*

⁴¹ *Integrated Management of the Humboldt Current Large Marine Ecosystem (HCLME)*

Humboldt Current fisheries in Latin America (Straddling Stocks, CBD). The *Development and Protection of the Coastal and Marine Environment in Sub-Saharan Africa* project will strengthen the compliance of many coastal African countries with the Abidjan and Nairobi Conventions and the GPA.

Several projects, ongoing or under preparation, specifically address issues related to the implementation

of the new POPs Convention. Two deal with testing alternatives to DDT for disease vector control in Central America and Africa. Another deals with demonstrating the effectiveness of non-combustion technologies for the elimination of POP stockpiles, with emphasis on PCBs. Two projects involve assessments of the impact of persistent toxic substances on a regional basis, and management requirements of countries in respect to persistent toxic substances.

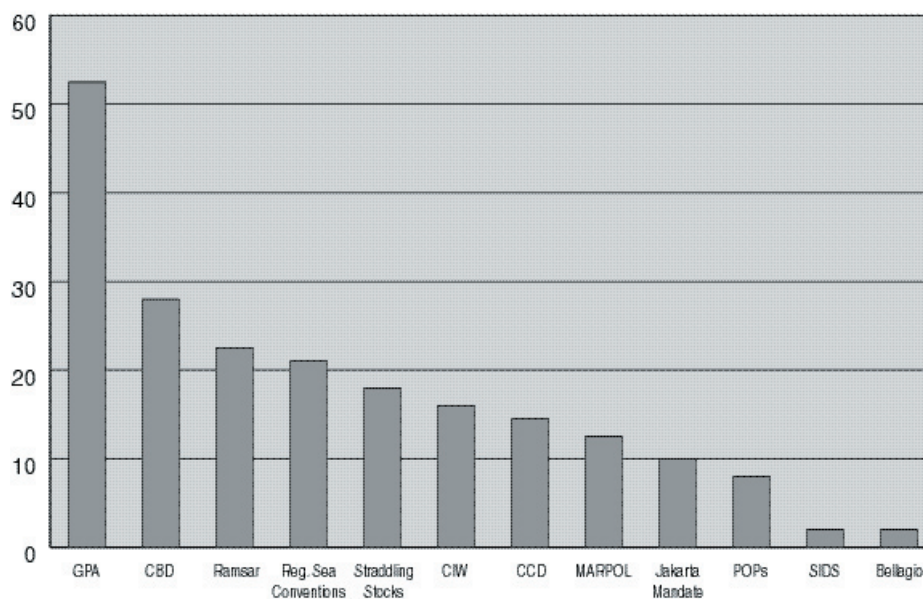
Conclusions

The strengthening of compliance with global and regional environmental treaties and adoption of the recommendations of action programs and other soft laws are not the primary purpose of GEF international waters projects. Nevertheless, through the adoption of an ecosystem approach, or water-body and basin framework, such projects contribute greatly to the implementation of the provisions of a variety of international environmental agreements. Indeed, one of the strengths of GEF interventions is that they deal with water bodies in a holistic manner, thereby ensuring that the preventive and remedial actions taken are consistent with a collective response to relevant agreements—whether bilateral, multilateral, regional, or truly global. Furthermore, they allow countries to address issues in a way that deals not only with national concerns and the internal effects of national activities,

but also external effects of national activities and the effects of other countries' activities on the national jurisdiction concerned (i.e., transboundary causes and effects). The GEF approach of fostering regional arrangements in which countries can consider both individual and collective causes and effects provides even greater benefits to international agreements.

The foregoing regional review of international waters projects has highlighted how, in each region, the various global and regional agreements enter into play and interact through the clustering of projects within river basins, geomorphologic regions, and large marine ecosystems. Figure 1 shows the numbers of international waters projects that correlate to specific international agreements, including global conventions.

Figure 1
Numbers of GEF International Waters Projects Correlating with Specific International Agreements



Thus, through GEF actions to reduce nutrient pollution in the Black Sea basin, the provisions and objectives of the GPA as translated into regional commitments by the Danube and Bucharest conventions, are strengthened by compliance with the Ramsar Convention and vice versa, while beneficial consequences are also accrued in respect to biodiversity preservation. Many projects in different regions address the fragile ecosystems of coastal environments where marine and freshwater systems interact, hydrodynamic processes are more intense, and the impact of human activities is being increasingly manifest. All these projects enhance synergies between the Jakarta Mandate and the GPA, and in some instances MARPOL, as is the case with projects in the Yellow Sea, along the Patagonian coast and shelf, and in the Southern Mediterranean. Where freshwater scarcity represents the major transboundary threat to ecosystems, the interplay of the Ramsar, international watercourses, and desertification conventions has provided a basis for the design of a number of GEF projects, such as the Okavango and the Niger basin projects.

