

**Rio+20 Side Event Organized by the GM and African Development Bank**  
**"Economic Valuation of Land: advancing land management towards a green economy"**

June 14, 11:15 – 12:45, Rio Conventions Pavilion

Statement by the GEF representative, Gustavo Fonseca  
*Policy issues around GEF Investments and Approaches to Incremental Cost Coverage*

Through its role as financial mechanism of the UNCCD, the GEF is major catalyst of innovation in sustainable land management globally. Over the last two decades, the GEF has invested \$369 million dollars through the Land Degradation Focal Area, to support 69 projects and programs involving more than 60 countries. Although modest in comparison to other GEF focal areas, these investments have leveraged an additional nearly \$2 billion in co-financing mainly through development funding.

The GEF has been a strategic partner in the Africa region, where more than 60 percent of all LD focal areas resources have been invested. In sub-Saharan Africa, the GEF has invested more than \$250 million through two separate programs that will help at least 40 countries move ahead with their commitment to implement sustainable land and water management initiatives under the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program. These investments, which will generate more than \$1.8 billion in co-financing from the governments and development donors, could play an important role advancing the Green Economy agenda on the subcontinent.

In much the same way, the GEF and its donor partners has helped countries in the Middle East and North Africa region to develop the Desert Ecosystem and Livelihoods Program. With a GEF grant of \$26.7 million and \$226.2 million in co-financing, MENA-DELP will contribute to enhancement of livelihoods in desert ecosystems by harnessing their value in an environmentally and socially sustainable manner so that the flow of desert goods and services can be optimized.

There are two main reasons for the significant financial leverage that is reflected in these programs. First, the Land Degradation focal area strategy includes an **explicit link between sustainable land management and human well-being**. GEF investments establish a foundation for improving the livelihood of millions of rural people who rely on agriculture and livestock management to survive. Engaging local communities in on-the-ground activities builds social capital and demonstrates that sustainable land management represents a long-term strategy for increasing livelihoods options.

Second, the Land Degradation focal area **mandate focuses primarily on agriculture, rangelands, and forest landscapes** where the potential for maximizing global environment and development benefits are greatest. These are the sectors

where the potential for leveraging development financing in SLM are greatest. It is within these same sectors where the value-added of land-based investments will show the greatest returns in a Green Economy. The GEF incremental financing is justified on the basis of the need to sustain flow of ecosystem services that underpin productivity and practices in these sectors.

The GEF financing and catalytic role builds on a strong partnership with the UNCCD, for which we serve as financial mechanism. The UNCCD is in the midst of implementing its Ten-Year Strategy, for which GEF support is important to affected countries and will become increasingly so as the countries seek to meet their obligations. At a time when food security and agriculture is once more a priority for the global community, the GEF mandate will remain important for aligning global environment needs to enhance long-term sustainability in management of land resources.