Statement by Prof. Madhav Gadgil, STAP Chair, to the GEF Council Meeting, December 5-7, 2001

Distinguished Chair and Members of the GEF Council, colleagues from the GEF Secretariat, Implementing Agencies, the Conventions and NGOs,

It is my pleasure and privilege to be once again with you to present a report of our activities since the last Council meeting in May 2001. This has been a time of reflection and consolidation as we attempt to conclude the manifold activities we had initiated over the first three years of our functioning, and draw lessons to communicate to STAPIII.

Land degradation

Provision of strategic advice is our central concern, and STAP II has sincerely devoted itself to this responsibility in the field of land degradation from the very outset. Particularly since 1999, it has expanded its involvement to the area of Integrated Land and Water Management and Integrated Ecosystem Management. My colleagues and I are delighted to learn that this Council Meeting might reach an agreement on declaring "Land Degradation" as a GEF focal area. STAP believes that its work over the last several years has made a useful contribution to the development of GEF activities in this area , and looks forward to continuing its support to further developments.

As a part of this effort, STAP is currently working on compiling a Source book on Community-Based Integrated Land and Water Management in support of GEF operations, particularly with respect to the implementation of the Land and Water Initiative for Africa and OP#12 on Integrated Ecosystem Management. We hope to have the Sourcebook ready for publication by April/May of 2002.

We are also working on the request of the GEF land and water task force on developing the outline of a Handbook on Integrated Ecosystem Management.

Adaptation

Adaptation and vulnerability to climate change have emerged as critical issues in the climate change debate, as was very much in evidence in the recently concluded Climate Change COP7 . You may recall that when I last reported to you, I indicated that STAP will be convening an Expert Group Workshop on this issue at the request of the GEF Secretariat. This workshop is now scheduled to take place on February 18-20, 2002 in Nairobi, Kenya.

A review of the various recent initiatives on this topic suggests that little attention has been paid to developing user-friendly and practical guidance on designing a framework for adaptation. The STAP Expert Group Workshop will therefore adopt a different – a bottom up approach – focussing on case studies of past and ongoing experiences of adaptation activities. These case studies will be sector-specific and rooted in regional and/or national perspectives. STAP believes that this approach will yield substantive guidance for developing a framework for adaptation interventions in the GEF context.

Sustainable Transportation

As outlined in the Programme Status Review for the GEF focal area of Climate Change, operationalizing OP#11 on Transport continues to present major challenges to the Implementing Agencies. In this context, STAP would like to reiterate that it is important for the GEF to examine the non-technology options for leveraging a modal shift in city transport systems (e.g. away from personal motorized transport to mass transit, buses, bicycles, etc.) as an important component of the implementation of OP#11. To assist the GEF Secretariat and the IAs in their efforts, a Brainstorming Session on "Non-technology Options for Sustainable Transport" will be convened by STAP immediately before the next STAP meeting in March 2002.

Social Dimensions of Climate Change Projects

An issue of major concern for STAP is the current limited focus in the Climate Change projects on social dimensions and their implications for the success of GEF projects. STAP believes that greater attention should be paid in these projects to the income generation potential of renewable sources of energy in the OP#6 and in energy efficient technologies in OP#5 projects. Some of the best examples of this come from projects, such as the "India Biomass Project" which involves gasification of wood grown in community woodlots to generate electricity to pump water for irrigation and domestic use. The benefits of such projects are far more broadly and visibly shared by the weaker segments of the population than is the case, say, with grid connected PV projects. Income generation provides a promising mechanism for ensuring sustainable dissemination of renewables and energy efficient technologies beyond the lifetime of a GEF intervention, thus facilitating the catalytic function of GEF financing. In so doing, it

is important to place the income generating emphasis in the wider context of the sustainable development of the target area and its inhabitants

Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)

A key issue identified in the Programme Status Review where STAP can provide significant inputs is in the area of POPs. STAP has already contributed substantive strategic advice which helped in the development of the OP on POPs. STAP has now been requested to provide further strategic advice to underpin the policy reforms and investments which are likely to result as countries seek to execute the national implementation plans prepared as a result of the enabling activities. In this regard, STAP will convene an Expert Group Workshop in March 2002.

