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**PROPOSALS BY STAP FOR IMPROVING
STAP'S EFFICIENCY**

(Prepared by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel)

Table of Contents

Adding Greater Value to STAP Contributions to GEF Operations	1
Mandate	2
A broad vision	2
Nurturing a collective identity.....	3
Understanding GEF.....	4
Streamlining procedures	4
Communication of demands.....	4
Prioritization.....	5
Generating strategic advice	5
Effective feedback.....	5
Interaction with the Conventions	6
Engaging the wider S & T community	6
Managing the roster.....	8
Developing capacity.....	10
Shaping a forward looking agenda.....	10
Acknowledgements.....	11

ADDING GREATER VALUE TO STAP CONTRIBUTIONS TO GEF OPERATIONS

“I have said that knowledge is the direction for action and action the effort of knowledge, and that knowledge is the beginning of action and action the completion of knowledge.”

Wang Yang-Ming (1527): Instructions for Practical Living

Summary of suggestions

1. An overlapping system of STAP membership should be instituted involving the following elements: (a) Each STAP member will have a three year term, (b) One-third of the old members will retire and be replaced every year. In the longer term, consideration may also be given to the possibility that (c) A Chair will serve for two years, and (d) STAP members themselves will elect a new Chair every two years from amongst the members who have completed one year of their three year term.

- (i) Each STAP member should be involved in an S&T focused selective review that may be organized in conjunction with the Secretariat Managed Project Reviews in the very first year of her/his tenure.
- (ii) Corporate demands may be conveyed to STAP as and when they arise in a written and structured manner.
- (iii) STAP should regularly interact with the CEO, Assistant CEO, and the Executive Coordinators to set priorities for the STAP work program.
- (iv) Secretariat and IAs be requested to provide specific written feedback in relation to STAP strategic advice and selective reviews.
- (v) Specific mention of S&T community as a component in the stakeholder participation annex.
- (vi) Establishment of S&T Networks and focal points in order to strengthen GEF at the regional/sub-regional levels, particularly in targeted research.
- (vii) Corporate identification of targeted research priorities while leaving the option open for agencies to identify targeted research projects
- (viii) Establishment of an S&T forum.
- (ix) Encourage more extended involvement of GEF roster experts over the project cycle beginning with the concept stage.
- (x) Encourage simultaneous involvement of two reviewers in a project, with at least one of them being from a recipient country.

- (xi) Encourage STAP to work on forward-looking issues of relevance to GEF.

Mandate

2. The GEF Council, at its meeting in December 2001, was gracious enough to put on record its perception that the Science & Technology Advisory Panel has an important, central role in the GEF and that all attempts should be made to strengthen the central role of STAP in the GEF system so as to enhance the quality of GEF-funded activities. It went on to ask the STAP Chair to prepare for consideration by the Council at its May 2002 meeting a report on STAP's views, proposals and recommendations for improving STAP's efficiency, the greater use of experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition and the role of STAP in the GEF, keeping in view his statement to the December 2001 Council Meeting as well as the recommendations of the Second Overall Performance Study concerning STAP. This report, an attempt to respond to this request, represents the first attempt at such an analysis since the institution of the STAP mandate in 1995.

3. STAP has prepared this response in the spirit of free inquiry, which is the wellspring of all scientific endeavors. For the creative enterprise of science the greatest failure is a failure of imagination; so, we have let our imagination roam freely. It is, therefore, entirely possible that some of the ideas we throw up, some of the recommendations we make may not stand the test of practicality. But we have felt it our duty to bring them up for consideration of the Council. We hope that the resulting debate will advance the cause of more effective action in the interest of global environment.

A broad vision

4. The mandate of STAP includes: (a) provision of strategic advice, (b) selective reviews of projects, (c) development and management of a roster of experts, (d) co-operation and co-ordination with the scientific and technical bodies of Conventions and (e) providing a forum for integrating science and technology into GEF operations and serving as a conduit between GEF and the wider S & T community. Ultimately, all these functions aim at integrating science and technology into the resolution of global environmental issues.

