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# The Green Climate Fund Regional Dialogue with Africa

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | 29 September – 1 October 2025



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## Introduction

The Green Climate Fund (GCF's) Regional Dialogue with Africa was held from 29 September to 1 October 2025 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia under the theme: 'Towards a resilient Africa: Advancing regional solutions for climate action, sustainable growth and inclusive development'.

It brought together over 200 stakeholders, comprising governments, National Designated Authorities (NDAs), Accredited Entities (AEs), and other partners from the Africa region to discuss climate plans and how to access GCF financing.



## Opening session

Mr. Sudhanshu Sarronwala, Director of Communications, GCF, welcomed the participants to the Regional Dialogue, following which a GCF.10 introduction video was played. He acknowledged the presence of high-level dignitaries including H.E. Mr. Seyoum Mekonnen, State Minister, Ministry of Planning and Development, Ethiopia, Ambassador Seyni Nafo, Co-Chair, GCF Board, Dr. Jihane EL Gaouzi, Head of Sustainability and Environment Division, AU-ARBE, and Mr. James Murombedzi, Head of the Africa Climate Policy Center of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa(UNECA). The high-level dignitaries were then offered the opportunity to give the welcoming and opening remarks.

Ms. Catherine Koffman, Director of the Africa Region at GCF, extended her appreciation to the Ethiopian government for hosting the dialogue and also acknowledged the support of UNECA as the delivery partner. In welcoming the participants, she noted that the Regional Dialogue will serve as a vital platform for African stakeholders to assess the progress, opportunities, and challenges of GCF programming while exploring the impact of recent reforms aimed at enhancing climate investment delivery. She highlighted other benefits including peer-to-peer learning, sharing of best practices, and the development of actionable climate mitigation and adaptation initiatives. She shared that over the next three days, the GCF team will engage with participants on policies, tools and enhanced processes which aims to improve efficiency and access to GCF.

Mr. Murombedzi delivered a speech on behalf of Mr. Claver Gatete, Executive Secretary of UNECA. He noted that the UNECA facility is a place where Africa continues to define its collective aspirations for transformation and also highlighted the loss of about 15 billion attributed to the impact climate change on the continent. Africa's survival depends on the flow of climate finance--yet justice remains stagnant. The story of Africa is one of vulnerability and resilience, opportunity and ambition which deserves representation with a fitting financial structure. He therefore called for innovative financial structures to address the needs of the continent. UNECA has platforms to enhance policy spaces for a one Africa voice on agendas including climate finance. He noted CCDA, COM and Africa Climate Talks among others as relevant platforms.

Strategic priorities for the continent outlined include;

- the AfCTA needing to become a green trade area
- the need of Africa SIDS for tailored finance options and mechanisms to better overcome its climate impacts..
- The need for resources to flow directly to the local actors such as vulnerable women, youth and SMEs to address resilience.

UNECA will continue to partner with GCF, using its analytics, convening platforms and partnerships to help build policy capability and institutional readiness that will help the continent build bankable projects.

H.E. Mr. Seyoum Mekonnen thanked GCF for choosing Ethiopia as the host country for the regional dialogue. He noted that the dialogue comes after Ethiopia just hosted the Africa Climate Summit and was hopeful that the outcomes from the summit would guide discussions at the Dialogue. He mentioned that Ethiopia's commitment to climate change is woven into the very fabric of its national ambition with its ambitious target of a 68.8% emissions reduction by 2030. Other examples he gave of Ethiopia's commitment to clean energy included the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which generates 5,000 MW of clean energy, and the Green Legacy Initiative and its planting of 48 billion trees. He called for deeper engagement with GCF, commending its reforms and requesting the establishment of a GCF Africa Regional Office in Addis Ababa. Participants were urged to move from dialogue to action, build partnerships, and develop bankable climate projects, with a closing invitation to experience Addis Ababa's cultural landmarks and attend a reception hosted by the Ethiopian government.



# Session Summaries

## Day 1

The day hosted the following sessions.

### 1.1 New GCF

Mr. Seyni Nafo, Co-Chair of the GCF Board, encouraged countries to actively utilize the Readiness resources available through the GCF, highlighting their importance in building institutional capacity and preparing for effective climate finance engagement. He also congratulated countries that have submitted applications to host the GCF regional office, recognizing their leadership and initiative. Additionally, Mr. Nafo extended an open invitation for countries to engage with him directly, signaling his willingness to support and collaborate more closely.

Ms. Koffman emphasised the urgency of delivering results at scale to create transformative impact rather than isolated efforts. She stressed the importance of strengthening institutional capacities to ensure countries are well-equipped to manage and implement climate finance. Ms. Koffman also highlighted the critical role of country platforms in aligning efforts with national priorities and fostering coordination. She pointed out that enabling Direct Access Entities to effectively access GCF resources remains a top priority. Furthermore, she noted the significant strides made in improving corporate efficiency and shared that the GCF is actively working to deepen its partnerships. Ms. Koffman concluded by reaffirming the Fund's commitment to listening and learning from its partners to continuously improve its support and responsiveness.

### 1.2 High - Level Roundtable Session (African Ambassadors and Champions for GCF)

African leaders delivered a unified call for the GCF to align its support with continental priorities, notably the AU Agenda 2063, the AU Climate Strategy 2022–2032, and programs such as the Great Green Wall Initiative. They underscored the need for the Fund to adapt its instruments and delivery mechanisms to Africa's realities, with particular attention to fragile and debt-stressed states. Participants highlighted the urgency of developing innovative financing models, such as debt-for-climate swaps, liquidity facilities, and dedicated windows for fragile states, and emphasised that strengthening fiduciary, procurement, and governance systems is essential to unlocking access to climate finance. The importance of mobilizing private sector participation was stressed repeatedly, with calls for the GCF to introduce targeted incentives and de-risking mechanisms. Priority sectors consistently referenced included food systems, renewable energy, ecosystem and land restoration, and water resilience.



Dr. EL Gaouzi presented Agenda 2063 and the AU Climate Strategy 2022–2032 as overarching continental frameworks. She urged the GCF to scale up both technical and financial support, accelerate the flow of climate finance, and invest in institutional capacity for access. Without stronger enabling capacity, she cautioned, African States risk being unable to translate financing opportunities into concrete projects.

H.E. Almoustapha Garbe, Executive Secretary of the Pan African Agency of the Great Green Wall, described Africa’s “triple crisis” of insecurity, limited access to basic services, and

growing environmental stress. He highlighted, however, that Africa’s youthful population, abundant renewable energy potential, particularly solar and wind, and climate-smart agriculture represent key opportunities for transformative growth. He urged the GCF to place greater focus on land restoration and to catalyze private sector engagement, stressing that scale cannot be achieved without private capital.

Mr. Murombedzidrew attention to Africa’s systemic debt distress, noting the lack of fiscal space for households and governments alike. He advanced proposals for innovative financial solutions, including debt-for-climate swaps, liquidity facilities, and dedicated financing windows. He further recommended that the GCF prioritize capacity-building in fiduciary and procurement systems, while also considering weighted allocation formulas to channel resources to the most climate-vulnerable and fiscally-constrained countries.

