

**GLOBAL  
ENVIRONMENT  
FACILITY**

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**ISSUES PAPER ON  
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY PANEL  
ON THE GEF**

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## INTRODUCTION

1. In March 1994, Participants in the Global Environment Facility (GEF) endorsed the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured GEF. Article 24 of the Instrument states that "UNEP shall establish, in consultation with UNDP and the World Bank and on the basis of guidelines and criteria established by the Council, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) as an advisory body to the Facility". Understanding was also reached among Participants that a major item on the agenda for the first meeting of the Council would include discussion on proposals for the establishment of STAP, including its role, function, composition and administrative arrangements.

2. This paper has been prepared by UNEP, in consultation with UNDP, the World Bank and the GEF Administrator's Office, and based on views expressed by STAP members in the Pilot Phase, in order to facilitate discussions on STAP at the first meeting of the Council in July 1994. It outlines issues concerning the establishment of STAP and highlights possible features which could guide the development of STAP's terms of reference.

## BACKGROUND

3. STAP was established by Participants in the Pilot Phase to advise the implementing agencies on generic technical issues related to the implementation of environmental projects and programs under the GEF. Its terms of reference included the provision of criteria and priorities for projects and programs in relation to global environmental objectives.

4. As the Pilot Phase progressed, Participants agreed that STAP should:

- (i) be involved in the review of individual projects;
- (ii) analyze and develop methodologies to address national and global benefits, cost-effectiveness, and incremental costs; and
- (iii) elaborate a rationale for funding targeted research, country studies, monitoring and other related activities of direct relevance to the GEF.

5. Based on this mandate, STAP's work in the Pilot Phase focused on:

- (i) formulating criteria for eligibility and priorities for selection of GEF projects;
- (ii) preparing analytical frameworks for projects in each focal area;
- (iii) compiling a Roster of Experts which could be used in the external technical review of projects;
- (iv) reviewing project proposals against the eligibility criteria, assigning priorities to the proposals, and analyzing the portfolio of projects; and

- (v) preparing a paper on justification for research activities that support the GEF, related environmental conventions, and international scientific assessments.

#### ASSESSMENT OF STAP'S ROLE

6. The *Report of the Independent Evaluation of the GEF Pilot Phase* and subsequent discussions have raised a number of issues relevant to discussions on the reconstitution of STAP, which can be summarized as follows:

- (i) In order for STAP to perform its role effectively, there is a need to ensure quality in the composition of STAP and consistency in the availability of its members;
- (ii) While STAP's assignment of priorities to proposals assisted in eliminating some low priority projects, its comments did not always contribute significantly to the improvement of projects; and
- (iii) The pressure on STAP to review individual projects made it difficult for its members to invest sufficient time in developing an overall strategy for each focal area with well-defined programme priorities.

7. The Evaluation Report concluded that a professionally strong and independent body such as STAP is essential for the future of the GEF in order to:

- (i) Provide Participants with advice on a scientifically, technically, economically, socially and legally sound strategy; and
- (ii) Serve as an impartial overseer of the implementation of this strategy.

#### RECONSTITUTING STAP: SOME IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

8. While the operational policies and strategies of the restructured GEF have yet to be established, it is possible to outline in broad terms certain characteristics that will differ from those of the Pilot Phase. The following factors may be taken into account in developing STAP's terms of reference:

- (i) The volume of the work program is expected to increase substantially;
- (ii) The work program will be largely country-driven, drawing on national strategies and action plans;
- (iii) The Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change (hereafter "Conventions") will provide the policies, program priorities, and eligibility criteria for the purposes of the Conventions; and

- (iv) The GEF will need to establish clear and consistent operational strategies for each focal area.

9. In addition, there are a number of evolving factors, such as the roles of the Convention bodies and the GEF's own organizational arrangements, which will require some flexibility in the establishment of STAP's mandate, composition and role.

