

Plan of Personal Commitment and Action

Global Environmental Governance Forum: Reflecting on the Past, Moving into the Future
(June 28 – July 2, 2009 / Glion, Switzerland)

Impact of the GEGF/GEGP on Environmental Governance and Policy Processes

The Global Environmental Governance Forum (GEGF) represents a unique opportunity for established and emerging leaders to collaboratively forge a new global architecture of environmental governance. The GEGF can play a key role in (re-)defining key environmental governance processes and emerging international policies by:

- Promoting reflection on past successes and failures and identifying key areas for reform;
- Facilitating dialogue and the sharing of lessons among past, current and future leaders;
- Bringing the voices and experiences of those most impacted by environmental problems and governance failures to bear on current policy dialogues;
- Formulating an action plan and framework for future environmental governance policies and institutions; and
- Raising the profile of current debates in environmental governance among the media, policy-makers and the public, and thereby reinforcing support for broad-based reforms.

Global climate change is one of the most significant challenges to our social, economic and ecological well being. It has the potential to affect all members of society, but will likely impact the poor and socially marginalized groups most severely. It is imperative to design effective international policies and institutions that confront this pressing threat by devising creative, innovative solutions that productively engage both the biggest contributors to climate change and those most affected by it. In this vein, one of the most important roles that the GEGF can play is to foster ongoing political dialogues concerning the shape and implementation of the emerging global climate policy framework that will replace the Kyoto Protocol in 2012. These dialogues will culminate in the Fifteenth UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP-15) meeting in Copenhagen in December 2009. At this meeting, the global community will agree on the design of a new international climate regime. There is still time to have input into this important process and the GEGF is the perfect venue to formulate specific recommendations for COP-15. Furthermore, although the basic framework of the new international climate policy regime is to be agreed upon in Copenhagen, there will inevitably be important details to work out for specific policy provisions, especially with respect to the design of carbon trading systems and the role of forests in climate change mitigation.

In addition to influencing the shape and logic of future global climate policies, it is crucial to consider how they are linked with other policies and institutions for international environmental governance. For instance, how do proposed mechanisms for climate change mitigation concerning forest carbon (e.g., Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation or 'REDD') relate to the UN Convention on Biodiversity or the UN Convention to Combat Desertification? In addition to biodiversity and other ecological concerns, it is important to consider how these mechanisms relate to broader sustainable development objectives, such as the Millennium Development Goals. The GEGF and GEGP could play a crucial role in influencing the design of these new policies and mechanisms and in ensuring that they are compatible and synergistic with existing governance structures and institutions for promoting positive environmental and development outcomes. Some specific actions that the GEGF and the GEGP could take to influence existing environmental policies and ongoing political processes include:

- Formulating a set of guidelines for reform of the global environmental governance system with respect to different environmental issues—such as the loss of biodiversity, global warming/climate change, desertification, industrial and agricultural pollution, and contamination and scarcity of freshwater resources—while explicitly recognizing the overlap, contradictions and synergies among them;
- Engaging current policy-makers in a process of reflection about the origins and outcomes of past policies and potential future directions (e.g., using scenario-building exercises);
- Drafting policy papers and briefings with specific policy and/or governance recommendations for prominent upcoming and ongoing environmental discussions and negotiations; and
- Actively advocating for specific changes in global environmental governance policies and institutions among governments and existing international environmental organizations.

The Role of Emerging Environmental Leaders in Environmental Governance Reform

In addition to the broader role that GEGF and GEGP can play in promoting the reform of the current international environmental policy framework, emerging environmental leaders engaged in the GEGF could play a significant role in promoting reform by:

- Bringing fresh perspectives on old environmental governance issues and concerns;
- Advocating for policy changes within their own institutions, and their personal and professional networks;
- Fostering dialogue and debate on important environmental governance issues and concerns at various levels—local, regional, national and international—and in various forums (e.g., professional meetings, conferences, online discussion groups) through their existing networks and affiliations;
- Organizing, facilitating and engaging in forums for discussions on the strengths and weaknesses of the current global environmental governance regime;
- Writing policy briefings and papers that highlight current pitfalls and potential innovations in environmental governance; and
- Creating diverse, innovative platforms for disseminating information on global environmental governance reform to a broader audience (e.g., online networks, multi-media productions and events, live interactive broadcasts).

My Contributions to GEGF – Skills, Experience and Insights

I have a range of skills and experience that would help the GEGF realize its goals of promoting reform of the global environmental governance system. These include facilitation and meditation practice in a variety of settings, as well as excellent research and analytical skills (e.g., surveys and qualitative interviews, oral history documentation, policy and stakeholder analysis), which I gained through both my academic training and professional work. Furthermore, I possess solid writing and editing skills from my extensive experience authoring and compiling policy studies, program evaluation reports, journal articles and book chapters, informational briefs, and grant proposals about a range of issues related to environmental governance: water and energy resources management, sustainable management and conservation of forest ecosystems, and market-based mechanisms for integrating conservation and development objectives.