Mr. Nebyida Lamech Kabore, Policy Advisor from Burkina Faso, shared his country’s experience of fragile governance, security challenges, and climate variability. He emphasised the importance of establishing “stability systems” and called on the GCF to tailor its instruments to fragile-state contexts. He advocated for more flexible, context-specific financing mechanisms to both improve access and attract complementary investment.

### 1.3 Revised Accreditation Framework

Ms. Solongo Khurelbaatar, Accreditation Specialist (GCF), presented the Revised Accreditation Framework (RAF), which takes effect on 31 October 2025. She explained that the reform repositions accreditation as fit-for-purpose due diligence which aims to streamline processes, enhance fairness and inclusivity—particularly by expanding opportunities for DAEs and self-nominated local entities—and reduce heavy reporting requirements. Key changes include a five-step process with pre-screening, application submission windows, clearer service standards, and flat fees for accreditation, while eliminating re-accreditation cycles and accreditation with conditions. Ms. Khurelbaatar highlighted screening requirements as another key change and outlined the rationale for redistributing some of the GCF requirements across the Accredited Entity’s life cycle of engagement. Existing AEs will benefit from greater flexibility on project size and financial instruments, with applicable standards and requirements checked at programming stage. Fast-track pathways for accreditation will be extended to include World Bank and AfDB, and transitional measures will manage the current pipeline, with the RAF seeking to contribute to doubling DAEs with approved proposals and expanding regional opportunities. Ms. Khurelbaatar also provided the key timeline for the implementation of the revised framework.

Mr. Euan Low, Climate Impact Area Lead (GCF), emphasised that accreditation remains a central topic for access to climate finance. He underlined that the process should be simple, focused, and intentional, noting that accreditation focuses on a fiduciary check on an entity’s ability to manage funds, among other

requirements. He cautioned against unnecessary delays caused by entities applying for all potential financing instruments for which they may or may not have a relevant track record and stressed the importance of aligning financial architecture with national action plans and NDCs. DAEs, Ministries of Finance, development banks, commercial banks, and equity funds were all highlighted as key players, and he encouraged countries to actively engage in dialogue to strengthen access and ownership.

In the Q&A session, participants expressed appreciation to GCF for bringing forward the accreditation reform, asked about timelines, nominations and new legal arrangements. The panelists emphasised again some of the key timelines and features of RAF. Existing entities can continue programming until the end of 2027, while new standard conditions will replace older agreements, consolidating requirements into a single legal document to reduce duplication. On nominations, it was clarified that there is no strict limit, but countries should be strategic. The discussion closed with a strong commitment to streamline processes through effective implementation of RAF, strengthen capacity, and ensure that accredited entities and ministries lead in delivering national priorities and NDCs.

## 1.4 Harnessing Synergies for a Climate-Resilient and Equitable African Economy (Infra/Urban/Transport/Energy)

Mr. Jitu Soni from the Climate Parliamentarians Network of Tanzania explained that they set up a Climate Parliament comprising 15 sub-Saharan countries with the aim of boosting climate finance. The purpose of this initiative is to jointly address common challenges, such as climate extremes, poor access to electricity, weak public finance, fragmented policies, unemployment, etc. He added that there is a need to de-risk capital to allow for more climate financing at the community level. Indeed, local communities should be empowered to attract investments, such as producing green energy by using renewables which would lower energy costs and stimulate growth. Finally, he encouraged participants to take advantage of the political momentum for climate financing at the community level to build national ownership.

Ms. Brenda Simainga representing the NDA on behalf of Zambia's Ministry of Green Economy & Environment expressed that Africa is vulnerable due to climate impacts, food insecurity, poor water access,

energy disruptions and natural disasters. She further explained that Zambia is dependent on climate sectors, such as agriculture and power generation which are crucial to ensure food and energy security. She therefore expressed a need for strong systems to be embedded in the country's strategy. She further shared that GCF supported Zambia to access financing through climate-friendly initiatives in the private sector. This allowed for synergies to be created, e.g. irrigation for better agriculture, transport for greater mobility, strong infrastructure for smart markets and strong communities.



Mr. Stanley Kinemelo, from CRDB of Tanzania shared that they are the GCF's first accredited entity in Eastern and Central Africa and consider themselves leaders in the financial sector in terms of innovation. CRDB has a large coverage throughout the country supporting projects in energy infrastructure, sector-based financing, agriculture and climate financing through green loans. He further highlighted the GCF support's of agriculture and climate adaptation through loans, guarantees and grants.

## 1.5 Private Sector Roundtable

Ms. Ivette Crespo, Climate Investment Specialist (GCF), moderated the session. In her introduction, she introduced the speakers and gave a briefing on PSF and its mandate to foster the mobilization of private sector finance for climate financing. Ms. Mousumi Ganguly from GCF further shared information on the state of financing across Africa; she stressed that current projections have been below par, and even the current private sector investments across 10 countries still fall short. Case studies “Gaia” across multiple countries and “Accelerating Solar Action Program” by Ecobank in Ghana were shared to demonstrate how GCF concessional financing strives to lower investment costs.

Ms. Lissa Andersson, Finance in Motion, cited adaptation interventions as the primary challenge in mobilizing financing. This was in relation to adaptation that focus on climate smart agriculture and interventions that promote decarbonization. To effectively manage risk across the continent, she proposed the aggregation of capital so as to ensure risk is shared across the funders. In conclusion, she remained optimistic that Africa has many opportunities in smart agriculture to reduce post-harvest losses and support value addition across production chains.

Mr. Kingsley Adofo-Addo of the ECO Bank in Ghana identified mobilization of finance and the lack of implementation capacity as main challenges facing the ecosystem. Lack of ownership was also cited as a challenge, with most projects implemented by external parties and exclude local players. He further emphasised the need to blend financing to address challenges between hard and local currencies. In the Q&A session, taxation, stringent national regulations and high interest rates (in double digits) were identified as the major barriers to climate financing. He proposed the participation of financial institutions in reforms and blending funds with concessional financing to lower interest rates, an approach that has worked for ECO bank in Ghana. He concluded that e-mobility and smart agriculture remain some of the most viable investment opportunities across Ghana.

## 1.6 Welcoming Dinner for Participants

The Ethiopian NDA organized a dinner for participants at the Radisson Blu Hotel. Ms. Koffman gave a brief welcome address which was followed by further informal dialogue among stakeholders with tasty Ethiopian meals and soft drinks.

## Day 2

Mr. Low, set the tone for Day 2 by emphasizing the urgency of climate change, the need for transformative leadership, and the importance of capacity building and effective implementation to unlock greater climate finance and impact. The narrative flowed from reflection and objectives through the call for change to the practical steps needed for progress. Participants then shared their expectations for the day's sessions.

## 2.1 GCF READINESS Program 2024-2027

Ms. Chihenyo Kangara, Regional Manager, Africa Region, GCF moderated the session. She reiterated key takeaways from the previous day's sessions that stated the need for intentional capacity building that can bring more transformational country-owned, managed and led programs that answer Africa's priorities and needs. This was then followed by a moderated Q&A.

Ms. Lilis Suharti, Finance Management Officer, GCF, outlined the updated processes to the readiness application process including for country window, direct access, and procurement options available such

as pre-qualified delivery partner/tender and hybrid. She also elaborated on the outcome (8) and output (10) log frame – RRMF.