10. Given these new demands, two issues emerge which are relevant to the development of STAP's terms of reference:

- (i) **A balance between the need for strategic scientific advice and technical reviews of individual program or project proposals for GEF funding.**

Independent advice on GEF strategies and projects can enhance the credibility and effectiveness of the GEF. STAP's involvement in strategy issues would help ensure the overall scientific and technical integrity of GEF initiatives, as well as provide a comprehensive and global scientific perspective for the development of GEF work programs. At the same time, it would be difficult for STAP, without investment of significant additional resources, to review individually the large number of projects that is anticipated. Therefore, in relation to project review, it is necessary to identify those entry points in the project cycle where external reviews of projects by STAP provide the greatest value added. This would imply a limited and selective involvement in project review; and

- (ii) **The need to clarify the nature of the "advisory role" with respect to the relative extent of proactive and reactive involvement.**

In defining STAP's mandate and role, consideration may be needed on whether it should be primarily "demand-driven" -- reviewing and commenting on strategies, guidelines and projects -- or whether the GEF could benefit from a STAP that is more proactive and recommends, on its own initiative, certain strategies, priorities, and options. A balanced approach could be achieved by establishing certain standard products required of STAP on a regular basis, which would provide STAP the opportunity to initiate work, while providing also for responsiveness to selective demand.

#### **RELATIONSHIP WITH CONVENTION AND ASSESSMENT BODIES**

11. STAP will need to interact with several other scientific and technical bodies. These include the subsidiary bodies on scientific, technical and technological advice of the Conventions, the international assessments by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and the ozone assessments under the Montreal Protocol. The different mandates and roles of these bodies will need to be taken into consideration in developing STAP's terms of reference.

12. STAP's role could be considered complementary to the subsidiary bodies on scientific, technical and technological advice of the Conventions and the inter-governmental assessments. For example, STAP's comparative advantage could lie in the multi-issue orientation of its membership as related to the four focal areas (which would enable it to address cross-cutting issues) and its independent scientific status (which would enable it to review and synthesize scientific and technical information relevant to the GEF from within and external to the Convention and assessment processes).

13. Cooperation and coordination between STAP and these bodies could be enhanced through:

- (i) Arrangements for common memberships in STAP and/or its working groups, which could promote greater collaboration. One option is to have the chairpersons of the subsidiary bodies and assessments as ex-officio (non-voting) members of STAP and/or its working groups, thus maintaining the scientific and technical objectivity of STAP while promoting a close cooperative relationship; and
- (ii) Mechanisms for meetings and consultations between the leadership of STAP and the subsidiary bodies of the Conventions and assessment panels.

#### **MANDATE**

14. Given these considerations, STAP could be established as an independent advisory body to the GEF Council, Implementing Agencies, and the GEF Secretariat with a mandate to provide strategic scientific and technical advice on GEF policies, operational strategies, and work programs. GEF procedures could require STAP's advice on critical issues, especially those to be submitted to the Council. Its mandate would be that of the custodian of a comprehensive scientific perspective in the GEF, including over-arching global issues. As an advisory body, STAP need not be vested with any clearance authority.

#### **ROLE**

15. STAP's primary function could be to advise the GEF on strategic issues, while at the same time playing a role in helping ensure independent reviews and technical quality in the project cycle.

#### ***Strategic Issues***

16. A STAP consisting of high level independent experts could best be utilized to advise the GEF on overall strategic and science-related issues, rather than on individual projects. In fulfilling this role, STAP could provide a forum for integrating the best-available expertise on scientific, technological, social, economic and institutional aspects of global environmental problems. Along these lines, STAP could function as an important conduit between the GEF and the scientific community at large, promoting and galvanizing contributions at the state of the art.

17. STAP's strategic role could be envisaged as follows:

- (i) Advise the GEF on the state of scientific and technical knowledge in each focal area, highlighting policy implications for the GEF (for example, by providing regular reports on important scientific developments, and on international environmental assessments);
- (ii) Provide scientific and technical advice to the GEF on specific strategic matters, such as cross-cutting issues, and integration of national and global environmental benefits in GEF interventions;
- (iii) Help establish and develop the necessary research agenda for the GEF, by identifying priority areas and strategies for applied/targeted research, and by reviewing the research work of the Implementing Agencies and the GEF Secretariat;
- (iv) Review, and advise the Implementing Agencies and the GEF Secretariat on, scientific and technical aspects of GEF operational strategies and guidelines, including those for monitoring and evaluation;
- (v) Prepare reviews of lessons learnt from the GEF work program, by recommending long-term research on scientific and technical aspects of GEF initiatives, which would identify patterns of practices that can inform future GEF operations, particularly in projects involving demonstration technologies and innovative methodologies;
- (vi) Advise the GEF on strategic aspects of portfolio management, such as on issues related to the balance and coherence of the portfolio, consistency with GEF policies and objectives, and strategic and scientific issues in project implementation and monitoring; and
- (vii) Constitute a scientific review board for GEF research initiatives and provide members for an editorial review board for GEF scientific and technical publications.

