

26th Meeting of the GBEP Steering Committee

Online 14.00 – 15.00 CEST time (UTC +2)

Thursday, 15 September 2022

Co-Chairs Summary

The GBEP Steering Committee held its 26th meeting, a special online session, on 15 September 2022. Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, Philippines, Spain, USA, EUBIA, FAO, IRENA, ICAO, ICRAF-CIFOR, IEA/IEA Bioenergy, UNIDO and WBA participated in the meeting as Partners and Observers. External experts from Imperial College of London, UK, and from the Biofuture Campaign also participated.

Ambassador Alexandre Ghisleni (GBEP Co-Chair, Brazil) and Ms. Emily Marthaler (GBEP Co-Chair, USA) co-chaired the meeting.

Opening and Adoption of the Agenda

Amb. Alexandre Ghisleni thanked Partners and Observers for supporting GBEP for more than 16 years. He highlighted the important role of GBEP for promoting sustainable bioenergy in its many forms among countries, and its added value in sustainability assessment, and capacity and network building, which were reaffirmed in the latest Steering Committee meeting, as well as recognized by the 28th FAO Committee for Agriculture. Moreover, Amb. Alexandre Ghisleni recalled the budgetary constraints pointed out during the previous Steering Committee Meeting at the end of June 2022, which led to the decision to mandate the GBEP Executive Secretary to prepare a Streamlined Programme of Work and Budget (PoW&B) to be supported by a part-time Secretariat. In addition, he renewed the call for GBEP members to step up to provide financial support that could keep the Partnership alive, and expressed the hope that the demonstration from GBEP of being able to continue working with less resources could encourage potential donors to also step forward.

Ms. Emily Marthaler emphasized the importance of GBEP as regards the relationships among the member countries, for facilitating inter-national discussions on the benefits and the role of bioenergy, and for sharing information, ideas and support needed for bioenergy in the context of the energy transition and decarbonisation. Ms. Marthaler thanked all the countries for participating in the meeting and for their efforts in helping to address the current financial situation of GBEP and to identify funding possibilities.

Amb. Alexandre Ghisleni and Ms. Emily Marthaler officially adopted the meeting's agenda.

Zitouni Ould-Dada (Deputy Director, Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment, FAO) participated in the opening of the meeting. He had to leave the meeting beforehand because of further engagements, he sent his apologies and Ms. Maria Michela Morese, GBEP Executive Secretary, brought his voice to express the firm commitment of FAO to continue supporting the Partnership.

GBEP Streamlined Programme of Work and Budget

Maria Michela Morese, GBEP Executive Secretary, presented an overview of the GBEP Streamlined Programme of Work and Budget (PoW&B) for the biennium 2023-24 (see Annex I), developed as an emergency measure to overcome the current budgetary constraints. The document had been developed in consultation with GBEP members and shared before the meeting. According to the Streamlined Programme, the GBEP activities will continue to be focused on two main pillars, i.e.

- (i) Working Group on Capacity Building (WGCB), co-chaired by Argentina and ECOWAS;
- (ii) Task Force on Sustainability (TFS), co-chaired by Italy, Japan and Egypt.

In addition, in the Streamlined PoW&B, specific attention is paid to outreach tools, including the organization of events/conference where GBEP members and the Secretariat are invited to participate and present GBEP's work, as well as the development of additional dissemination materials (papers, news articles etc.), the renewal of the GBEP website, and a regular presence in social media, in order to give more visibility to the Partnership.

Moreover, Ms. Morese mentioned that the presented Streamlined PoW&B will require an estimated budget of approx. 200,000 USD, whilst the regular annual activity of the Partnership on a normally basis would need a doubled budget. This implies, as an emergency measure, the GBEP Secretariat staff to be contracted on a part-time basis, allowing for very limited funds for travel purposes.

Following this presentation, there was a discussion among Partners and Observers on the points raised.

All Partners and Observers who intervened were very adamant in their expressions of support and appreciation of the work of GBEP. The added value of the Partnership was also highlighted, standing alone among other fora on bioenergy for its intergovernmental work. It is the only bioenergy forum with such a broad membership of developed and developing countries; this geographical coverage is important for providing a platform and a voice to underrepresented countries who are otherwise absent in other initiatives on bioenergy. Intervening members expressed consensus with the Streamlined Programme of Work and Budget (PoW&B) proposed, their willingness to participate in finding solutions to keep the Partnership alive and to continue working with GBEP through in-kind contributions, as already done also in the past.

In particular, CREA/Italy confirmed its commitment in working with GBEP as an institution on technical aspects, but also as a governmental body in promoting GBEP within the Italian administration. CREA/Italy stressed its firm interest to have bilateral discussions with the GBEP Secretariat as soon as a new Government would have settled after the forthcoming political elections, on how to re-strengthen cooperation with GBEP, including with financial support.

Germany expressed appreciation to the work of GBEP and highlighted its interest to consider the possibility to fund specific GBEP projects/activities, while funding the GBEP Secretariat won't be possible. The importance to discuss the funding procedures that could accommodate both the German Government and FAO's internal procedures was also mentioned.

In light of the above, bilateral discussions of these Partners with the GBEP Secretariat will take place.

Conclusions and Next steps

Amb. Ghisleni summarised the main discussion points, reviewing the options proposed to reinforce the GBEP funding resources.

He concluded from the discussion that there was general agreement on the Streamlined Programme of Work and budget for 2023-2024 that therefore was considered approved as an emergency measure.

Ms. Emily Marthaler thanked all the participants for their willingness to support GBEP, either financially or through in-kind contributions.