Mr. Abdulbari Shaeban, Portfolio Management Officer, Africa Region, GCF, emphasised the importance of strategic planning for the 4-year window. This includes aligning readiness resources with national priorities, ensuring coherence between programming and project origination, collaboration between public and private sectors, identifying country needs and ensuring sustainability through strategic alignment.

Mr. Adofo-Addo, a beneficiary of the DAE modalities, shared his experience with the process. He noted that the executive buy-in was very critical to the process, including the consideration of challenges from previous processes and collaboration with the GCF team who helped them navigate the new process. He also acknowledged the early engagement with GCF and the role of consultants with relevant experience in CN preparation.

The participants appreciated the new Readiness application process and noted how it simplified the DAE application window. Other issues around the difference between accreditation and FMCA were addressed. Further clarification on the timelines for CN review, no objection procedure and access to NAP1 and NAP2 was given, and others also appreciated the communication regarding the ability of NDAs to engage UN agencies, with a few at an early stage of engaging with these UN agencies to access Readiness.

## 2.2 Investment Platforms: Greening the Africa Free Trade Area: Pathways to Sustainable Trade and Development and AGII

Ms. Roslyn Ngeno, Senior Investment Specialist (AfCFTA), introduced the Africa Green Industrialization Initiative (AGII), grounded in the 2023 Nairobi Declaration, which aims to accelerate the continent's transition to sustainable industrial development. She highlighted the goal of the AGII to promote renewable energy-powered industrial clusters, green value chains, and intra-African trade, ultimately seeking to mobilize \$100 billion to transform Africa's natural resource wealth into resilient, innovation-driven economies that generate jobs and strengthen climate adaptation.



Mr. Benedict Libanda, CEO of the Environmental Investment Fund of Namibia, highlighted Namibia's vision of green industrialization supported by 8 target sectors, aiming to develop a \$20 billion investment pipeline. He stressed the importance of harmonized policy and regulatory frameworks for attracting private capital. GCF played a crucial role in supporting this process, as a Readiness Grant supported the development of a national green hydrogen strategy for Namibia.

Ms. Anne Gateru, Manager, Group sustainability Operations, Equity Bank

highlighted the importance of DAEs and NDAs in operationalizing the AGII. She introduced Equity Bank's Africa Resilience and Recovery Plan, which strengthens value chains, finances SMEs, and promotes green, inclusive growth—enhancing productivity and resilience across agriculture, manufacturing, and trade amid global economic shocks.

Ms. Natalia Mrówczyńska, Strategy and Policy Officer, GCF highlighted the importance of blended finance to bridge Africa's green industrial and climate funding gap by combining GCF concessional capital with

private investment. Such platforms support project preparation, viability assessments, and connect bankable projects with financiers, de-risking early stages and accelerating sustainable development.

## 2.3 GCF Achievements in key result areas (Agriculture & Ecosystems)

Mr. Gabriel Boc opened the session by introducing the panel members.

Mr. Assan Ng'ombe introduced the work of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), which started in agriculture and now offers comprehensive coverage of Africa's food systems. He discussed the deficiencies of these systems, which stem from fragmentation, a weak market system, climate vulnerability, conflict, economic and demographic pressures, hunger, inequities, wasteful food flows, and a fragile environment. He highlighted the dire impacts of climate change on farmers and food systems, resulting in aggravated food security with high rates of undernourishment and malnutrition. He explained that Africa imports a large quantity of food and emphasised the need to produce its own food rather than relying on imports. He also pointed out the high market volatility, which may hinder the African continent's progress in terms of food production and distribution. He then added that large segments of the population, including women and youth, are often excluded and do not benefit from the food system. He believes Africa is least capable of adapting to shocks, and it needs to improve how it farms, invest in a healthy and sustainable diet, support small-scale farmers, reduce food waste, and protect the environment. He concluded his presentation by reiterating the need to scale technologies, strengthen extension and advisory services, promote thought leadership, policy and innovative finance, and encourage inclusive growth and resilience.



Ms. Annie Wakanyi introduced the One Acre Fund. She then listed some issues her institution has identified, including the farmers' lack of access to quality food, adequate training, and good connections to markets. She believes that the ability to scale is critical considering the challenges they face, and this includes financing on credit, training to access to key knowledge and tools, post-harvest management and access to markets. She described the shift from their previous focus on food security, to their new goal to move them towards prosperity by supporting them in planting high-value crops such as avocados and macadamias, and helping them establish good connections to local and international markets. For its Burundi project, the institution collaborates with the GCF to help farmers achieve prosperity by ensuring they diversify their sources of income and enhance security through increased livelihoods. She explained that One Acre Fund supports farmers in building multiple layers of resilience and transitioning from subsistence to commercial agriculture. She also highlighted that 90% of their staff are from the farming community, allowing them to build trust with local communities and governments. She said the goal is to make the project scalable and provide support to farmers to build independence.

Ms. Meryem Andaloussi discussed the challenges that DAEs have and how to overcome them. After briefly introducing her institution, ADA Morocco, she began elaborating on its project that aims to plant argan trees to help alleviate pressure on forests. She mentioned that some of the challenges included linguistic barriers and a lack of sufficient support for the DAEs. She emphasised the importance of negotiating the contract terms properly with the GCF and the EE and noted the benefits of having a multidisciplinary team that includes ESS and gender experts. She also drew attention to the importance of effective project governance from the project's inception through steering committees that involve all stakeholders. She

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concluded her remarks by highlighting the importance of keeping relationships with GCF focal points and NDAs.

Dr. Moctar Sacande discussed the opportunities and challenges of working on the Great Green Wall Initiative, which started with the African Union in 2007. He explained that it aims to scale up resilience, and is the first regional programme on land restoration. He added that in the countryside, land is not monitored properly, and GCF funding would help the institution to come up with figures to help establish monitoring practices. He stated that this project is in the inception phase and aims to help build capacity for monitoring, visibility, etc., in eight countries. He emphasised the importance of conducting studies and analysing mega-statistics to evaluate the landscape and identify restorable land. He added that technologies and cost-benefit analysis are also key. He then pointed out the need to involve women and youth experts to see the results, and that it is critical to invest in people so that they can build markets and preserve the environment.

During the Q&A Session, a representative from the Development Bank of Namibia asked how they managed expectations and resources until they secured the funds. Ms. Andaloussi responded that it was useful to build the capacity of their internal team and submit for PPF. She recommended that organizations submitting applications to have experts on the ground asking for capacity building and utilising the roster of experts for the relevant subjects. Then, a DRC Focal Point mentioned that in DRC, opponents to tree planting affect millions of households. He asked how to have more sustainable interactions and improve the welfare of the farmers. Ms. Wakanyi answered that it is useful to have a team on the ground during the inception phase and to work with the government of DRC to ensure sustainability. She highlighted the importance of maintaining a feedback loop with stakeholders, including the farmers they serve. Last but not least, a representative from the Development Bank of Nigeria inquired about the ideal "green" in agriculture. Ms. Wakanyi explained that it depends on what the target is. She emphasised the importance of having a monitoring system and ensuring that the project's impact is properly communicated.