5. STAP therefore believes that a broad appreciation of global environmental concerns is central to its functioning. STAP must comprehend GEF operations in their totality, the way GEF strategies are formulated and translated into programs and projects, and how they lead to effective action on the ground. While STAP must always be mindful of the requirements of the GEF Secretariat and Implementing and Executing Agencies in terms of specific on-going programs and projects, it must also ensure that this does not constrain its thinking. STAP ought to strive all the time towards an appreciation of the broader picture, building on its significant strength as an interdisciplinary group. This would be particularly vital in coming years as GEF comes under ever greater pressure while serving (a) an increasing number of Conventions, (b) adding new focal areas (c) expanding the range of activities under older Conventions and (d) setting strategic programming objectives in managing a growing portfolio in a resource-constrained environment. Under these circumstances, STAP must help in identifying priorities on the basis of a broad understanding of global environmental issues. To accomplish

this, STAP will have to engage the wider scientific and technical networks ever more effectively. STAP would therefore like to recommend that in the coming years it should be encouraged to develop a forward looking agenda, while doing justice to the corporate demands perceived by the IAs, EAs and GEF-Sec.

Nurturing a collective identity

6. Currently, STAP tends to function collectively as an entity comprising STAP Chair and members, STAP Secretariat, GEF Secretariat and Implementing Agencies. While it is vital that STAP be engaged with these other members of the family, it also needs greater opportunities to nurture its own strengths, to draw on its links to scientific and technical networks and to look ahead. STAP must therefore have space to foster its collective identity and build institutional memory through an efficient process of overlapping membership. This is very difficult under the current system where every new STAP has to build its own identity and simultaneously try to understand GEF, which is an operation of ever increasingly complexity. A member needs at least three to four years of tenure to do justice to this task. We therefore strongly recommend that GEF moves towards a system of an effective overlap in which all STAP members will have a three-year term, with one-third of the STAP members being replaced every year. In the longer run the Council might also like to consider a system of the STAP members themselves electing a new Chair every two years from amongst the members who have completed one year of their three year term.

7. Such a system would, of course, call for some additional effort, especially to ensure that disciplinary, regional and gender balance is maintained. However, this is not all that more difficult than when selecting twelve or fifteen new members. After all, there have been some imbalances even under the present system. Thus there has so far been no STAP member from countries with economies in transition, or from amongst indigenous peoples. The gender balance has also only gradually been improving. Given the will, it would certainly be possible in the proposed system to combine choice of at least one member from each of the major disciplinary areas and from major geographical regions, and a proper gender balance at every selection. The benefits in terms of strengthening STAP as an institution would be tremendous and are worth the additional effort.

8. Of course, such a system cannot be put in place immediately, and some transitional arrangements will have to be worked out. This process could begin with some appropriate modification of the current UNEP proposal.

Recommended policy decision: An overlapping system of STAP membership should be instituted involving the following elements: (a) Each STAP member will have a three year term, (b) One-third of the old members will retire and be replaced every year. In the longer term, consideration may also be given to the possibility that (c) A Chair will serve for two years, and (d) STAP members themselves will elect a new Chair every two years from amongst the members who have completed one year of their three year term.

Understanding GEF

9. GEF is an increasingly complex endeavor and it is vital that STAP members acquire a proper appreciation of its functioning if they are to provide worthwhile inputs. Selective reviews could play a very useful role in this context in enhancing the efficacy of STAP by exposing STAP members to GEF operations on the ground. Of course, the focus of such selective reviews involving STAP members should be on S & T issues and on drawing lessons from the experiences in concrete implementation of scientific concepts. The newly instituted system of Secretariat Managed Project Reviews could provide an excellent opportunity for organizing these selective reviews. Experiences from the selective reviews could advance the forward-looking work of STAP. Selective reviews would also create opportunities for STAP members to interact more meaningfully with STAP roster experts and the wider scientific and technical networks both in the conduct of the review, and through sharing the experiences so collected in a variety of other forums. Ideally each STAP member should involve herself/himself in one such S & T focused selective review in the very first year of her/his tenure.

Recommended policy decision: Each STAP member should be involved in an S&T focused selective review that may be organized in conjunction with the Secretariat Managed Project Reviews in the very first year of her/his tenure.