The GEF, through its international waters focal area, can thus be seen as a major, or possibly the major, facilitator of the implementation, and increased adoption⁴², of international water laws, action plans, and regional environmental protection agreements. By far the main topic of the relevant agreements is pollution from land-based sources (GPA), followed by loss of biodiversity (CBD), fisheries over-exploitation (Straddling Stocks), loss of wetlands (Ramsar), and hazards associated with shipping (MARPOL).

This function of the GEF and the considerable service provided to international aquatic environmental pro-

tection agreements have gone largely unnoticed. Several global conventions and their secretariats have not taken full advantage of the opportunities arising from GEF projects to advance sectoral goals and foster their translation into national legislation and policies. The holistic approach that underlies the GEF strategy and the majority of its projects is tangibly demonstrating how the effectiveness of international environmental law can be enhanced through collective arrangements and responses. However, a satisfactory level of synergy has yet to be achieved with existing international convention mechanisms, such as their consultative meetings of contracting parties and secretariats, that would further strengthen the catalytic role of the GEF, the replication of successful demonstrations, and global awareness of, and compliance with, international agreements⁴³.

The role of regional conventions and international river and lake basin organizations may be of critical importance for the success and sustainability of GEF initiatives. The present review has documented GEF support for strengthening several basin organizations and the regional seas conventions (UNEP) to address transboundary issues. The GEF has also been instrumental in advancing new multicountry agreements for the management of shared water bodies, such as Lake Tanganyika and the Caspian Sea. Most of these institutions are both politically⁴⁴ and financially weak, however, and are frequently limited to advisory functions. Efforts should be made in GEF projects to institute mechanisms aimed at strengthening the financial self-sustainability of these organizations and enhance their wider recognition, acceptance, and implementation.⁴⁵

⁴² Some of the agreements referred to in this review have not yet entered into force (e.g., the Convention on International Watercourses).

⁴³ Ways to encourage information exchanges among GEF IW projects, national and international executing agencies, NGOs, and regional/global agreements could be identified based on the framework of the IW:LEARN project (*Strengthening Capacity for Global Knowledge-Sharing in International Waters*).

⁴⁴ The prevalence of environmental or water ministries and the lack of interministerial committees at national levels are additional elements undermining the effectiveness of these organizations.

⁴⁵ An example of innovative approaches is the Marine Electronic Highway, a private-public venture being tested for the first time in the international waters projects of the GEF. This information infrastructure would greatly enhance navigational safety and promote compliance with, and enforcement of, national and international marine law. A small fraction of the revenues generated would be allocated to a regional environment fund.

Annex 1: Conventions and Agreements— International Waters

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat - Ramsar (1971)	UN Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) (1992)
International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 (MARPOL 73/78)	Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (1994)
UNEP Regional Seas Program: the Barcelona (1976), Kuwait (1978), Abidjan (1981), Lima (1981), Jeddah (1982), Cartagena (1983), Nairobi (1985), Noumea (1986), Bucharest (1992), and Guatemala (2002) Conventions, and their partner agreements (Helsinki 1974, OSPAR 1992)	Barbados Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island States (1994)
Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (1979)	UN Agreement on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (1995)
UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (1982)	Global Program of Action (GPA) for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (1995)
Bellagio Draft Agreement Concerning the Use of Transboundary Groundwaters (1987)	Jakarta Mandate on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity (1995)
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) (1991)	UN Convention on Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (1997)
	Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) (2001)

Annex 2: GEF International Waters Projects

Completed

Project Title	IA	Project Type
Global: Support for Regional Oceans Training Program	UNDP	FP
Global: World Water Vision	WB	MSP
Africa: Water Pollution Control and Biodiversity Conservation in the Gulf of Guinea LME	UNDP	FP
Africa: Pollution Control and Other Measures to Protect Biodiversity in Lake Tanganyika	UNDP	FP
Africa: Oil Pollution Management Project for the Southwest Mediterranean Sea	WB	FP
Asia/Pacific: Prevention and Management of Marine Pollution in the East Asian Seas	UNDP	FP
Caribbean: Planning and Management of Heavily Contaminated Bays and Coastal Areas in the Wider Caribbean	UNDP	FP
Caribbean: Wider Caribbean Initiative on Ship-Generated Waste	WB	FP
CE Europe: Danube River Basin Environmental Management	UNDP	FP
CE Europe: Black Sea Environmental Management	UNDP	FP
CE Europe: Developing the Danube River Basin Pollution Reduction Program	UNDP	FP
CE Europe: Developing the Implementation of the Black Sea Strategic Action Plan	UNDP	FP
Latin America/Caribbean: Wider Caribbean Initiative for Ship-Generated Waste	WB	FP
Latin America/Caribbean: Strategic Action Program for the Binational Basin of the Bermejo River	UNEP	FP
China: Ship Waste Disposal	WB	FP