### *Project Cycle*

18. STAP's involvement in the project cycle will need to balance the following elements:

- (i) **efficiency:** STAP's participation should be part of a streamlined project cycle that provides a cost-effective external review and does not add to the lag between work program approval and project approval;
- (ii) **effectiveness:** STAP's participation in the project cycle should contribute to significant improvements in the scientific soundness and technical quality of projects through rigorous independent reviews and high quality objective advice to the GEF; and

- (iii) **credibility:** as an independent external body, STAP would help ensure that the GEF's operations are transparent and are considered to be based on impartial scientific and technical advice.

19. One approach to balancing these and other factors could be to avoid the need for STAP's reviews of individual project proposals by adopting a combination of:

- (i) Including in the Implementing Agencies' Technical Review Panels, for all project proposals, independent technical reviewers selected from a Roster established, maintained, and revised by STAP; and
- (ii) Providing for limited review of projects by STAP in certain circumstances and at specific points in the project cycle.

20. This would involve strengthening the independent elements of the Implementing Agencies' Technical Review Panels, while avoiding the establishment of an additional step in the review process. It would allow for an effective contribution by STAP to the decision-making process in the GEF and help ensure that there is adequate interaction on all aspects of project design between agency specialists and external experts.

21. Such an arrangement could include the following:

- (i) STAP would establish and maintain a Roster of Experts consisting of specialists in the scientific and technical areas relevant to GEF operations.
- (ii) Each GEF project proposal would require an external technical opinion by at least one expert from the Roster. The expert(s) could be designated by STAP in each case from a short-list provided by the Implementing Agency;
- (iii) The terms of reference of the experts could include providing STAP with a report on the proceedings of the Implementing Agencies' Technical Review Panels;
- (iv) STAP could continuously update and revise the Roster, and advise the GEF on technical review procedures based on its assessments of the quality of the Implementing Agencies' Technical Review Panel's work, including reviews by experts on the Roster; and
- (v) STAP would receive current documentation for all projects throughout the project cycle so that it has a complete perspective on GEF operations. This will make it possible for STAP to identify instances that require its detailed review of projects, as well as ensure that STAP's scientific and technical advice is based on a full knowledge of GEF operations.

22. STAPs' role with respect to reviewing projects would be at the request of the Council or the Chief Executive Officer, and/or where appropriate on the recommendation of the STAP Chairperson, when scientific and technical advice is needed on the projects' quality and consistency with GEF objectives. In specific relation to the project cycle, STAP's limited role could include:



- (i) Selectively reviewing individual project proposals, either randomly (e.g., 10% of the proposals), or based on certain established criteria (e.g., strategic or scientific significance, high environmental risk, innovation, demonstration potential, significant research components);
- (ii) Reviewing all targeted research project proposals; and
- (iii) On a selective basis and in consultation with the Implementing Agencies and the GEF Secretariat, conduct ex-post evaluations of the strategic scientific and technical aspects of projects, particularly those that are innovative, or contain research, monitoring and assessment components.

23. Selective involvement in the project cycle along these lines could meet the requirement for independent advice on projects and a balanced portfolio. Nevertheless, consideration may be given for other procedures to ensure that projects, before final approval, conform to GEF policies, to the original design and funding endorsed by the Council, and to any comments by the Council and STAP made earlier in the project cycle. These procedures could be implemented by the functionally independent GEF Secretariat.