## **2.4 Design to Deliver Impact/Results: Concept Note Development process**

Mr. Anil Gupta, Senior Ecosystems Management Specialist, Africa Region, GCF moderated the session with contributions from 6 speakers including a moderated Q&A.

Mr. Kevin Horsburgh, Climate Science Lead, GCF, emphasised that concept notes should align with country priorities and clearly demonstrate impact potential, as outlined in Board Decision B.33/12. For mitigation projects, they must show how greenhouse gas reductions will be achieved, while adaptation projects should explain the connection between climate vulnerability, risks, and impacts within the broader context of sustainable development. He stressed the importance of a concise and clear narrative focused on the climate issue, noting that if a concept is meaningful to the country, it is sufficient for GCF consideration. He also highlighted the value of early engagement with the GCF.

Mr. Low underscored the value of using the 5-Case Model to structure the narrative in concept notes and proposals. This approach includes presenting a compelling strategic case with a clear climate rationale and theory of change, demonstrating socio-economic benefits for various stakeholders, ensuring the commercial viability and sustainability of the proposed deal while minimizing reliance on grants, providing a solid financial justification for the use of GCF funds, and outlining robust implementation arrangements to guarantee impactful delivery.

Dr. Mandy Barnett, Chief Director, South African National Biodiversity Institute, , explained that SANBI's initial focus on building institutional mechanisms delayed their first GCF project. She shared key lessons, including the importance of concept notes originating from the country and addressing a clearly defined climate change problem. She emphasised that the accredited or direct access entity must articulate the instigating rationale, involve in-country partners responsible for sustaining the project during the design

phase, and ensure that the broader institution is informed about the work, including engaging all other relevant units.

Mr. Sean Foden, Senior Program Officer, World Wildlife Fund, reflected on WWF's recent experience with the concept note process, emphasised the importance of early engagement to ensure projects are country-driven and responsive. He noted that seeking guidance from the GCF helps strengthen proposals and praised the practicality of the new template, which promotes clarity through word limits and allows annexes to support assumptions.

In response to the questions from the participants, Mr. Low explained that co-financing aims to stimulate additional investment in the sector, while Mr. Horsburgh cautioned against strictly separating development and climate projects, noting that adaptation efforts often align with the Sustainable Development Goals and that climate considerations are central to addressing these challenges.

In conclusion, Ms. Koffman stressed that a concept note must do more than convey an idea. It should clearly define a climate issue, offer tangible solutions, and convincingly justify the need for GCF support. She also reaffirmed GCF's commitment to submitting funding proposals to the board within 9 months of receiving a concept note.

## 2.5.1 Deep dive: Readiness planning (step by step approach + Q&A) for NDAs

Mr. Ibrahima Bamba, Regional Manager, Africa Region, GCF, moderated the session with contributions from four speakers, including a demonstration and country perspectives.

Ms. Suharti provided an overview of the pathways available to access GCF Readiness support for the 2024–2027 period. She outlined three modalities: Direct Access, support through pre-qualified Delivery Partners, and hybrid approaches. She introduced the outcomes' log frames and standardized deliverables as key components of the updated Readiness programming framework. Additionally, she presented the GCF Placement Scheme and conducted a live walkthrough of the GCF Readiness online portal, demonstrating how to submit different types of requests, including support requests, Direct Access proposals, and applications for the placement scheme.



Mr. Shaeban focused on the process of identifying Readiness needs and aligning them with strategic interventions. He highlighted the different categories of Readiness interventions, such as capacity building, policy and regulatory reforms, and the strengthening of institutional frameworks. He emphasised the importance of tailoring support to address country-specific priorities and readiness gaps.

Mr. Abakar Mournou Abdoulaye, representing the National Designated Authority (NDA) of Chad, and Dr. Gilson Pina, from the NDA of Cabo Verde, shared country experiences in navigating the Readiness process. They reflected on the challenges and opportunities inherent to identifying strategic support needs and aligning Readiness programming with national climate priorities.

## 2.5.2 Environmental and Social Safeguards for high-quality projects

Mr. Mwanza Lukwesa (GCF), moderated the session with contributions from Mr. Ireland (Save the Children Australia) and Mr. Christian Manzi (Rwanda Ministry of Finance).

Mr. Lukwesa shared that GCF places sustainability and inclusion at the heart of its mission to “do no harm.” This commitment is supported by several key policies: the Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) Policy, the Gender Policy, and the Indigenous Peoples Policy. These frameworks are designed to ensure that climate projects funded by GCF protect both people and the environment while fostering equity and participation.

Currently, GCF uses the IFC Performance Standards but is in the process of developing its own ESS standards that align with those of other Multilateral Development Banks. Projects are categorized into three levels of environmental and social risk, with low-risk projects enjoying a simplified approval process. GCF itself conducts only first-level due diligence, while Accredited Entities (AEs) are responsible for ongoing compliance and monitoring.

Disclosure is required at two critical stages: before the Board reviews a project and before its implementation. The Gender Policy mandates the inclusion of a Gender Assessment and Action Plan, while the Indigenous Peoples Policy ensures their protection and inclusion throughout the project lifecycle. Although GCF does not carry out direct monitoring missions, it relies on AEs to uphold safeguard standards, with trust and integrity forming the foundation of this delegated approach.

Mr. Manzi shared the ministry’s experience. He informed that the Rwanda’s Ministry of Finance became accredited with GCF in 2018, and the success of its first project led to three additional approvals. To ensure compliance with Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS), the Ministry established a dedicated department that works closely with project teams to integrate ESS throughout all stages of implementation. Rwanda has introduced mechanisms for anonymous reporting, escalation, and redress, recognizing that community awareness of rights and reporting channels remains low. To address this, community structures have been developed to strengthen accountability and ESS delivery. The country has also highlighted the need for a regional GCF office to improve support and responsiveness for African nations. Regarding terminology, Rwanda finds the GCF’s definition of “indigenous peoples” difficult to apply due to its political and potentially discriminatory implications. Instead, it uses the term “marginalized communities,” which is considered more inclusive and contextually appropriate.

Save the Children Australia, represented by Mr. Ireland, shared its experience as an Accredited Entity with GCF. The organization currently has seven projects under implementation and one pending approval. It has successfully institutionalized Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) within its systems, building on strong existing social safeguards while investing significantly in environmental capacity development, initially in Australia and now globally. Rather than creating new structures, Save the Children adapted its existing systems by developing tools and checklists to embed ESS into project design and execution. The organization emphasised the importance of meaningful community engagement and consultations. It also recommended treating projects as one risk category higher than assigned to ensure preparedness for rigorous review processes and safeguard compliance. Capacity building was highlighted as essential for adapting to evolving operational contexts, and integrating Annual Performance Report (APR) requirements into project design from the outset was advised to ensure systematic data collection.

Key takeaways from the session are as follows:

- Green Climate Fund (GCF) is moving away from the IFC Performance Standards and developing its own Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) framework that better reflects its mandate and aligns with practices used by Multilateral Development Banks.
- The success of ESS implementation depends largely on the capacity and integrity of Accredited Entities, which underscores the importance of readiness support. In Africa, defining terms such as

“indigenous peoples” remains complex, and using more inclusive language like “marginalized communities” is often preferred.