Streamlining procedures

10. STAP currently conducts a substantive part of its business through two three- day meetings around March and September every year. At present a large proportion of the meeting time is devoted to an overview of ongoing developments, articulation of corporate demands and formulation of the STAP work program in response to these demands, and a review of the progress in the STAP work program. Inevitably, any individual participant, be she/he from STAP or from GEFSEC or IAs is interested in only a part of this discussion. This entails a considerable waste of time and a waning of interest. Much of what is thus transacted could be done more effectively and expeditiously through written exchanges. These would not only save a great deal of time at the meetings, but would also mean that transmission of demands and strategic advice would not have to wait for several months for a meeting to take place. The more focused discussions at the meetings would also help sustain the level of interest of the participants and render the meetings far more productive.

Communication of demands

11. As noted above, corporate priorities and demands are currently communicated to STAP by way of presentations at STAP meetings. Such demands could be conveyed more effectively as and when they arise in a written and structured manner highlighting the operational significance of the demand and the intended use. STAP may then identify one particular member to take the lead in following up on any one demand.

Recommended policy decision: Corporate demands may be conveyed to STAP as and when they arise in a written and structured manner.

Prioritization

12. Of course, it is necessary to establish priorities amongst the various demands being received by STAP, as well as issues that STAP may identify as being significant through its own deliberations. This could be accomplished through a discussion at the highest levels, namely with the CEO, Assistant CEO, and the Executive Coordinators.

Recommended policy decision: STAP should regularly interact with the CEO, Assistant CEO, and the Executive Coordinators to set priorities for the STAP work program.

Generating strategic advice

13. Once a set of priorities has been established, STAP may identify one particular member to take the lead in following up on each of the issues. This STAP member could then organize a regular dialogue with other concerned GEF family members and provide written reports to STAP, while bringing up only the more important issues for discussion during STAP meetings. Specifically assigning the responsibility of following up on a particular issue to one STAP member could provide an important opportunity to enhance the quality of the advice by facilitating her/his seeking inputs from the wider S&T community as well. This could be accomplished by encouraging her/ him to be in touch with STAP roster experts, as well as her / his own scientific and technical network to get their reactions by taking advantage of regular professional meetings or through specially organized electronic or teleconferences. The STAP members could also be encouraged to organize “feed-back” scientific seminars for the S&T community based on the information gathered through the members’ involvement in GEF activities. These seminars focusing on the S & T lessons flowing from the actual implementation of S & T concepts could be very attractive to members of the wider S & T community. They would open up to them an opportunity to collect valuable information, possibly useful for their own research agendas and in their involvement in expertise/ policy making at the national level. The seminars would also be an opportunity for STAP/GEF to collect views and proposals from the S & T community. The current STAP workshops are typically ‘forward looking’. These seminars emphasizing assessments from the field could play a very useful complementary role.

Effective feedback

14. It is important to ensure that the Secretariat and IAs provide specific written feedback in relation to STAP strategic advice and the selective reviews. This would enable STAP to constantly assess the quality of the strategic advice being provided to the GEF and its own value added to GEF operations.

Recommended policy decision: Secretariat and IAs be requested to provide specific written feedback in relation to STAP strategic advice and the selective reviews.

Interaction with the Conventions

15. The STAP interaction with the Conventions currently involves: (1) STAP members' fairly regular attendance at the Convention SBSTTA meetings, as well as the occasional attendance of SBSTTA Chairs at STAP meetings, and (2) Extensive co-operation in the context of brain-stormings and workshops on specialized topics. The first modality has so far not been particularly productive; however, the Convention meetings could provide a good opportunity to communicate with participants from other fields, for example, by holding GEF/STAP workshop as a side event, and this possibility should be explored in the coming years. The second modality has been very effective, and may continue to be the main focus of STAP interaction with the Conventions.