Moreover, I have gained valuable insights into diverse aspects of environmental governance through my work and research experiences in a number of different contexts and geographical settings. These include conducting research and writing publications on governance of forest ecosystems in both protected area and community-based resource management contexts in South Asia (Nepal, India, Bangladesh); Working with key stakeholders to promote dialogue and collaboration on trans-boundary water and energy resources and to broker a regional agreement for the Syr Darya River Basin involving four countries in Central Asia; Interviewing representatives of government, civil society and donor organizations in Central Asia about issues of broader environmental governance for a report outlining policy recommendations for the Asian Development Bank's regional environmental management strategy, and for a book on "Civil Society in Central Asia"; and investigating environmental service payment schemes for promoting the conservation of upland areas and watersheds in Latin America (Costa Rica).

Through my current academic research, I have also become well versed in contemporary debates surrounding climate change mitigation strategies and policies in general, and proposals for a new 'avoided deforestation' mechanism (i.e., REDD) in particular. Furthermore, by investigating local perceptions and experiences with community-based forest management, I have gained valuable perspectives on how environmental policies and programs play out in diverse settings, and an in-depth understanding of the roles, relationships and tensions among the various institutions involved in environmental governance at multiple levels.

Aside from my own work and research experience, I am involved in a few professional and academic networks and organizations that promote environmental governance. In September 2008, I was one of 38 experts worldwide invited from diverse stakeholder groups (NGOs, donor institutions, government agencies, researchers, and national associations of community based organizations) to participate in an international workshop on "Forests, Landscape and Governance: The Roles of Local Communities, Development Projects, the State and other Stakeholders". At the workshop, held in Bhutan, we derived a set of guidelines for enhancing governance of forests and their broader landscapes, which were shared with policy-makers at a subsequent meeting in Switzerland. Since the workshop, we have also developed an online forum for continued collaboration, and have initiated a joint project to develop a methodology for monitoring and evaluating governance in conservation and natural resource management initiatives, drawing on our collective experience in many different countries and settings. I am also involved with a group of young scholars in the field of Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change, which is collaborating to find ways to enhance the role of research in environmental decision-making and increase our understanding of human-environment interactions and processes. My active involvement in these groups, and my ongoing participation in relevant conferences and other deliberative forums, has provided me with important insights into the impediments, prerequisites and approaches for enhancing environmental governance on a global scale.

I have also been a leader in promoting environmental sustainability within my own community at the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawai'i. As the Sustainability Coordinator of the East-West Center Participants Association—comprised of over 400 students and scholars from more than 40 countries—I have worked with students, the administration and staff to enhance energy efficiency and reduce waste in office and residential buildings. These efforts have resulted in the installation of more energy efficient lighting systems, water conservation measures, and the expansion of recycling efforts, and have prompted a commitment by the Center to adopt alternative energy technologies.

My Vision and Commitments for Promoting the Objectives and Legacy of the GEGF

My overall **vision** as an emerging environmental leader is to help foster an effective and transparent environmental governance regime that promotes social equity, economic opportunity, and ecological integrity. This will be achieved through the expansion of forums for information-sharing, dialogue and

action on emerging policies, governance frameworks and institutions to encompass a broad spectrum of people working on diverse aspects of environmental governance reform around the world. I am dedicated to facilitating progressive change toward the above goals through a number of specific **commitments**. Specifically, I will:

- 1) Share the outcomes of the GEGF with my colleagues in other professional and academic networks that I am involved in, and solicit their feedback ideas and participation on various ideas and proposals.
- 2) Stay abreast of the ongoing climate change policy negotiations and share insights from my own research on REDD and forest carbon trading with others in the environmental advocacy and policy community.
- 3) Develop a model for engaging communities in deliberative dialogues about the opportunities, risks and challenges of participating in forest carbon trading regimes, test this model in my research sites in Nepal, and produce a set of for national and local climate change mitigation planning and governance.
- 4) Contribute to the development of a global online forum and platform for dialogue and action on important issues related to environmental governance. This forum would be open to all GEGF participants, as well as others interested in promoting environmental governance reform. I envision this forum as a space for the sharing of information, concerns and calls for action on specific environmental governance issues.
- 5) Facilitate the organization of an international event of 'Emerging Leaders for Environmental Governance Reform' at the East-West Center in Honolulu as a follow-up to the GEGF. This workshop will provide an opportunity to share the outcomes and outputs of the Forum, and to engage a larger group of emerging environmental leaders from throughout the Asia-Pacific Region and beyond in current debates on environmental governance reform. Drawing on the expertise of others in the environmental governance field, this event will engage participants in creative, inspiring deliberation and collective visioning through the use of interactive and flexible discussion tools, such as 'open space' and 'peer assist'. The media will be invited to publicize and cover this event, thereby increasing awareness within the broader global community.

Through this vision and these commitments—as well as my diverse and extensive personal, professional and academic experience, abilities, networks and insights—I will promote the objectives of the GEGF and GEGP, and my own development as an emerging environmental leader in the global movement toward a more effective, transparent, accountable, sustainable and just system of environmental governance.