- Rwanda and Save the Children Australia have shown how institutionalizing ESS systems, engaging communities, and investing in capacity building can strengthen and safeguard outcomes.
- Planning early, establishing robust systems, and managing risks proactively are essential for integrating ESS effectively into GCF-funded projects.

## 2.6.1 Country Platforms

Mr. Horsburgh moderated the session with contributions from 5 speakers including a moderated Q&A. Mr. Horsburgh opened the session by introducing the concept of Country Platforms, a concept growing in popularity and attracting interest from GCF and countries around the world.

Ms. Natalia Mrówczyńska, Policy & Strategy Officer, GCF introduced how GCF conceptualises Country Platforms, what has been accomplished so far and what support is available. Country Platforms are voluntary country-led mechanisms which translate national policy ambitions into pipelines, coordinate stakeholders internally and externally, match needs to finance and oversee country wide implementation. There are no criteria or exact design parameters for how to set up a Country Platform, and they are meant to be tailored to context. It is

expected that a Country Platform would have a Secretariat or Project Management unit overseeing its functions. As guiding design principles, Platforms should be aligned to national priorities, tailored to context and strong governance, with a recommendation that the coordination body should have sufficient convening power to effectively bring stakeholders together. The benefits of country platforms cover enhanced country ownership, promotion of systemic transitions through better national coordination and efficiency and increased access to finance and mobilization. All GCF modalities can be deployed in support for designing and implementing Country Platforms.

Ms. Mahitab Elramal, Manager, Carbon Certificates Marketing Departments, Ministry of Environment, Egypt spoke about the national platform established in Egypt which reflected national priorities and was essential in driving synergies between various sectors. Maintaining political will was a challenge and the overall process was long, but it paid off as it became a role model and meaningful convening agent. Strong outcomes were delivered in terms of smart coordination between all actors, across sectors and financing instruments, with dedicated attention provided to mobilizing private sector by offering the safety of government investment first. USD 2 billion was raised in two years, or 50% of the entire funding needed for identified projects is a key measure of the platform’s success.

Mr. Muhammed Sayed, Specialist, Climate and Environment Finance Unit, DBSA spoke about the national Just Energy Transition Platform established in South Africa following multiple engagements with donors seeking to coordinate on supporting South Africa’s transition. Focused on energy, the platform covered multiple sub-sectoral aspects and themes and tailored coordination and engagement to specific needs. The ‘just’ angle was unpacked through multiple avenues, including adequate support through social protection, livelihood diversification and engagement with civil society. Likewise strong engagement with national development banks and domestic financing institutions was key for implementation. An integrated country owned approach was key to success.



Ms. Ngeno spoke about the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement, a continental co-investment platform focused on enhancing and simplifying trade across Africa. The rationale for the platform came from an understanding across financial institutions that too much investment fragmentation and on-going risk lead to project failures. The platform was key in helping banks secure proof of viability before investing own funding, followed by support to blend and de-risk broader capital. On-going operationalization of the platform also highlighted opportunities in harmonizing requirements and regulations.

Mr. Liban Obsiye, Executive Director, National Climate Fund, Somalia provided insights on the thinking around setting up a country platform in a fragile context. As the country is undergoing multiple simultaneous reforms, it became evident that reforms wouldn't be effective without partnerships. There is a strong understanding that main sectors in Somalia's economy, including agriculture and livestock require additional support to meet resilience needs. He indicated that there are strong arguments for setting up a country platform in Somalia, though it wouldn't come without challenges as it would require simultaneous implementation on multiple fronts; building capacity while setting up the coordination structures. A platform would also be a mechanism for enhanced aid effectiveness.

One question from the floor asked what could be done to encourage intra-African trade, to which the panelists answered that steps were taken to establish special economic zones or dedicated trading companies aggregating small demand to enable them to access funding. Several questions asked about options to strengthen civil society engagement in country platforms, if there are model formats for country platforms, if country platforms can build on existing national steering committees and whether future GCF programming will depend on countries having country platforms. The GCF clarified that existing steering committees should definitely be used in constructing country platforms, to ensure they build on existing processes, that pipeline development and processing does not depend on country platforms and that countries are encouraged to consider fit for purpose options for multi-stakeholder engagement.

## 2.6.2 Building Climate-Resilient Health Systems in Africa: Partnerships for Action

Mr. Patrick Gitonga (GCF) opened the session by stressing the urgency of climate action and the unique position of the GCF to support countries. He asked panelists to reflect on the intersection of health vulnerabilities and climate determinants, the role of partnerships in building climate-resilient health systems, the importance of capacity, and actionable points for private sector engagement.

Mr. Joseph Ngwachi Wangendo (Africa CDC) emphasised that the interplay of climate and health is a survival issue, not just a technical one. He highlighted that 56% of all public health events between 2001–2021 were climate-linked, with malaria in Nigeria alone accounting for 26% of global cases and 31% of deaths. He noted that health systems are weak and highly exposed, with significant gaps in surveillance,

early warning, and data integration. Domestic allocations remain low (below the Abuja 15% target), leaving the workforce underfunded and reliant on external finance. Africa CDC has developed a continental climate and health framework (2025) to guide member states and is working with GCF on climate resilience and community welfare programmes. Key priorities include strengthening governance and early warning systems, workforce training, climate-smart infrastructure (with private sector investment in solar facilities), and



regional knowledge exchange. He called for health to be integrated into NAPs, NDCs, and GCF pipelines, scaling up PPPs, and empowering women and youth as frontline actors.

Ms. Fiona Ward (UNICEF) highlighted that climate change disproportionately impacts children, who are less able to withstand heat stress. Reduced water availability drives diarrhea and stunts growth, permanently affecting development. The burden of water collection exposes girls and women to GBV, while livelihood impacts drive child marriage and school dropout rates. She emphasised that climate rationale is often missing from health planning, as health and climate sectors rarely interact. UNICEF is addressing this through preparedness in facilities, surveillance, low-carbon and resilient infrastructure, and community capacity-building, especially engaging youth and women. As the lead UN agency for WASH, UNICEF promotes integrated community-level services. She cited UNICEF's work in Nigeria to strengthen surveillance, build capacity, and ensure sustainability by working with state and local authorities.

Mr. Ireland presented FP244 on climate-resilient health and wellbeing in rural Malawi. The project has four objectives: reduce risks of climate-sensitive diseases, strengthen infrastructure, prepare staff, and empower communities (with focus on women, children under 2, and people with disabilities). He described a holistic design across levels: national (surveillance and EWS), district (infrastructure and institutional capacity), and community (empowerment and inclusion). The climate rationale considered long-term shifts while ground-truthing through consultations, which highlighted diarrhea, malnutrition, and GBV. The Ministry of Health led the process with a climate task team over 2–3 years, supported by partner coordination (UNDP, WHO, GIZ, USAID). Key lessons included: Ministries of Health are the experts, communities know their challenges best, WHO frameworks help bridge local and national systems, and AEs/DAEs must play facilitative roles to integrate and respond.