Engaging the wider S & T community

16. GEF has a catalytic role in promoting action towards caring for a global environment. This catalytic action is surely not limited to leveraging co-funding for GEF projects. GEF must more broadly promote grassroots initiatives towards protection of environment in the developing countries, all the more so as it moves towards supporting projects with larger and larger elements of local benefits, as in the case of the OP on Integrated Ecosystem Management. The upcoming activities relating to adaptation to climate change would similarly critically depend on locality specific knowledge and action. National and regional S&T networks and communities, as also local knowledgeable individuals have a vital role to play in such contexts. Indeed, the GEF Council at its December 2001 meeting recognized the need to include in the STAP roster specialists with expertise in traditional knowledge and practices of indigenous and local communities. Involving the broader S&T community has therefore to be a significant component of GEF endeavors.

17. In this context, STAP would like to draw the Council's attention to the following observations in the OPS2 report:

“GEF recognizes the importance of mobilizing the wider scientific and technological community to help incorporate scientific inputs in GEF operations at the national and local levels, including the development of methods for assessing the efficacy of ongoing GEF operations. Indeed, STAP organized an international workshop in January 1999 on the theme “Integrating Science and Technology into GEF Work”, which focused attention on how to establish a dialogue with the global and regional science and technology networks and what were the most appropriate mechanisms for involving the science and technology community at the national level in the different phases of the GEF project cycle. Despite the efforts of STAP, progress in engaging the scientific community at the national and regional levels remains limited.

18. The OPS2 team finds that country ownership of projects and global environmental issues is significantly enhanced when government engages the national scientific and technical community, as has been often the result in GEF enabling activities.

19. On the other hand, the involvement of national science and technology communities in developing countries in a sustained way in the design and implementation of country-driven GEF projects is limited and non-systematic. While STAP does provide a conduit for interfacing with the wider science and technology networks, this is considered an inadequate mechanism because of a lack of supporting mechanisms at the regional and national levels.

20. By broadening and intensifying this partnership with the science and technology communities GEF would not merely be making in-country project planning and implementation cost-effective and sustainable, it would build capacity that enabled developing countries to meet their obligations under the conventions. Expertise could be built in country for developing and applying scientific indicators to measure project impacts in each of the GEF focal areas. Policy guidance should be given to the implementing agencies regarding how national science and technology communities could be encouraged to participate as key stakeholders in the project planning and implementation process.”

21. Science and technology are, above all, collective, co-operative endeavors. The engagement of Science and Technology in GEF may, therefore, be viewed at several levels beyond that of the STAP and the STAP roster of experts:

- (a) Global S & T networks such as ICSU, START, TWAS, SCOPE
- (b) Regional and sub-regional S & T networks such as Regional and National Science Academies, or the Asia Pacific Network for Global Change
- (c) Community of practicing scientists and technologists, and finally
- (d) Barefoot ecologists, important in contexts such as evolving options for local strategies of adaptation to climate change or designing alternative livelihood strategies for populations living within and on boundaries of protected areas.

22. Exposure to and participation in concrete actions promoted by GEF projects will play an important role in energizing these significant players to address the challenges of global environmental change and in catalyzing grassroots action. One way in which GEF could promote such an involvement is by asking for specific information on participation of the S & T community as a component of the stake -holder participation annex.

23. GEF might also like to consider the establishment of a Roster of Scientific and Technical Networks to serve as supporting mechanisms at the regional and national levels as suggested by the OPS2 report. Such networks could advance GEF operations and programs by strengthening GEF

inputs, especially at the regional and sub-regional levels. In addition, these networks could be used as a driving force for giving a meaningful role for targeted research in advancing GEF operations and programs. This would however necessitate a slightly different approach to the identification of targeted research priorities, involving a more corporate approach led by STAP. Once the priorities have thus been identified, the services of the various networks could be engaged for their execution. These networks could also play a valuable role in promoting GEF capacity development activities.

24. The GEF might also like to explore the possibilities of establishing an S&T Forum similar to the one currently in place for the NGO community. The details of such a Forum could be worked out in collaboration with the S&T community with STAP taking the lead. Such a Forum would provide a platform for the wider S&T community to discuss advances being made in science and technology and their implications for GEF operations and programs.