Ongoing

Project Title	IA	Project Type
Global: Regionally Based Assessment of Persistent Toxic Substances	UNEP	FP
Global: Development of National Implementation Plans for the Management of Persistent Organic Pollutants	UNEP	FP
Global: Removal of Barriers to the Effective Implementation of Ballast Water Control and Management Measures in Developing Countries	UNDP	FP
Global: Removal of Barriers to the Introduction of Cleaner Artisanal Gold Mining and Extraction Technologies	UNDP	MSP
Global: Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA)	UNEP	FP
Global: The Role of the Coastal Ocean in the Disturbed and Undisturbed Nutrient and Carbon Cycles	UNEP	MSP
Global: Strengthening Capacity for Global Knowledge-Sharing in International Waters	UNDP	FP
Global: Reduction of Environmental Impact from Tropical Shrimp Trawling Through Introduction of By-catch Technologies and Change of Management	UNEP/FAO	FP
Africa: Implementation of the SAP for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden	UNDP/WB/UNEP	FP
Africa: Lake Victoria Environmental Management	WB	FP
Africa: Implementation of the Strategic Action Program Towards Achievement of the Integrated Management of the Benguela Current LME	UNDP	FP
Africa: Nile Transboundary Environmental Action Project – Phase 1	WB	FP
Africa: Reversal of Land and Water Degradation Trends in the Lake Chad Basin Ecosystem	UNDP/WB	FP
Africa: Senegal River Basin Water and Environment Management Project	WB	FP
Africa: Environmental Protection and Sustainable Management of the Okavango River Basin	UNDP	FP
Africa: Development and Protection of Coastal and Marine Environment in Sub-Saharan Africa	UNEP	MSP
Africa: Western Indian Ocean Islands Oil Spill Contingency Planning	WB	FP
Argentina: Coastal Contamination Prevention and Sustainable Fisheries Management	WB	FP
Asia/Pacific: Reducing Environmental Stress in the Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem	UNDP	FP
Asia/Pacific: Mekong River Basin Water Utilization Project	WB	FP
Asia/Pacific: Reversing Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand	UNEP	FP
Asia/Pacific: Building Partnerships for the Environmental Protection and Management of the East Asian Seas	UNDP	FP
Asia/Pacific: Preparation of a Strategic Action Program and Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis for the Tumen River Area, Its Coastal Regions, and Related Northeast Asian Environments	UNDP	FP
Asia/Pacific: Implementation of the Strategic Action Program of the Pacific Small Island Developing States	UNDP	FP
Brazil: Integrated Watershed Management Program for the Pantanal and Upper Paraguay River Basin	UNEP	FP

Project Title	IA	Project Type
Brazil: Integrated Management of Land-Based Activities in the Sao Francisco Basin	UNEP	FP
CE Europe (Black Sea Basin): Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technology (TEST) to Reduce Transboundary Pollution in the Danube River Basin	UNDP	MSP
CE Europe (Black Sea Basin): Preparation of a Strategic Action Program for the Dnieper River Basin and Development of SAP Implementation Mechanisms	UNDP	FP
CE Europe: Addressing Transboundary Environmental Issues in the Caspian Environment Program	UNDP/ UNEP/WB	FP
CE Europe: Lake Ohrid Management	WB	FP
CE Europe: Water and Environmental Management in the Aral Sea Basin	WB	FP
CE Europe (Black Sea Basin): Building Environmental Citizenship to Support Transboundary Pollution Reduction in the Danube – A Pilot Project	UNDP	FP
CE Europe (Black Sea Basin): Danube/Black Sea Basin Strategic Partnership on Nutrient Reduction – Phase I	WB/UNDP/ UNEP	FP
CE Europe (Black Sea Basin): Strengthening Implementation of Nutrient Reduction Measures and Transboundary Cooperation in the Danube River Basin—Phase I	WB/UNDP/ UNEP	FP
Egypt: Developing Renewable Ground Water Resources in Arid Lands – A Pilot Case in the Eastern Desert of Egypt	UNDP	FP
Egypt: Lake Manzala Engineered Wetlands	UNDP	FP
Europe/Mediterranean: Determination of Priority Actions for the Further Elaboration and Implementation of the Strategic Action Program for the Mediterranean Sea	UNEP	FP
Europe/Baltic: Baltic Sea Regional Project – Phase I	WB/UNDP	FP
Europe/Baltic: Development and Implementation of the Lake Peipai/Chudskoe Basin Management Plan	UNDP	FP
Georgia (Black Sea Basin): Agricultural Development Project II	WB	FP
Jordan: Gulf of Aqaba Environmental Action Plan	WB	FP
Latin America/Caribbean: Environmental Protection of the Rio de la Plata and Its Maritime Front - Pollution Prevention and Control and Habitat Restoration	UNDP	FP
Latin America/Caribbean: Environmental Protection and Sustainable Integrated Management of the Guarani Aquifer	WB	FP
Latin America/Caribbean: Formulation of a Strategic Action Program for the Integrated Management of Water Resources and the Sustainable Development of the San Juan River Basin and Its Coastal Zone	UNEP	FP
Latin America/Caribbean: Demonstrations of Innovative Approaches to the Rehabilitation of Heavily Contaminated Bays in the Wider Caribbean	UNDP/ UNEP	FP
Latin America/Caribbean: Implementation of Strategic Action Program for the Bermejo River Binational Basin – Phase II	UNEP	FP
Poland (Europe/Baltic): Rural Environmental Project	WB	FP
Romania (Black Sea Basin): Black Sea Agricultural Pollution Control Project	WB	FP
Russian Federation: Persistent Toxic Substances, Food Security, and Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North	UNEP	MSP
Russian Federation: Support to the National Plan of Action in the Russian Federation for the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment from Anthropogenic Pollution	UNEP	FP