Mr. Gerishom Gimaiyo (Rockefeller Foundation) described philanthropy's role as flexible and risk-tolerant, able to work at early stages and catalyze wider investments. He emphasised the importance of starting with domestic resources — governments should fund core health infrastructure and leverage budgets across sectors such as WASH. International climate finance, particularly GCF, should crowd in capital and mobilize private sector investment (e.g., solarizing health facilities). He noted innovative finance tools such as debt-for-health swaps and parametric insurance. He concluded that countries will pursue different pathways, but domestic resources are the cornerstone of sustainable climate–health financing.

Mr. Mark Edington (Global Fund) underlined that GF is the second-largest health investor in Africa (USD 6 billion, with two-thirds directed to Africa). While not structured around climate, GF has launched a USD 15m Climate and Health Catalytic Fund with partners to provide grants, technical assistance, and decision-making capacity, aimed at integrating health into early warning and climate planning. He noted that floods and malaria are increasingly dominating discussions in African ministries of health. GF's Covid-19 experience demonstrated its ability to mobilize rapidly (USD 4 billion). Edington stressed the importance of partnerships: GF has an ongoing relationship with Africa CDC and is exploring collaboration with GCF. He acknowledged that resilience of health systems is being reshaped by climate change and that GF will increasingly focus on Africa (from  $\frac{2}{3}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of portfolio).

Q&A discussion raised issues of health sector engagement in climate diplomacy, management of ESS standards in infrastructure, Save the Children's integration of climate into programming, the Africa CDC–Global Fund partnership, and strategies for engaging DAEs. Panelists noted that NDAs and CCMs provide entry points, infrastructure projects must respect ESS but can be climate-proofed within existing footprints, and partnerships are evolving with Africa CDC providing strategic vision. UNICEF described its nine-step "climate shift" approach to build capacity in DAEs, citing Rwanda as an example.

Mr. Gitonga closed by stressing three key reflections: (1) climate change is not only an environmental crisis but also a health crisis, (2) partnerships are at the heart of solutions, and (3) finance and innovation are critical enablers.

## Day 3

Ms. Emmanuella Doreen Kwofie, Operations Analyst Consultant (GCF) highlighted the inspiring progress made in the previous days, underscoring community, collaboration, and shared purpose across key topics such as climate resilience, country ownership, and innovative solutions. She concluded with a call for continued learning, connection, and action toward Africa's climate-resilient future

### 3.1 Monitoring and Evaluation: MEL Capacity Building Initiative

The session was moderated by Ms. Ani Waiba from GCF and in her introductory remarks, she related that the session is a deep dive in M&E aimed at positioning partners for enhanced measurement and reporting. She further emphasised that result delivery performance is a critical issue in M&E and gave an update on the recently approved Monitoring and Accountability Framework (MAF). She also shared that GCF's DMEL has expanded and has been reaching out to partners with the aim of enhancing capacity. She later introduced Mr. Claudios Hakuna from DMEL to present and lead the Q&A Session.

In his introductory remarks, Mr. Hakuna posed a question to the audience: if they knew what MEL stood for, and followed it up with a question on the challenges faced during reporting. The presentation focused on three main areas – building stakeholder capacity at a national level, building capacity at the project and program level focused on MEL- capacity development, and the ongoing advisory for robust monitoring and reporting.

With regards to national level capacity, he informed the audience that this was based on climate policy foundations such as UNFCCC, NAP's and NDC's to enhance the transparency framework. He further shared that this involves monitoring evaluation learning and monitoring verification at national level, the design of national MEL and MRV systems including objectives and purpose, monitoring for climate action with regards to adaptation and the measurement for climate action for tracking mitigation. He also shared that a module has been developed on evaluation review, learning and review mechanisms and the participatory approach. With regards to the updated MAF, he shared that the framework covers all policies related to M&E including MEL basic for monitoring in GCF and the harmonization of the results management framework.

During the Q&A session, a representative from CRDB Bank inquired on when capacity building programs will be initiated, in response, Mr. Hakuna revealed that the rollout will be in 2026, with stakeholder consultations and content development already underway. Mr. Eric Chipeta from NDA Namibia wanted to find out if LOTA has been embedded in the new system and if universities have been approached for possible partnerships. In his response, Mr. Hakuna confirmed that LOTA has been embedded, and further mentioned that despite having a good system, it is important that not only good lessons be reported, but bad lessons as well. He further encouraged African universities to partner with GCF and embed the modules into their curriculum. As part of the discussion, the DAE from South Africa informed the participants that there are many South African universities willing to partner, including postgraduate programmes to looking to foster African-led initiatives. Other questions were from Rwanda NDA and Africa Adaptation Initiative on training and outcomes. In conclusion Mr. Hakuna shared that training will be



face to face and online, with other modalities also being explored. He further related that multi-country monitoring will also be covered as it has been challenging when reporting to GCF.

### 3.2 Catalyzing Regional Climate Solutions: UNECA Partnerships and Pathways for GCF Impact in Africa

The moderator, Mr. Charles Akol opened the session by underscoring Africa's urgent need for more money, more investment, and implementation that delivers results. He highlighted UNECA's Readiness Framework Agreement with the GCF, noting that the first readiness project is already underway across nine countries. He stressed the role of the regional climate finance platform to coordinate efforts, strengthen capacity, and unlock climate finance for higher impact.

Dr. Pina emphasised the importance of national ownership in building successful partnerships. He explained that when a country defines its priorities clearly, partners like UNECA and GCF respond with seriousness and commitment. Cabo Verde's readiness projects, he noted, are interlinked rather than standalone, which builds coherence, strengthens skills, and improves institutional capacity. Trust, commitment, and collaboration have been the foundation of their success.

Mr. Youssef Elamine Mbechezi (Comoros) reflected on the particular vulnerabilities of small developing countries like Comoros to climate hazards, but affirmed their continued commitment to both regional and national climate initiatives. He pointed to the renewal of the blue economy strategy, supported by UNECA, UNEP, and other partners, as a key milestone. The focus is on mobilizing resources, strengthening capacity, and building resilience to adapt to vulnerabilities while maintaining strong political commitment at the national level.

Mr. Gabriel Ngua Ayecaba (Equatorial Guinea) congratulated the conveners of the regional dialogue and emphasised its importance for African countries' access to climate finance. He highlighted the partnership with UNECA, which began after COP22 with the creation of the Climate Commission for Small Island States, and which has since enabled Equatorial Guinea to benefit from a GCF-supported readiness project. He noted UNECA's role in supporting reporting to the UN and improving data collection, allowing small countries like Equatorial Guinea to be recognized and supported.

Mr. Helmut Barreto (São Tomé and Príncipe) shared his country's experience as one of the most climate-vulnerable island states, facing severe challenges such as sea-level rise. He explained that São Tomé and Príncipe is developing its updated NDC (2.0) with GCF support, while also focusing on NDA capacity, transforming the energy sector, and developing innovative financing instruments. UNECA's technical and financial backing has been crucial in building renewable energy capacity, especially solar, while ensuring resilience and protecting heritage sites such as Príncipe, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Mr. Bryan Chung (Indian Ocean Commission) emphasised the strategic importance of regional cooperation for African island states to collectively access climate finance and avoid fragmented efforts. He underscored the need to translate policies into action despite limited resources, pointing to the 2024 mangrove nature-based solutions project as an example. He stressed that climate action must go beyond governments to involve the private sector and that regional initiatives are essential for generating tangible benefits for people and communities.