25. STAP II has been very actively pursuing the mandate of working closely with the wider S&T community, but much more needs to be done. In this context it is pertinent to mention the GEF-UNEP strategic partnership dedicated to mobilizing the wider S&T community. STAP has had limited association with this effort which might be more fruitfully reorganized in a number of ways.

Recommended policy decisions: (a) specific mention of S&T community as a component in the stake-holder participation annex; (b) establishment of S&T networks and focal points in order to strengthen GEF at the regional/sub-regional levels, particularly in targeted research; (c) Corporate identification of targeted research priorities while leaving the option open for agencies to identify targeted research projects; (d) establishment of an S&T forum.

Managing the roster

26. STAP has developed and maintains a roster of international experts in the areas of relevance to GEF operations. These roster experts currently perform the function of reviewing GEF projects prior to the submission of the project briefs to the Council. The feedback from the exercises of assessments of the reviews is reassuring and suggests that the STAP roster reviews are performing a valuable role in the GEF project cycle. However, much of the time, the reviewer is given little time to undertake the review. Under these circumstances, there is naturally a tendency to use a known expert in order to minimize any uncertainty about the quality and acceptability of a review; so much so that last year 75% of the reviewers were from amongst those already used earlier. Furthermore, as many as 70% of the reviewers so far used hail from the developed world.

27. The fact that only a minority of experts has been used over the years since the institution of the STAP roster of experts suggests that the roster, standing at about 400 members, is in the need of pruning to a smaller size. However, several IA colleagues believe that this may not be the right conclusion since at any time they are attempting to identify an appropriate expert, several roster members with relevant expertise are not free to accept an assignment and that the IAs therefore often

have to contact several roster experts, or even ask for consent to use an expert from outside the roster. Indeed one IA colleague opined that the roster needs to be larger, say of around 500 experts. Certainly new experts need to be inducted with expertise in fields such as POPs and biosafety. The operational guidelines of the roster provide no criteria for removal other than poor performance. Since most of the experts have not been called upon to perform under the present system, it is impossible to assess their performance. As a result experts are currently deleted only on grounds of death, retirement or joining a GEF agency. Under these circumstances, we may consider two ways of pruning the roster. One may target for pruning scientific disciplines for which there has been no demand since the beginning. Atmospheric Sciences is one such field; since the relevant expertise could be utilized only in a case of preparation of national communications for IFCCC. But, since enabling activities do not require roster reviews there has been no demand for atmospheric scientists. As of now, it is difficult to identify any group of people other than the Atmospheric Scientists as appropriate candidates for deletion from the roster on the basis of currently applied categorizations. It may nevertheless be possible to further elaborate and analyze the CVs to identify attributes of experts who are unlikely to be ever in demand, and are therefore appropriate candidates for deletion. This would, however, require further efforts. A second possibility for pruning relates to the observation that a small proportion of the roster is being repeatedly used, so that no new perspectives may be being brought in to assess GEF projects. A ceiling such as one, may then be imposed on the number of projects reviewed by an expert per year. Furthermore, an overall ceiling, such as five, may be placed on the total number of projects reviewed by a roster expert, following which she/he may be removed to make way for fresh blood. However, STAP would like to submit that pruning is not a major concern, and to reiterate GEF Council's suggestion that serious thought must instead be given to ways and means of increasing the current level of use of roster experts, especially those coming from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

28. While, by and large the engagement of the roster expert has been restricted to an evaluation of the project brief just prior to its submission to the Council, there have been excellent examples of exchanges and dialogue between the reviewer and the project proponents and Implementing Agencies throughout the development phase leading to thorough, critical, but constructive reviews and strengthening the scientific and technical soundness as well as the overall quality of the project. One may then consider a two-stage approach to the use of STAP experts : at the concept stage and at the time of completion of draft project document. Involving a national or regional STAP roster expert at the concept stage would be very desirable, since such an expert will bring on board knowledge of local environmental and societal context. Such knowledge will become more and more valuable as GEF emphasizes more and more projects such as those in Integrated Ecosystem Management. Involving a local expert at such an early stage will also obviate any pressure of time as happens when an expert is brought in just prior to the submission of the brief to the Council. This expert may be identified in consultation with the local or regional S & T focal points that may be established. In such a case, these experts could be encouraged to bring on board other knowledgeable colleagues from amongst the roster experts and from their own scientific and technical networks to provide additional inputs to the GEF operations. Such consultations could be organized very economically through e-mail or teleconferences, or by taking advantage of on-going scientific meetings. The experts may also be encouraged to work with local knowledgeable individuals. This appears to STAP the best way of

involving members of indigenous and other local communities in GEF projects. GEF Council might like to consider earmarking additional funds for this purpose, since it offers very effective means of capacity development.

