



Phemo Kgomotso, UNDP Africa opens the GEF Day

Before the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Day began, a separate side event was held in the Rio Conventions Pavilion. Mr. David Oswald, founder of DE (Design & Environment) discussed his company's development of a platform for the environmental indicators of the Rio Conventions. He explained to an eager audience that DE has conducted integrated environmental analyses since 2012 in many Latin America and the Caribbean countries. The company also designed a platform that stores, manages and presents the gathered information concerns on the national level. Oswald said, "Our work consists mostly of monitoring, we capture data for hydrology, biodiversity & critical infrastructure".

The first session of the GEF Day was organized by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and centered on country ownership and empowerment in sustainable land management (SLM). Ms. Phemo Kgomotso, Regional Team Leader UNDP Africa opened GEF Day. UNDP is one of the agencies instrumental in supporting countries in these national programming exercises. She said of one program in Burkina Faso, "the program has trained a lot of people, but one program is not enough, we need to have a long term approach and use different mechanisms on the local level." Since the third programming cycle of the GEF (GEF 3), the GEF has tested different approaches to make SLM a reality on the ground. The Country Partnerships Programs (CPP), which were the first generation of programmatic approaches,

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mainly at national level, to increase the visibility of SLM on the development agenda, develop institutional capacities, and set up technical and financing mechanisms to deliver SLM were also discussed.

Further presented in the first session was the fourth programming cycle of the GEF (GEF 4). During this cycle China, India and others developed a robust portfolio of SLM projects under Sustainable Land and Ecosystems Management Programs. More recently Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Tanzania have developed a national agenda on SLM, with many lessons and best practices emerging out of these experiences. Building on the lessons from these programmatic approaches, Lebanon and Namibia have recently begun to include the land degradation neutrality (LDN) concept into their national framework for addressing land degradation and desertification. The session brought together UNCCD focal points, CSOs, agencies and partners who were involved in these programs, and drew outlines and messages to replicate and scale up good experiences

The panelists shared experiences and highlighted their lessons learned. Stephen Muwaya, UNCCD National Focal Point, Uganda said the country has clear policies on land use legal instruments, such as the land act. He went on to say that Uganda has been engaged in the activities of health organizations, is supporting communities to improve their landscapes and is planning to implement the resilience of food security. Muwaya said Uganda has achieved innovations in three areas: additional frameworks, integration on a national level and environmental assessment.

Even though many countries have made use of the tools available through the GEF, Asha Bobb-Semple from UNDP observed, “according to GEF, since 2002 the GEF has invested close to USD 0.5 billion in more than 100 integrated land management projects. We are trying to promote investment in land and SLM, but governments do not always use the systems available to them”.

The second session of GEF Day was organized by the World Bank and concerned African countries’ experiences and emerging priorities under the TerrAfrica partnership to promote interventions at scale against land degradation. In 2005 TerrAfrica was created as a platform to fight land degradation in order to mobilize all resources. Jean-Marc Sinnassamy, GEF, said the organization is working on existing questions concerning ongoing work programs to review the platform. Isaac Aquah, Ghana SLM Project Coordinator said his country needs to create mechanisms and structures, but is able to use foreign resources. Remi Hemeryck, Executive Director, SOS Sahel stressed that knowledge sharing is also very important.

Policy Officer at the European Commission (EC), Alexandru Ghiurca, said, “From my perspective, TerrAfrica approaches concern policy making and participation building”. He

continued, saying the EC would also like to see more coordination, such as the European Union and European countries developing more policy to promote land degradation neutrality.



Magda Lovei, World Bank talks with other panelists of the GEF Day before the third session begins

The third session of GEF Day focused on financing synergy in land and climate actions. The UNCCD Executive Secretary, Monique Barbut stressed that, “we should be trying to turn fragmentation around, finding synergies.” She also thanked the GEF for being very responsive on LDN and said, “we wouldn’t be where we are now on LDN without the resolute support from the GEF. I am delighted GEF has set aside 10 million USD for the implementation of the 2018 framework.” She further discussed how 15 years ago, work on forests was all about biodiversity, but that someone woke up and figured out biodiversity is linked to climate change. She expressed frustration that in all that time, no one seemed to have woken up to the fact that biodiversity and climate change are also both linked to land. She strongly recommended, “We should take a hard look at national reporting and identifying national priorities, so we can analyze and discover the underlying problems and solutions. Projects on the ground are where we will see the real synergies. Land should not be forgotten, and the projects that protect the vulnerable should be kept going.”