The Expert Group Workshop will examine a number of scientific and technical issues including options for dealing with stockpiles of these POPs, especially in developing countries. Some of these have seeped into the soil and need a different approach than those sequestered otherwise. Several of the stockpiles are in part of the world with poor transport and communication facilities so that conventional routes of disposal such as incineration are not feasible. Substantial scientific inputs are called for in finding the most appropriate ways of elimination of these stocks. Other issues arise as new, more acceptable compounds are introduced. These will now enter environments where the older compounds are already present. Questions arise as to how the microflora will react to these cocktails. There will also be some implications for the agricultural sector. Finally, there are intriguing possibilities of totally eliminating the need for the POPs molecules by approaches such as development of vaccines against malaria and dengue so that controlling the vector populations is not a prerequisite for the control of these diseases.

Monitoring and Evaluation

STAP II looks forward to its continuing involvement in the Monitoring and Evaluation Work Programme. We have identified biodiversity programme indicators and human impact of GEF projects as two themes of particular interest to STAP. In this context, I would like to draw your attention to STAP selective reviews. Two of these, viz. China Efficient Industrial Boiler Project and Conservation of Priority Protected Areas Project in the Philippines are being placed before you. These were undertaken at the request of and in collaboration with the M&E Unit as part of the programme/impact studies in preparation for the Second GEF Overall Performance Study.

I had the privilege of personally participating in the selective review of the Conservation of Priority Protected Areas – Philippines (CPPA) , which represents a path-breaking experiment in organising conservation of biodiversity as a participatory endeavour involving a number of stakeholders; the national government represented through its Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the local governmental units at the Barangay and Municipal levels, a group of national NGOs active in fields of environment and development, local host NGOs primarily involved with rural development, People's Organizations representing various user groups such as fishers, and organizations of indigenous peoples.

Much has been accomplished through this pioneering experiment. There are in place significant institutional innovations such as the Protected Areas Management Boards (PAMB) that bring together multiple stakeholders to set policy and oversee implementation. The Biodiversity Monitoring Systems are functional, generating periodic assessments of the efficacy of the system, providing important feedback to the managers and PAMBs. There are, however, certain difficulties, especially in the resolution of issues relating to tenure and elaboration of sustainable livelihood projects so vital to participation of local communities. While this whole range of issues was dealt with by the M&E team, STAP worked hand-in-hand with them to focus on issues pertinent to its own specific mandate, namely, on what has been attempted and what broader lessons can be drawn in relation to: (a) providing Science and Technology (S & T) including Social Sciences (SS) as well as Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Wisdom (TEKW) inputs to the design, implementation and monitoring of the project; (b) developing S & T, SS and TEKW capacities in conjunction with implementation of the project to address global environmental challenges; and (c) designing S & T, SS and TEKW institutions in conjunction with implementation of the project to build up capabilities to address global environmental challenges. STAP's conclusions were, of course, focussed on these issues.

As an example of one of our recommendations, we observed that good beginnings have been made in involving S & T community in the prioritisation phase and in designing the biodiversity monitoring systems. It is however important that strong links be established amongst science-technology/ social science/ traditional ecological knowledge streams; links that are largely absent today. It is then necessary to involve these knowledge enterprise communities in advisory groups to work with Protected Areas Management Boards, and to assume a major responsibility for monitoring and evaluation that can provide inputs for adaptive management practices. It might be worthwhile examining these possibilities to develop a sound project under the upcoming GEF Capacity Development Initiative. I am happy to report that our review in fact helped forge such links amongst science-technology/ social science/ traditional ecological knowledge streams as well as the resource management agencies through a series of two meetings, the first ever of their kind at the University of Philippines Marine Sciences Institute on February 2 and 5, 2001 immediately following the review.

I would like to stress therefore that the STAP selective reviews have a special and distinctive niche complementing the implementation reviews by the IAs and the M&E teams. STAP would, of course, be very happy to work on ways and means of maximizing the benefits and synergy from these two complementary processes.

STAP Roster of Experts

The development and management of the Roster of Experts has been one of our important activities. The report of the OPS 2 team includes several insightful comments on this topic, and I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on a number of their suggestions. Some of the significant steps taken during the tenure of STAP II in this regard include: establishment of an internet web site with dynamic web pages for accessing the roster including search and update features; development and corporate acceptance of annotations to the original TOR to facilitate more comprehensive and in depth reviews; and identification and filling in of gaps in the roster database. The roster experts are called upon by the IAs to review the projects before the submission of the project briefs to the Council. STAP is very happy that there has been a marked improvement in this review process over the years, in particular in terms of the response from the IAs to the reviews. The role of the reviewer appears to be better understood today than four years ago, and the entire process seems to be maturing. 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. They often contribute to strengthening the long-term strategy by suggesting key changes in the approach and objectives. Overall, the quality of the reviews is rated high by both STAP members and the Project Managers.