## STRUCTURE

24. Taking into account work load, the advisory nature of the panel, and the need to advise the GEF on both high level scientific strategic issues and project-related matters, STAP could be structured in two tiers:

- (i) **A core STAP of 8-12 members**, consisting of eminent individuals. They will be responsible for providing strategic advice and assisting in mobilizing necessary expertise. The objective would be to keep the group as small as practically possible, while ensuring the necessary breadth of experience. Tenures for the core STAP members would be essential for ensuring independence and continuity.
- (ii) **Thematic, issue-based ad hoc working groups**, consisting of technical experts from relevant fields, possibly led by a designated core STAP member, which could provide the permanent nucleus for continuity in the working groups. These ad hoc working groups could be established to enable STAP to obtain specialized technical opinions as needed. They could be responsible for those aspects of STAP's work that relate to the project review process described in Paragraph 20, as well as specific tasks assigned to them by the core STAP. The working groups could also be designed as resource groups for the Implementing Agencies on specific technical aspects of project design and provide advice on technological options, cost-effectiveness, and social issues.

25. In addition to the permanent nucleus, the ad hoc working groups could consist of:

- (i) external experts from the STAP Roster; or,

- (ii) a mix of external experts from the Roster and specialists from the Implementing Agencies and the GEF Secretariat, whose composition would depend on the issue.

26. The notion of independence of STAP would be vested in the core group, which would supervise and review the work of the ad hoc working groups. Such a two-tier approach could accommodate the dual needs of strategic advice and limited project cycle involvement. A mix of external and internal experts could also provide synergy between STAP's activities and the work of the Implementing Agencies, particularly UNEP.

## COMPOSITION

27. The scientific integrity of STAP would best be served by the appointment of members in their individual capacity. In appointing STAP members, quality of scientific expertise would be a primary factor, while sensitivity to geographic representation and gender balance will be necessary. Members could be considered from a broad base of relevant expertise, including the social sciences, as well as knowledge about the scientific processes of conventions and relevant international assessments. It is also important to consider the potential for including scientists from non-governmental organizations and the corporate sector.

28. The nature of the panel's mandate might suggest the following characteristics in STAP members:

- (i) Recognized world leaders in specific fields, but with an ability to bridge across scientific, technological, economic, social and policy issues;
- (ii) Experience in the management of science, with a good sense of the issues in the implementation of complex international initiatives;
- (iii) Some understanding of the organizational and operational setting of the Implementing Agencies could be desirable.

29. STAP's Chairperson will be called upon to play an important role in providing strategic leadership in STAP. The Chairperson would be responsible for setting the panel's agenda, acting as STAP's spokesman in various fora, and managing STAP's work between meetings. STAP would also have a Vice-Chairperson.

30. It is likely that, given the nature of the commitment by core STAP members, the Chairperson may need to be contracted to work approximately half-time on GEF matters and other members may be contracted for approximately two months per year, including attendance at meetings and preparatory work. Members of the ad hoc working groups, whose membership could vary depending on the expertise required, could be compensated for work undertaken. Levels of compensation should be commensurate with the level of excellence required in STAP.

31. Ensuring the quality of STAP would depend largely on the selection process of its members. This could be complemented by provisions in the terms of reference on conflicts of interest, the Chairperson's authority to recommend removal of members, removal of the Chairperson, and security of tenure.

## SECRETARIAT

32. STAP and its ad hoc working groups would be served by a Secretariat. This Secretariat will be provided by UNEP. Under the guidance of the STAP Chairperson, its responsibilities could be to:

- (i) Manage STAP's budget, arrange STAP meetings, organize the flow of documents to STAP members, assist members in the preparation of documents, and assist in the initial screening of candidates for the Roster;
- (ii) Produce analyses and draft treatments of issues, including assistance in research of publications, summarizing and synthesizing key issues, and preparing initial drafts for the panel's consideration.

33. In determining the location of the STAP Secretariat, efficiency considerations are important. However, issues of functional effectiveness are of primary importance. Several factors affect the effective functioning of the Secretariat, including the interactions between:

- (i) The STAP Chairman and members;
- (ii) Members among themselves;
- (iii) STAP and UNEP's scientific and technical staff, the GEF Secretariat, Implementing Agencies, Convention Secretariats, and the scientific community.

## APPOINTMENTS

34. The independence of STAP may best be guaranteed by making the nomination process open and informal. A Search Committee could be established by UNEP to receive nominations and recommend a short list of candidates for appointment. Appointments will be made by UNEP, in consultation with UNDP, the World Bank, and the GEF Secretariat. In view of the central role of the Chairperson of STAP, it would be appropriate for the Committee to first appoint a Chairperson, who could then participate in the search for other members of the panel.