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STATEMENT BY YOLANDA KAKABADSE, STAP CHAIRPERSON TO THE THIRTY-FIRST MEETING OF THE GEF COUNCIL

(Prepared by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel)



United Nations Environment Programme

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PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT • PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE

ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

Statement by Yolanda Kakabadse, STAP Chairperson, to the Thirty-first Meeting of GEF Council

Washington DC

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1. Chair, CEO/Chairperson, distinguished Council Members and guests: I welcome this opportunity to brief you on the work of STAP since the last Council in December 2006. This has been a period of immense change in order to respond to the challenge of revitalising the GEF to deliver its mandate of delivering global environmental benefits. In particular, I wish to elaborate on the role of science and technology in providing a core rationale and justification for a restructured GEF, its new focal area strategies and proposed Strategic Work Programs.
2. Your STAP believes that science underpins the successful delivery of sustainable global benefits. In this increasingly complex and inter-dependent world, the environment provides the ecological support functions and services upon which we all rely. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment showed conclusively that 60 percent of ecosystem services are being degraded and used unsustainably, leading in the worst case scenarios to, for example, 'dead zones' in coastal waters, shifts in regional climate and irreversible loss of habitat for the world's biodiversity. Only through carefully targeted interventions based upon sound science can we hope to reverse current trends. Only through knowledge of ecosystem processes can we secure the livelihood and well-being of over two and a half billion people in poverty who are directly reliant on the services provided by ecosystems. Science, therefore, should thoroughly inform the choices we make and the decisions of this Council.
3. In setting out what she sees as GEF's 'Sustainability Compact', the CEO/Chairperson said in her address to the last Council that there are five key elements for effective investment in the global environment and sustainable development: strategy; innovation; equity; accessibility; and focus. Already STAP members have assisted with the first two, engaging scientific expertise to support the new focal area strategies with innovative suggestions to prioritise new areas engagement for GEF.
4. The balancing of developmental and environmental aspirations requires not only innovative ways of thinking but also a breadth of vision that cuts across rigid disciplinary boundaries and integrates human needs with environmental processes. As our CEO/Chairperson said last December, "we must find compatibility between the need to preserve the environment for everyone and the legitimate needs of the

developing countries to catch up with the developed world.” Inter-disciplinary social, economic and natural science is required to develop appropriate approaches and technologies to achieve co-benefits for both society and the environment.

5. STAP fully subscribes to the changes being proposed to this Council. Our emerging understanding of the most effective way to tackle global environmental problems suggests that a piecemeal project-driven approach is unlikely to deliver benefits commensurate with the challenge. A programmatic approach based upon a thorough assessment and analysis of the needs and appropriate points of intervention in global cycles is a more cost-effective and rational way to focus on those areas where investments will deliver substantial and quantifiable benefits. The new Strategic Program on sustainable forests, developed in collaboration with the GEF agencies to meet the identified needs for tackling deforestation in a way that utilises the comparative advantages of the GEF is one such example. STAP intends further to advise on the tools, methods, assessments, technologies, valuations and other science-based provisions in order to contribute to the building of a comprehensive and coherent strategy for GEF that not only engages all key stakeholders but also integrates GEF priorities in sustainable development frameworks.
6. Since it convened in October 2006, STAP 4 has worked closely with the GEF Secretariat to provide scientific and technical input to the GEF’s strategy both via the Technical Advisory Groups convened for each Focal Area and through STAP Chair’s participation in the Strategy Advisory Group. The STAP members were all significant contributors to the new focal area strategies, providing the scientific evidence base for innovations and assisting with drafting, as appropriate. As input to the GEF Secretariat’s proposals to Council on the reform of the GEF project cycle, STAP produced a strategic paper containing advice for revising STAP’s role in the project cycle.
7. In addition to providing strategic level advice, STAP 4 produced operational level advice in response to specific questions from GEF bodies and partners. In November 2006, STAP convened the Workshop on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Groundwater and Interlinkages, hosted by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, which through a science-based stocktaking developed specific recommendations to the GEF concerning greater integration of its focal area work for SIDS. This Workshop built on the findings of the two preceding STAP Workshops “Strategic Options and Priorities in Groundwater Resources” (GEF STAP Paris Workshop Report, April 2004), and the second, “Managing the Sub Surface Environment”, (GEF STAP, New Delhi Workshop Report, September 2005), which addressed aquifer systems as an essential ingredient in gaining global environmental sustainability. The final report of the Trinidad and Tobago workshop, together with the recommendations from STAP is presented for your consideration at this Council meeting. STAP has also followed up its report provided to the Council last December on liquid biofuels in transport, with its conclusions and recommendations calling for environmentally and socially sustainable use of biofuels. The report calls attention to the need for much greater efficiencies in existing transport systems, and that while new technologies offer promise, they also need to be appropriate solutions to problems facing developing countries.

8. Taken together, the activities of STAP in the GEF financial year 2007 have demonstrated effective contributions, renewed commitment and responsiveness to the needs of the GEF. During this time, STAP 4 worked in a mode of transition, with partly reformed processes, new members and in closer cooperation with the GEF Secretariat. We hope to consolidate these positive changes and help meet the challenges facing the GEF through the reconstitution of STAP proposed by UNEP, our host agency in Agenda Item 10.
9. This proposal was developed in close collaboration between UNEP and the STAP Secretariat in response to the Council's request at its June 2006 meeting that the Executive Director of UNEP and the Chair of the STAP review the current terms of reference of the STAP and develop a proposal to enhance STAP's effectiveness and relevance to the GEF.
10. To support GEF, STAP must be an effective and impartial advisor to the GEF Council and to the GEF CEO and Council Chairperson. In order to deliver this function, STAP's scientific and technical advice must be the most relevant and scientifically rigorous advice available on a global basis. STAP must deliver forward looking strategic advice to identify and support the GEF on emerging issues and challenges in which the GEF has a comparative advantage. For this, GEF requires a greater constituency of scientific expertise than that provided by a single panel.
11. For this reason, the proposal before you reduces the number of Members appointed to the Panel from 15 to six members, and lengthens the appointment period and the remunerated time of the Panelists to better engage with GEF's operations and needs. The cost savings from a reduced panel would be invested in developing and maintaining a broader network of global scientific and technical expertise, using the most appropriate mechanisms, including but not limited to memoranda of understanding with scientific institutions in the public and private sectors.
12. At the operational level, STAP responds to specific questions from GEF bodies and partners. As STAP's former project-focused role is much less relevant today because the GEF Agencies have greatly increased their in-house expertise, we propose that STAP's added value at project level be to provide programmatic guidance for project screening and project design. In this mode, the STAP would be embedded in GEF's day-to-day operations through a strengthened Secretariat.
13. The present STAP Roster would be transformed to make available two forms of expertise. On the one hand, scientific and strategic expertise for use early in the project cycle, drawn from networks across the world, and on the other development practitioners drawn from the GEF recipient countries, consisting of experts with experience in project implementation, that may be used for selective late stage review upon request.
14. Lastly, the STAP Secretariat, which constitutes the support mechanism to deliver the advice, would be strengthened with an additional professional post to ensure that the Secretariat is able to provide timely and consistent service from scientific and technical experts and close liaison with the GEF partners.

15. The new STAP, if approved, will act as the conduit for cutting-edge science from the many global and regional institutions with mandates in GEF's focal areas to be brought to bear in the design of new Work Programs, the development of suites of projects and the delivery of multiple benefits.
16. STAP looks forward to working closely with UNEP and the GEF Secretariat to implement any changes the Council requests in order to continue providing the GEF with the best scientific and technical advice available.