But, of course, there never is room for complacency, and the comments from within the GEF community, as well as the very significant observations of the OPS2 team point to a number of issues that would repay closer scrutiny. I would therefore like to submit for the consideration of this august body some thoughts on the ways and means to strengthen the process and enhance the contribution of the STAP roster reviews in the project cycle.

.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. STAP is currently interacting with the IAs, in particular the World Bank to draw lessons from these promising initiatives.

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 this year 75% of the reviewers were from amongst those already used earlier.

Around 70% of the reviewers hail from the developed world, and this is likely to be related to STAP members' observations that the uneven quality of the reviews is often rooted in insufficient knowledge of the institutional and socio-economic reality of the country/region where the GEF intervention is being implemented. Another potential cause of the uneven quality of the reviews is the difficulty for a single reviewer doing justice to all aspects of a complex project or a project involving innovative technologies.. It is therefore important to examine how we could create conditions favouring a more CV and expertise-based use of the roster in place of previous good reviews by an expert.

In view of the fact that a large number, close to 80% of experts have not been and most likely will never be used, IA's and STAP, as also the OPS 2 team have considered the need to prune the roster. However, removing experts is a task that cannot be undertaken without criteria to do so. The operational guidelines of the roster provide no other criteria for removal than poor performance. Since most of the experts cannot be called upon to perform, it is impossible to assess their performance. Moreover, a large number of the unused experts on the roster possess valuable but very specialized skills and expertise that may still be useful in cases where a more technically specialized opinion is required. Examples include experts in taxonomy and climatology, two areas of expertise the GEF rarely draws upon.

Another important issue highlighted by the OPS2 team is that GEF has so far done little to engage developing country scientific networks in its project cycle. GEF is evidently very conscious of the desirability of contributing to development of capacity in the recipient countries, and of mobilizing the wider scientific community to participate in its activities. The engagement of STAP roster experts in the GEF project cycle can offer valuable opportunities of addressing these concerns.

We would like to suggest that it is reasonable to expect the following from the review process: the review should add a critical evaluation, a systematic assessment, and concrete suggestions to improve a project; the selection of the reviewer should be based on the CV that takes into account the geographical and substantive expertise; and the reviewer should be offered a reasonable amount of time for his/her engagement, preferably beginning at an early stage in the project design. STAP would therefore like to suggest that the GEF must apply its mind to the question of overcoming the "GEF exposure barrier", which has been identified by the IAs as a major constraint in extending the use of the Roster to the developing country experts with substantive understanding of the locality and society specific context.

Orientation of STAP Roster of Experts

The GEF Council, at its meeting in November 2000 agreed that a GEF orientation should be provided to roster experts, especially those who have been newly added to the roster or who have not so far participated in a STAP review. In my statement to you

at that time, I had submitted that consideration should be given to allocating resources for STAP, in collaboration with scientific and technical networks, to undertake this task . On its own initiative UNDP organized in India a series of 4 two-day GEF awareness workshops in collaboration with the Indian National Science Academy with substantial participation of existing and potential STAP roster experts. I had the privilege of being closely involved in this exercise. It was a most rewarding experience, and GEF needs to consider seriously the possibilities of a more substantive programme of this nature. We believe that such an orientation could be provided most effectively and efficiently on a regional, and where appropriate on a country basis, and in association with national or regional scientific networks..

The orientation sessions could be structured to train the roster experts in providing reviews that add maximum value to the project cycle, i.e. reviews that assess the possible deficiencies of the proposal, evaluate the risks and constraints of the proposed approach, provide suggestions on how to enhance the scientific and technical dimensions of the project and bring to bear recent knowledge of the situation on the ground. Although the training would comprise a "GEF orientation" segment, the sessions would focus on the role of the technical review by roster experts in the project cycle, and in ensuring the scientific and technical soundness of GEF projects. Working sessions are proposed where roster experts write reviews of existing projects following the GTOR and the focal area-specific annotations, and discuss them in working groups.