UNCCD Executive Secretary, Monique Barbut thanks the GEF for their support

Following Barbut, Appolinaire Gnanvi, Director General of the National Fund for Environment and Climate, continued the discussion saying his organization is based on the principle that those who pollute should pay for the damages. He also stressed that a complete global framework is very important. Thereafter, Liu Shirong, Deputy Director People's Republic of China (PRC) GEF Partnership on Land Degradation, expressed that land degradation is critical in China, but that the financing synergy in the country has proven to be a very successful model. Shirong supported that the government provides favorable conditions for the private sector and invests money toward sustainable land management projects.

Ms. Chizuru Aoki, Leading Environment Specialist at the GEF, said “any project of GEF is multi-focused” and drew attention to the fact that key elements of whatever the organization pursues are based on Conference of the Parties (COP) decisions and guidance, programming strategy and national priorities. The Project preparation/Adaptation Senior Specialist at the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Jason Spensley said, “GCF is the window to implement the guidance” and “we are all working for the same goals.”

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The GEF Day's fourth session highlighted scientific innovations and tools that support smallholder farmers and provoked a discussion on the role of innovation, science, and technology in the GEF agenda. There is currently a strong interest in remote sensing, connected tools and devices, notably in the context of LDN. Juha Uitto, Director of the Independent GEF Evaluation Office, introduced the session with the results of the Land Degradation Assessment and the Value For Money studies developed under the context of the Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF. He said research is being done to find out what the direct results of the GEF's programmes are.

Baron Orr from the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) explained recent innovations, science and technologies for SLM. He exclaimed, "the world is not only globalized, it is telecoupled." Land Potential Knowledge Systems (LandPKS) and Vital Signs were highlighted as case studies, the second being developed and extended under the GEF Integrated Approach Pilot on agroecosystem services for food security. Jeff Herrick, Soil Scientist and LandPKS Principal Investigator (PI), United States Department of Agriculture, presented a case study from LandPKS Mobile APPs for Optimizing LDN Investments. He said, "Sustainable production is never possible because of the type of degradation it causes." Jonathan Davies, Global Coordinator, Global Dryland Initiative, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), connected the LDN concept to other platforms and tools to highlight the multiple benefits of land restoration. He also talked about how innovative countries are beginning to develop integrated approaches and mentioned that the organization plans to engage in target setting. Neil Sims, Team Leader, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) Land&Water discussed the GEF Land Degradation Monitoring Project Toolbox, and said, "we can't measure degradation correctly, but we can note the changes."

The last session was a bottom-up discussion that gave the floor to various CSOs involved in sustainable land management to share their experiences with the GEF. Some CSOs were involved in national processes to identify priorities, others have developed projects at regional levels, while some are involved in the GEF CSO network. Various topics concerning GEF policies were discussed, including public participation, CSOs, gender issues and Indigenous People. The GEF secretariat engaged with stakeholders and provided outlines about of the next GEF replenishment.

Omer Ouedraogo, SPONG (Permanent Secretariat of NGOs, Burkina Faso), shared his experience from the GEF CSO (Civil Society Organization) network and SPONG's implication to formulate recommendations in view of the next GEF replenishment. He said, "for CSOs to access finances, the recommendation is to simplify the rules and procedures." Patrice Burger, Chairperson and founder of Centre d'actions et de réalisations internationales (CARI), a CSO, said "since the beginning of the convention, CSOs have been involved in the convention" and "people are mostly satisfied with the projects". Ms. Bora Masumbuko, IUCN, shared her experiences from the GEF5 BRICKS (Building Resilience through Innovation,

Communication and Knowledge Services) and some of the national projects under the Sahel and West Africa Program Sahel and West Africa Program (SAWAP). She highlighted the role of women in disseminating SLM related innovations. She outlined three aspects where the role of women could be strengthened to progress toward LDN: education, efficient access to resources, and participation in decision-making. She went on to say, “we need to look at the capacity building, including training and access to basic education for women” and “how the rights of women can be increased so that they are more a part of the community”.



Bora Masumbuko, IUCN, shared her experiences from the GEF5 BRICKS

Yoko Watanabe, Global Manager of the GEF Small Grants Programme, said “We are working on the local solutions to global environmental problems” and “we provide a strategic platform for community-based activities”. She said the GEF is happy CSOs and other communities are involved and that the organization does not focus only on financing, but also on technological approaches and supporting dialogue between governments and civil society. Chizuru Aoki, and Ulrich Apel, GEF Land Degradation Coordinator concluded the day by answering questions from the audience.

The day ended with a very pleasant reception in the dining hall of UNCCD COP 13, complete with local finger foods and traditional Inner Mongolian classical music playing softly behind the light rumble of mingling professionals.

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