Dr. Pina noted that one of the biggest challenges had been bridging the distance and building trust between national teams and UNECA. While communication gaps had created challenges in the past, he affirmed that relationships are now stronger. He urged continued efforts to improve communication and ensure that UNECA's support is more closely connected to national realities and priorities.

The session concluded with emphasis that cooperation is essential to overcome challenges and leverage opportunities. Regional platforms for climate finance, strategic use of readiness resources, and UNECA's convening role were highlighted as critical enablers of Africa's climate action.

### 3.3.1 Enhanced Country-ownership, Direct access and locally-led climate action

This session was moderated by Ms. Ramona Calin, locally-led Climate Action Specialist at GCF in the presence of five distinguished guests: Mr. Z. Elijah Whapoe, National Coordinator, Environmental Protection Agency, Liberia, Mr. Peter Odhengo, Senior Policy Advisor, Climate Finance, National Treasury, Kenya, Mr. Shekhu Kanneh, Chief Director, Environment Protection Agency, Sierra Leone, Ms. Khaoula Jaoui, Director, Climate Department, Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel and lastly Mr. Becquet Polycarpe Bationo, Head of Research and Fundraising, Fonds d 'Intervention pour l'Environnement.

Major highlights of the discussion followed five important topics:

- National–Local Integration- A strong emphasis on aligning local climate initiatives with national priorities, ensuring NDCs and development plans are mainstreamed at county and district levels through regular coordination.
- Enhanced Direct Access (EDA): EDA pilots and call-for-proposals models enable accredited entities to channel resources directly to communities, supporting flexible, community-driven solutions.
- Role of DAEs and Development Banks: National entities are transitioning from traditional lending to climate-responsive financing, embedding gender, inclusivity, and additional criteria while leveraging co-financing for renewable energy, agriculture, and SME projects.
- Key Challenges: Persistent barriers include data gaps, lengthy project approval/disbursement timelines, political transitions disrupting continuity, and the need to manage community expectations to maintain trust and;
- Country Practice: In specific Kenya emphasises its institutionalized locally-led climate action by establishing climate change units and funds in nearly all counties, supported by participatory climate risk assessments that directly engage communities in planning.

### 3.3.2 Design to Deliver Impact/Results: Importance of Theory of Change and Climate Rationale

The session opened with introductory remarks by Mr. Kevin Horsburgh, who set the stage by highlighting the theme of “Identifying and showing climate impact.” He framed the discussion around how Accredited Entities (AEs) are using climate information to strengthen project design, and how these lessons can inform broader decision-making. Three case studies were then presented, each offering perspectives on how to achieve and sustain integrated national decision-making for climate action. The presenters also outlined challenges faced and solutions developed in scaling up climate-resilient interventions.



Dr. Barnett reflected on South Africa’s experience with its first GCF project, emphasizing the importance of building institutional capacity and identifying clear climate actions. Mr. Moubarak Mougaila (BOAD) shared lessons from Togo, underscoring how they built collaboration among national institutions and local communities, leading to effective proposal design, including strong local ownership. Mr. Ireland provided insights from Mali, where climate-smart agriculture and agroforestry practices are addressing food security while balancing urgent community needs with longer-term resilience, despite persistent challenges of fragmented climate data.

Following these presentations, participants engaged in a round-table discussion facilitated by Mr. Patrick Gitonga, Mr. Bamba and Mr. Horsburgh. The conversation explored two guiding questions: how climate action decisions are made, and what the biggest challenges are in finding and using information.

Feedback from the groups emphasised the opportunity for south-south learning and cooperation in the design of sustainable decision-making mechanisms. It was also clear that many countries have significant capacity in the context of integrated climate programming but that support is required to maintain institutional capacity and inter-agency cooperation, as well as improving access to reliable data for both immediate and long-term planning. Examples included the Development Bank of Southern Africa's (DBSA) structured use of GCF support, UNICEF's integration of climate questions into health surveys, and country cases (Cameroon, Morocco, Benin) showing progress through specialized institutions and legal mandates. Persistent challenges remain around limited data sharing, integrating quantitative and qualitative data, high costs of data collection, and national capacity for stronger scientific analysis.

### 3.4.1 How to deal with complaints about GCF projects

This session was moderated by Ms. Sue Kyung Hwang, and the panel members for the discussion were Ms. Olga Vasiliev, Senior Dispute Resolution Specialist, GCF, Mr. Kouame Mathieu, ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development and Mr. Kimaren Riamit, Indigenous Livelihoods Enhancement Partners.

The session was organized by the Independent Redress Mechanism (IRM) of the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and provided a comprehensive overview of how affected communities and Accredited Entities (AEs) can address grievances that arise from GCF-financed projects. The IRM representatives explained that the mechanism functions as an independent accountability office of the GCF, reporting directly to the Board. It plays a key role in facilitating dialogue and resolving disputes between project implementers and affected communities without halting project operations. The IRM's core functions include problem-solving, compliance review, capacity building, outreach, and advisory services, all aimed at ensuring that GCF projects are implemented in a transparent, fair, and socially responsible manner.

The speakers emphasized the importance of having robust, accessible, and legitimate grievance mechanisms within AEs and executing entities. Such systems help prevent and address harm to project-affected people, mitigate environmental and social risks, and strengthen institutional accountability. The discussion referenced the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which outline key effectiveness criteria for grievance mechanisms—legitimacy, accessibility, predictability, transparency, and fairness. These standards help ensure that affected individuals can safely and effectively raise complaints and seek remedies when issues occur.

Practical experiences were shared by participants, including the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID), which presented its experience in setting up a grievance and compliance unit integrated within its Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS). EBID described how its mechanism allows complaints to be submitted through various channels, ensures confidentiality, and protects complainants from retaliation. The Bank highlighted how participation in the IRM's capacity-building activities helped enhance their internal processes, communication materials, and complaint-handling efficiency. A civil society representative also shared lessons learned from working with international financial institutions in Kenya, noting that grievances often stem from power imbalances, limited access to information, and weak trust between communities and implementing agencies. He stressed that effective grievance mechanisms must be built on transparency, trust, inclusivity, and clear procedural steps—from complaint submission to resolution—to prevent escalation and ensure timely responses.

The IRM outlined the capacity-building opportunities it offers, including an e-learning course on operating grievance mechanisms, annual virtual and in-person training, and specialized technical support on gender, retaliation, and community engagement issues. Entities that have not yet completed accreditation were

also encouraged to participate, as having a functioning grievance mechanism is a prerequisite for GCF accreditation. The IRM further promotes knowledge exchange through its Community Mediation and Grievance Redress and Accountability Mechanism (GRAM) Partnership network. Participants suggested expanding training to include pre-accreditation entities and raised questions on how IRM distinguishes genuine complaints from malicious or unfounded ones. In response, the IRM clarified that all complaints are assessed for eligibility and factual credibility before registration.

Overall, the session underscored that having a trusted, transparent, and responsive grievance mechanism is essential for the success and sustainability of GCF projects. IRM reaffirmed its commitment to supporting entities through continued capacity-building programs and collaborative partnerships to enhance accountability and trust across the GCF portfolio.