On the basis of the discussions, it was agreed that:

1. Offers expressed by Partners and Observers can be further explored through bilateral conversations; and
2. Another Special Steering Committee Meeting is not required, therefore, the forthcoming discussion on the GBEP programme of work and budget will take place during the next annual GBEP meetings (21-22-23 November 2022 – more details to follow in due advance).

Proposal for streamlined GBEP Programme of Work and budget 2023-24

5 September 2022

GBEP is internationally recognized for its intergovernmental work since its establishment in 2006, contributing to ensure that sustainable bioenergy is an engine of low-carbon and sustainable development. In this context, GBEP is the only bioenergy forum with a broad membership of developed and developing countries, which provides a platform and a voice to underrepresented countries who are otherwise absent in other international initiatives on bioenergy. It therefore represents an important platform for sharing lessons learned and best practices in sustainable modern bioenergy development. GBEP has gained a very valuable cumulative experience in the last 16 years: on one side the GBEP Sustainability Indicators are unique in their agreement and endorsement by so many countries globally, and on the other side the GBEP's in-country implementation, capacity building activities on the sustainability indicators, and on the transition from traditional towards more modern sustainable bioenergy have been providing important lessons and policy recommendations.

The below table on the proposed activities of the GBEP Secretariat under a **streamlined GBEP programme of work and budget for the biennium 2023-24** has been developed with the aim to **prioritize the key prerogatives and recognized added value of GBEP**.

The approximate budget for funding of all activities included in the table is USD 210 000 per year, around half that of previous years. This considers the budget for GBEP Secretariat regular activities – with current staff reduced to part time (50% time) under the same contractual arrangements – including administration and necessary travel of the Secretariat during this time.

Activity Group/Area of Work	Activity foreseen 2023-24	Details
Working Group on Capacity Building (WGCB)		
AG2 “Raising awareness, and sharing of data and experience on the implementation of the GBEP indicators”	GBEP Sec. backstopping of piloting of the Rapid Implementation Framework Handbook.	This support includes only initial guidance and troubleshooting on Handbook. Further support activities should be funded by external resources.
AG3 “Study Tour for capacity building and training”	10th GBEP Bioenergy Week to take place in Viet Nam in 2023. 11th GBEP Bioenergy Week to take place in Africa in 2024 in collaboration with ECREEE, AFREC and UNECA.	Organisation of annual Bioenergy Week from procedural and technical points of view, in association with hosts and other collaborating organisations. (External sponsorship will be required and sought, as with previous editions.)
AG4 “Woody biomass for forest landscape restoration (FLR) and sustainable livelihoods”	Webinars on the links between sustainable wood energy and FLR and/or biohydrogen for the sustainable energy transition.	At least 1 webinar to be held annually to bring together private sector, academic institutions, governments and international organisations to discuss pertinent aspects related to either: i) the links between sustainable wood energy and FLR, or ii) the sustainable growth of the biohydrogen market.
	AG4 session during the Bioenergy Weeks 2023 and 2024.	Session will have a thematic focus of interest to the related region and will be followed by a brief regarding the conclusions of the session and related follow-up.
AG7 “Biogas”	Webinars in collaboration with regional biogas initiatives on co-benefits of biogas for sustainable development.	At least 1 webinar to be held annually to encourage cross-regional exchange and learning on specific topics related to the co-benefits of biogas as part of the circular economy.
	AG7 session during the Bioenergy Weeks 2023 and 2024.	Session will have a thematic focus of interest to the related region and will be followed by a brief regarding the conclusions of the session and related follow-up.

AG8 “Advanced Liquid Biofuels”	Webinars on the sustainable growth of the advanced liquid biofuels sector.	At least 1 webinar to be held annually, bringing together private sector and governments to discuss how the advanced liquid biofuel sector can be supported to best contribute to the achievement of climate mitigation targets and other aspects of the sustainable development agenda.
Youth	2023 and 2024 GBEP Youth Award	The GBEP Youth Award will be associated each year with the region of the Bioenergy Week (2023 in Asia and 2024 in Africa).
Capacity Development Events	(Co-)organisation of events in collaboration with other relevant initiatives, e.g. IEA Bioenergy, UNIDO, Biofuture Platform, among others.	Organisation of workshops and events, as appropriate, in collaboration with other relevant initiatives, e.g. IEA Bioenergy, UNIDO, Biofuture Platform, among others. At least 2 per year .
	Participation of the GBEP Sec. in relevant conferences and workshops as speaker/chair	At least 5 appearances of the GBEP Secretariat as speaker in other external conferences to give visibility to GBEP activities and experience.
	Develop capacity development materials like news, newsletters, infographics and others to raise awareness about sustainable bioenergy and the role of GBEP	Variable number
Dissemination and outreach tools	Renew the GBEP website and social media activities	New GBEP website and regular social media activities on various platforms (i.e. LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)
Task Force on Sustainability (TFS)		
GBEP Sustainability Indicators for Bioenergy and related Rapid Implementation Framework	Development of project proposals that integrate the implementation of the GBEP Sustainability Indicators and/or the related Rapid Implementation Framework.	At least 2 project proposals to be developed annually to procure external funding for projects that incorporate the implementation of the GBEP Sustainability Indicators and/or related Rapid Implementation Framework in different contexts.

Bioeconomy	GBEP Sec. to continue to contribute to the Biofuture Platform Working Group on Biomass Quantification and Sustainability Governance	
	Discussion and related paper, as well as piloting by GBEP members, on how the GBEP indicators could be applied to the wider bioeconomy	
	Development of project proposals that integrate a bioenergy component as part of broader bioeconomy issues.	