The expected outcome of the GEF/STAP orientation sessions would be an increased awareness on part of new, never used and potential STAP roster experts of the GEF and their own role in the project review process and in STAP activities. Implementing Agencies would then be more confident in selecting experts who are new or have not been used before, resulting in the widening of the pool of expertise GEF draws upon for the independent review of all its project proposals in GEF. This would contribute to an enhancement of the quality of the reviews as more experts would be selected on the basis of their expertise and local knowledge. In addition, the orientation session would be a concrete step in building relationships with national scientists and scientific institutions in recipient countries, which would further strengthen the S & T base of the GEF programmes. Of course, as agreed upon at the March 2001 STAP meeting, before undertaking a major training and orientation project, there is a need to look at the entire roster review and quality-control process and to conclude the on-going revision of the roster.

At this juncture, I would also like to bring back to the Council my earlier suggestion of the possibility of engaging more than one expert in the review of the more complex and innovative projects. In such a case it might be desirable to ensure that, at least one of them comes from developing countries. STAP would further like to propose that we examine the possibilities of the roster expert being engaged with the project over an extended period, as has happened in a few promising initiatives, in place of the more usual practice of involving her/him in a one time assessment. In such a case, the expert could be encouraged to bring on board other knowledgeable colleagues from his/her scientific networks to provide valuable inputs to the GEF operations.

In this connection I would like to share with you some of the lessons learnt from the French GEF experience. The progressive evolution of their "Scientific Committee"

involvement in the project review process has introduced two major differences in comparison with the current GEF procedure. The first is to ask for the evaluation at an earlier stage in order to allow the "Implementing Agents" to adapt the project design in view of the observations made by the Scientific and Technical Committee. However, at the early stage of a draft proposal, it is rather difficult to critically assess the proposed approaches and methods, because of the lack of any detailed information. Consequently, the French Committee has abandoned the "assessment" objective, and adopted an approach whereby a series of scientific and technical questions are identified and examined as key issues to ensure the success of the project. After the finalization of the project document, these key issues provide a set of indicators against which an evaluation can be made on how the issues identified earlier were addressed.

The difference between ours and the French GEF is that the project review is undertaken by their Scientific Committee given the small number of projects submitted every year. The committee members have, however, faced the same difficulties: limited information at the earlier stage of project development and complex projects that require a range of expertise. Once the key issues have been identified, the French committee member organizes a consultative process involving his/her own scientific/technical network, looking for more specialized skills to cover all aspects of the project. After the review is completed, the committee member may be called upon for further clarifications and additional specific advise.

A similar process may be adapted to the institutional context and procedures of the GEF giving an opportunity for a greater involvement of the wider scientific community, while keeping the responsibility for the review, and thus the predictability of its quality, in the hands of one or two reviewers. National and Regional Scientific Academies, and ICSU bodies such as the Third World Academy of Sciences, the Scientific Committee on Problems of Environment or START could play a very useful role in such a process.

Preparation for the Second GEF Assembly

STAP, along with the rest of the GEF family, has begun to prepare for the Second GEF Assembly and the third phase of the GEF. With respect to the latter, STAP has commenced working on a paper entitled "Priority Issues which STAP Should Address in GEF Phase III". This paper will draw on the collective wisdom of the current STAP members to identify the major scientific and technological trends arising out of the GEF operations with the view of providing some inputs to the incoming STAP. This paper will be submitted for your consideration at the May 2002 Council Meeting.

In addition, to ensure that the transition from STAPII to III takes place smoothly, a joint meeting will be convened in June 2002. An integral part of that meeting will be a series of presentations by STAP II members on emerging scientific and technical themes and their implications for GEF operations

With respect to the preparations for the Second GEF Assembly, STAP, in addition to its paper on priorities, will also prepare a report of its activities in Phase II with an emphasis on the broad scientific and technical issues that have emerged during GEF Phase II and their implications for the future of GEF operations. This will take the form of a triennial report.

I am confident that we would continue to enjoy over the remainder of our tenure the very high level of co-operation and support we have received from the GEF Secretariat, the Implementing Agencies and of course the Council and the CEO, as well as the Convention Bodies and the wider scientific and technical community. I would like to end by expressing my appreciation to all involved and to the STAP Secretariat and the GEF unit in our host agency, UNEP.

Thank you.

SAHYADRI\ STAP\ COUNCIL PRESENTATION .November 19, 2001