

Global Environment Facility

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY: A COMMON AGENDA

By

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Good morning. It is a pleasure for me to be a part of International Centers Week 2000. I want to thank Ian for inviting me and to take this opportunity to commend him for the superb job he has been doing as Vice President of ESSD and now as chairman of CGIAR. I want also to express my appreciation to Bob Watson and Pedro Sanchez for their thought-provoking presentations. I am pleased to note that the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and CGIAR recently became neighbors in 1776 G Street. But all along, we have been working toward the same sustainable future, albeit from different angles -- the global environment on the one hand and food security on the other.

When we talk about protecting the global environment, we sometimes stress the "big picture" of biological systems and species on the verge of collapse or extinction. Yet the loss of countless children to starvation each year is part of the same tragedy. And hunger would not be a constant companion to more than 800 million people around the world if not for the destruction of natural resources their communities have relied upon for centuries.

A recent UNEP study found that two-thirds of all agricultural land in Sub-Saharan Africa is affected by land and water degradation. It is no wonder then that FAO's new analysis of "The State of Food Insecurity" points to the same region as having the gravest problems with malnutrition. In half of all Sub-Saharan nations, the undernourished are more than 300 kilocalories below the minimum threshold each and every day.

Clearly, CGIAR is and will continue to be part of the solution. What your Centers do best was highlighted earlier this month when Doctors Villegas and Vassal won the Millennium World Food Prize for the development of "quality protein maize". This high-yielding and protein-rich corn is already transforming agriculture in parts of China, Mexico, and Peru.

CGIAR is also at the forefront of better farming methods, including alternatives to slash-and-burn agriculture. I note that GEF helped fund these efforts through the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry as part of our commitment to preventing deforestation that contributes to atmospheric carbon dioxide. It is encouraging that ICRAF has continued this work, with its own resources and funding from other donors.

Yet even these advances cannot keep pace with the challenges facing developing countries today. The global value of freshwater services, including for agriculture, is estimated in trillions of dollars. We have already heard about the potential impact of climate change on water scarcity. In addition, another report released last Saturday by the World Resources Institute reveals that the world's freshwater ecosystems are so degraded that their ability to support human, plant, and animal life is greatly in peril.

This report is a precursor to the broader Millennium Ecosystems Assessment, which is chaired by Bob Watson and of which GEF is a principal fonder. Covering agro-ecosystems, coastal areas, forests, and grasslands, as well as freshwater resources, this global effort should provide a framework for thinking and acting holistically.

Thinking and acting holistically is at the heart of GEF's strategies and programs. When we got off the ground nine years ago, we used to talk about holistic thinking on the margins of our work. Now it is the mainstream. As M.S. Swaminathan is fond of saying, "Conservation without finance is just

conversation." We're proud of GEF's \$11 billion safety net that was put together with the help of our Implementing Agencies: The World Bank, UNDP, and UNEP, in support of sustainable development in more than 140 countries -- \$3 billion allocated by GEF, and \$8 billion in co-financing. But we know that it will be the results and impacts on the ground that will make the biggest difference over time.

GEF's support of the major environmental conventions and agreements on biological diversity, climate change, desertification, and international waters is seen increasingly as part of the same continuum. For it is only by integrating these concerns that we can ensure something that is even bigger than food security -- that is global environmental security.

We have a major capacity development initiative with UNDP, involving a host of **institutions worldwide to build and mobilize** capacity for the global environment as a whole, not just one aspect of it or another.

We have refined GEF's approach to targeted research to pinpoint critical initiatives like the one currently examining sustainable agricultural practices and their impact on carbon retention on hillsides in Mexico -- and other similar initiatives in our pipeline with a direct bearing on food and environmental security in developing nations.

GEF is a leader in promoting renewable energy to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, including biomass from agricultural residues and biogas from animal wastes, as well as solar, wind, geothermal, fuel cell, and energy efficiency alternatives that can improve the lives and livelihoods of rural residents. We have emerged in the last five years to become the single largest funder of renewable energy in developing countries.

However, for many countries, small island states for example, adaptation to climate change is of immediate relevancy. That is why GEF is also leading the way in helping countries to assess the risks of climate change and develop strategies to respond to them. GEF's support includes full-cost funding to conduct studies aimed at identifying vulnerable regions and sectors and to develop adaptation options. GEF then provides additional support to countries to set priorities, develop national adaptation measures, and implement mitigation measures.

One of the most critical adaptation issues is food security, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Climate change is resulting in changes in land productivity and geographic shifts in agricultural land use. The conservation of crop varieties with a wide range of climatic and soil tolerances, will increasingly become important for food security.

Continuing down the list, earlier this year we created a new team dedicated to a holistic approach to conservation and sustainable use of land and water resources.

Perhaps most significantly, we have a new operational program on integrated ecosystem management with multiple, interwoven goals: conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, including control of land and water degradation and rehabilitation of ecosystems, reduction of emissions and increased storage of greenhouse gases, and conservation of international waters, including coasts, river basins, and watersheds. The goal is to promote interventions much like CGIAR's that integrate ecological, economic, and social goals within the context of a country's sustainable development agenda to achieve local, national, and global benefits.

This operational program recognizes the linkages between climate change, biodiversity and land degradation. We all know that nature does not recognize the segmentation of these concerns. However, for political convenience or expedience the three conventions were negotiated and are being administered separately. With the GEF as the financial mechanism for the Climate Change and Biodiversity Conventions, and a major supporter of the objectives of the Desertification Convention, it was only a matter of time before we embarked on such holistic thinking and approaches.

For if our institutions are not to become the dinosaurs of the 21st century, we must throw out many of our old assumptions and work together for maximum impact. The old way of addressing environmental problems in piecemeal fashion and in isolation of economic and human development never did work and the consequences of "local" environmental degradation are anything but.

A stand of trees on a mountain slope can be a one-time source of fuel or income for the local population. But those trees and their roots may also be the crucial barrier against soil erosion, which prevents rainwater from flooding fields and villages farther downstream. If the trees and those who profit just once from cutting them are in Nepal, for example, the long-term victims of that deforestation will be in Bangladesh. Similarly, there is nothing more local than the immediate and longer-term effects of global climate change: droughts, floods, and extreme weather patterns that weaken crops, increase agricultural pests, and lower farm yields.

If our institutions are not to lose public trust and become extinct, we must also find ways to make our parallel paths converge and multiply our impact many times over. It is in all of our interests, but most especially those of the people and vital resources we hope to serve, to pool our talent and resources behind strategies and actions that work. That's easier said than done, but the GEF stands ready to help make it happen and we would welcome exploring with you opportunities for cooperation in addressing some of the most pressing issues of our time.

Thank you.