### **3.4.2 Access, Ownership, and Inclusion: Lessons from GCF Evaluations**

The session was moderated by Mr. Archi Rastogi, of the Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) of the GCF. The panelists included: Ms. Baky Buba, a member of the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG) of the GCF, and Dr. Barnett.

Mr. Rastogi opened the session by outlining the objectives of the session and introduced the panel. He also gave a brief overview of three evaluations conducted recently (access, country ownership and Indigenous Peoples). On access, the IEU evaluation found out strong correlation between country capacity and access to finance. Access was initially about access for developing countries, but over time it became about access for entities, which creates policy confusion. Direct access is underserved; only 14 of the 32 DAEs in Africa have accessed GCF resources through projects. IEU findings show that difference in language and time zones had very little correlation with access, indicating that aside from regional presence there is a need for structural changes to address issues of access and ownership. On country ownership, Mr. Rastogi emphasised that it needs continuous reinforcement at the systems level, not project by project. It is also important to provide more thorough guidance to NDAs on country ownership. On Indigenous Peoples, Mr. Rastogi noted that the GCF Indigenous Peoples' Policy focuses on "do no harm" but does not actively tackle providing climate finance benefits to Indigenous Peoples. The IEU evaluation also found out that implementation of the free, prior and informed consent has been inconsistent. The main recommendation was to have a dedicated window for Indigenous Peoples and non-state actors.

Ms. Buba shared her views on the GCF Indigenous Peoples' Policy. It provides strong infrastructure to ensure that GCF activities respect Indigenous Peoples, helps them to benefit from GCF climate finance, and the guiding principle of "do no harm" is implemented efficiently. She also touched on the objectives and structure of IPAG. Turning to the IEU evaluation, Ms. Buba highlighted high transaction cost and dispersed populations of Indigenous Peoples being as some of the barriers for Indigenous Peoples to access climate finance. Ms. Buba also noted IPAG's history of engagement with the Secretariat, particularly the Executive Director, on improving access for Indigenous Peoples. Ms. Buba highlighted the importance for GCF to have a dedicated mechanism for Indigenous Peoples such as a small grants window for direct access to Indigenous Peoples, youth and women organizations. The GEF small grant window is a good example. She also noted that Indigenous Peoples are very organized and meaningful standards for engagements need to be embedded for no-objection and project-level processes. Ms. Buba called for Indigenous Peoples' expertise to be embedded in GCF regional departments and urged to consider this in the context of regional presence-related discussions. Ms. Buba concluded by stressing the importance of participation by IPAG in GCF dialogues and fora where they can learn more about directions, projects etc. She also noted that there are two representatives of IPAG in Africa and can engage with GCF, countries, and other stakeholders.

Ms. Barnett, the other panelist, a representative of SANBI (DAE), began with noting that SANBI was the pioneer of enhanced direct access with Adaptation Fund and highlighted the importance of not just

focusing on small grants to Indigenous Peoples, youth and women, but also ensure aspects such as local origination and locally-led actions. She then discussed how direct access brings ownership and innovation, but can also be underserved because DAEs do not have dedicated people. Ms. Barnett called out the restrictions in the current Readiness Programme that does not allow hiring and nurturing young talent through, for example, young professionals programmes, while it does allow the hiring of consultants.

Mr. Rastogi opened the discussion to other delegates and recalled a recommendation from the IEU evaluation that calls for making direct access the default and documenting why each project brought by IAEs could not be brought by DAEs. A participant stated that displaced people are more exposed to climate change impacts and recommended for more visibility and discussion on inclusion of displaced people.

Another participant, a representative from a Kenyan NDA, agreed that country ownership needs to be institutionalized. The participant noted that the Kenyan NDA does not have technical expertise to review project proposals and relies on other ministries and agencies for their technical views to issue no-objection letters for proposals.

Ms. Koffman noted that the Secretariat carries out its own analysis of whether the projects are fully country-owned in addition to no-objections letters being obtained by AEs and added that there are some aspects that are difficult to be formalized.

Ms. Barnett asked IAEs in the room to share their challenges of transferring capacity to DAEs and noted that the requirement by GCF for IAEs to do capacity transfer to DAEs may not have been operationalized well. Mr. Rastogi responded that the IEU evaluation shows limited effectiveness of the GCF requirement for IAEs to build capacity of DAEs. A representative from UNICEF expressed their interest to support direct access applicants to get accredited as UNICEF itself has gone through the accreditation process recently.

Concluding the discussion, Ms. Buba called for ensuring direct access resources to Indigenous Peoples; establishing dedicated arrangements for Indigenous Peoples, youth, and women; called for effective implementation of the GCF Indigenous Peoples policy.

### **3.5 Funding Tools for Water Projects**

Given the high level of interest in Q&A from day one, this session was combined with the Open Mic (Q&A) session to address the numerous questions participants raised during the dialogue.

### **3.6 Open Mic (Q&A)**

Mr. Andrew McElroy, Media Senior Specialist at GCF, moderated the Q&A session. Ms. Koffman, Director of the Africa Region at GCF; Mr. Bamba, Regional Manager for the Africa Region at GCF; and Mr. Low, led the responses to over 17 questions submitted via questionnaires and asked during the session.

Participants who took the floor to ask questions included representatives from MoF Zambia, EIF Namibia, Botswana NDA, Pathfinder International, and MoF Uganda. The questions addressed topics such as accreditation, Readiness, country engagement, programming in FCAS, ESS, PMO costs, co-financing ratios, and financial instruments to incentivize private sector investment in adaptation.

It was noted that some AEs were interested in discussions on the review of PMO costs to reflect the high operational cost. Others expressed the need for GCF to explore solutions to the issue of non-responsive NDA focal points. Additionally, GCF was encouraged to work with NDAs to ensure that loan facilities targeting the most vulnerable, particularly women, reach the actual beneficiaries and avoid intermediaries.

In conclusion, Ms. Koffman assured participants that funding is available for the GCF-2 programming cycle, in response to a question raised during the session.



### 3.7 Regional Dialogue Closing Plenary



Ms. Koffman, Director of the Africa Region at GCF, in her closing remarks, thanked the Government of Ethiopia and UNECA for hosting the dialogue. She extended her appreciation to H.E. Mr. Seyoum Mekonnen, Ambassador Seyni Nafo, Co-Chair of the GCF Board; and Mr. Murombedzi, for gracing the event with their presence. She also acknowledged the support of GCF staff in making the event possible. Ms. Koffman concluded the dialogue with reflections on the journey from Day 1 to Day 3 and invited participants to a closing dinner hosted by GCF.

## Annex 1

### Bilaterals

Over 30 bilateral meetings were scheduled on the sidelines of the regional dialogue. These meetings offered a focused space for National Designated Authorities (NDAs), delivery partners, and GCF partners to align on priorities, co-create readiness proposals, and explore tailored investment platforms, such as the African Island States Regional Platform for Climate Finance. They also enable peer-to-peer learning and matchmaking between country aspirations and potential funding modalities, ensuring that Africa's climate goals are not only discussed but actively advanced through bankable projects and strategic partnerships.