Pipeline

Project Title	IA	Project Type
Global: Demonstration of Viability and Removal of Barriers that Impede Adoption and Effective Implementation of Available, Noncombustion Technologies for Destroying Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)	UNIDO	FP
Africa: Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem	UNEP/FAO	PDF-B
Africa: Reversing Land and Water Degradation Trends in the Niger Basin	UNDP/WB	PDF-B
Africa: Integrated Management of the Volta River Basin	UNEP/UNDP	PDF-B
Africa: Development of a SAP for the Guinea Current LME	UNDP/UNEP	PDF-B
Africa: Elaboration of the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) and Strategic Action Plan (SAP) and Implementation of Priority Elements of the SAP for the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Western Indian Ocean	UNEP	FP
Africa: Reducing Reliance on Agricultural Pesticide Use and Establishing a Community-Based Pollution Prevention System in the Senegal and Niger River	UNEP	FP
Africa: Joint Integrated Management of the Maputo Basin	UNDP	FP
Africa: Developing Detailed Regional and National Project Proposals and Financial Mechanisms to Implement the Lake Tanganyika Strategic Action Program and the Convention	UNDP	FP
Africa: Protection and Strategic Uses of Groundwater Resources in the Transboundary Limpopo Basin and Drought-Prone Areas of the SADC Region	WB	FP
Africa: Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Project (SIOFP)	WB	FP
Africa: Regional Project to Control Infestation and Translocation of Aquatic Weeds	WB	FP
Africa: Lake Malawi/Niassa/Nyasa Ecosystem Management Project	WB	FP
Africa: Integrating Transboundary Concerns into National Water Resources Management Legislation in the SADC Region	FAO	FP
Asia/Pacific: Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem	WB	PDF-B
Asia/Pacific: Development of a Regional Marine Electronic Highway in the East Asia Seas with a First Phase in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore	WB	FP
Bulgaria (Black Sea Basin): Wetlands Restoration Project	WB	PDF-B
CE Europe: Regional Partnership for Prevention of Transboundary Degradation of the Kura- Aras River	UNDP	FP
China: Hai River Basin Integrated Water Resources Management	WB	FP
Hungary (Black Sea Basin): Nutrient Reduction Project	WB	FP
Jordan: Water Quality and Environmental Improvement in the Jordan Rift Valley	WB	FP
Latin America/Caribbean: Integrating Management of Watersheds in Caribbean SDS	UNEP/UNDP	PDF-B
Latin America/Caribbean: Reducing Pesticide Runoff in the Caribbean	UNEP	PDF-B
Latin America/Caribbean: Environmental Protection and Maritime Transport Pollution Control of the Gulf of Honduras	WB/IADB	PDF-B

Project Title	IA	Project Type
Latin America/Caribbean: Comprehensive Action Program to Phase Out DDT and Reduce the Long Term Effects of Exposure in Mexico and Central America	UNEP	PDF-B
Latin America/Caribbean: Integrated Catchment Area and Coastal Zone Management in Small Island Developing States in the Caribbean	UNEP/ UNDP	FP
Latin America/Caribbean: Integrated Management of the Humboldt Current Large Marine Ecosystem (HCLME)	UNIDO	FP
Latin America/Caribbean: Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and Strategic Action Program for the Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem	UNDP	FP
Moldova (Black Sea Basin): Agricultural Pollution Control Project	WB	FP
Russian Federation (Black Sea Basin): Reduction of Nutrient Discharges and Methane Emissions in Rostov-on Don	WB	FP
Slovenia (Black Sea Basin): Danube Pollution Reduction Program - Financing Pollution Reduction Projects by Local Financial Intermediaries	UNDP/ EBRD	FP
Turkey (Black Sea Basin): Agricultural Pollution Control Project	WB	FP
Uruguay: Maritime Management Project	WB	FP