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Press Release

Replenishment of Global Environment Facility Seen as Major Success for Johannesburg Summit Process

New York, 14 August -- Johannesburg Summit Secretary-General Nitin Desai today called the \$2.9 billion replenishment of the Global Environment Facility a positive indication that countries are serious about putting resources behind efforts to promote the plan that will emerge from the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg later this month.

Desai said that not only did donor countries agree on the largest replenishment ever of the GEF, they also agreed to expand the use of the facility to finance efforts to implement the Convention to Combat Desertification, which is working to preserve and restore drylands for productive purposes, and for efforts to eliminate persistent organic pollutants.

More than 100 world leaders, along with thousands of government delegates, NGOs and business leaders, have indicated that they will participate in the Summit, an historic opportunity to forge a global consensus on an action plan to reverse environmental degradation and improve living standards.

The new GEF replenishment, agreed upon by 32 developed and developing countries in Washington, funds operations over the next four years, from 2002 to 2006. In addition to the new areas of desertification and persistent organic pollutants, the GEF will continue to finance projects aimed at protecting biodiversity, mitigating climate change, protecting international waters, and replacing ozone-depleting chemicals.

Mohamed T. El-Ashry, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the GEF, said that "the level of replenishment is strong evidence of the participants' commitment to the global environment and the GEF, and should contribute to the success of the World Summit on Sustainable Development."

The replenishment of the GEF has been a contentious issue during the preparatory process for Johannesburg, and one of the unresolved portions of the draft Plan of Implementation calls for a substantial replenishment of up to \$3 billion. The issue of using the GEF to finance the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, heavily pushed by African countries, was also unresolved.

"This agreement is a huge step forward, and will have a major effect on moving the negotiations forward on the remainder of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation," Desai said. "This shows that the negotiations are not about empty words and promises. Countries are prepared to put their money where their mouths are, to really achieve results on the ground."

Although the GEF started before the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the first major infusion of resources to the facility came after that Summit, and the GEF represents one of the major successes of the post-Rio era in addressing areas of environmental degradation. During its first decade, GEF allocated \$4.2 billion, supplemented by \$11 billion in co-financing, for more than 1,000 projects in 160 developing countries and countries with transitional economies. GEF is the only new funding source to emerge from the 1992 Earth Summit and today counts 173 countries as members.

The 32 donors participating in the new replenishment are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Cote d'Ivoire, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg,

Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States.

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