29. As of now there is no role for STAP roster experts in medium sized projects since these do not require a roster review. In the prevailing atmosphere of resource constraints, MSPs are gaining in significance at the cost of full projects requiring roster review. In view of this it may be desirable to examine the possibility of the MSPs being also reviewed by roster experts, preferably at the concept stage.

Recommended policy decision: Encourage more extended involvement of GEF roster experts over the project cycle beginning with the concept stage.

Developing capacity

30. The roster reviews are, of course, primarily intended to help enhance the quality of GEF projects. They could, additionally, come to perform a vital role in developing the capacity of and involving the wider S&T community, especially of the recipient countries, in GEF operations. Since learning by doing is such an effective mode of capacity building, it may be appropriate to treat roster reviews as one of the components of GEF's capacity development efforts. A possible modality of doing this would be to simultaneously involve two reviewers in a project, with at least one of them representing a recipient country. As suggested above, the recipient country experts should be brought on board at the concept stage. This would ensure that project processing is not affected because of IAs having to work with experts who may have had limited exposure to GEF, or who may not have ready access to modern fast modes of communication. But such an arrangement would overcome the serious barriers that have so far kept the use of roster experts from developing countries or from countries with economies in transition at a low level. Simultaneously, it would lead to more comprehensive reviews bringing on board a better understanding of the ground realities in the recipient countries. It would also be of much value in case of the more complex projects, or projects involving innovative technologies. One may mention, as an example, the Danube basin project reviewed by a very competent hydrologist. However, this expert could not assess other vital issues of the impacts of agricultural land use and POPS. A second expert with an understanding of these issues would have added considerable value to the project.

Recommended policy decision: Encourage simultaneous involvement of two reviewers in a project, with at least one of them being from a recipient country.

Shaping a forward looking agenda

31. GEF obviously needs two kinds of inputs: from the perspective arising from operational experiences of GEF-SEC and Implementing Agencies, and a perspective coming out of other

experiences relevant to GEF concerns. STAP obviously has an important role to play in bringing on board these complementary perspectives.

32. In the coming years, therefore, STAP as a group may be expected to contribute ever more significantly through fostering a forward-looking agenda, by exploring new avenues, new thematic fields of intervention or new approaches within the GEF mandate. This should be grounded in a sound understanding of GEF activities and in STAP's capacity to draw on the wider scientific community to identify new issues or innovative solutions that would enhance the quality of GEF interventions. Of course, STAP is not the only member of the GEF family in charge of looking ahead; however, this is clearly an area of important added value for STAP. . The Power Sector Reform Workshop organized by STAP II is an example of such an activity. While the initiative for exploring this issue came from STAP, it was developed with full involvement of other GEF partners. This forward-looking role could be reinforced through a variety of new ways of operating that could be put into place. For instance, an inter-sessional meeting could focus on the forward-looking agenda. Some of the STAP members may also be encouraged to concentrate on specific think pieces with the target of producing a substantive report and as well as organizing major presentations at relevant forums. STAP members working on think pieces should be provided with a modest budget to procure the necessary technical support and assistance. The budget should be linked to specific outputs (e.g. major report and several presentations at relevant forums such as Workshops, Brainstorming Meetings, STAP meetings).

Recommended policy decision: Encourage STAP to work on forward-looking issues of relevance to GEF.

Acknowledgements

33. STAP is grateful to the GEF Council for this opportunity for introspection and sharing the thinking STAP has developed over the last four years with the GEF family. STAP greatly appreciates the help of all fellow members of the GEF family who contributed a fund of excellent ideas for developing this submission.