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## ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE STAP ROSTER OF EXPERTS, FY 99 (JULY 1998 TO JUNE 1999)

(Prepared by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel)

**ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE  
STAP ROSTER OF EXPERTS, FY 99**  
(July 1998 to June 1999)

**STAP Secretariat  
United Nations Environment Programme**

## Table of Contents

### Preface

<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Analysis of the Use of the Roster by the Implementing Agencies</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	Use of the Roster during FY99	5
2.2	Analysis of the use of the Roster over the last three financial years	5
<b>3.</b>	<b>The Review Process</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1	Ratings of the Reviews	7
3.2	Adherence to the Generic Terms of Reference (GTOR)	7
<b>4.</b>	<b>Response to STAP Roster Experts Comments</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Gaps in Expertise</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Management of the Roster</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>STAP Web Site</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	
I	Dynamic Roster Database web pages	
II	The STAP Forum	
III	The Feedback	
<b>B.</b>	<b>Facilitating the Information Flow between the STAP Secretariat and the Implementing Agencies</b>	

## **PREFACE**

It gives me great pleasure to present the *Annual Review of the STAP Roster of Experts*. This report constitutes a review of the use and management of the STAP Roster of Experts for FY99 (July 1998 to June 1999). The Annual Review is being undertaken consistent with the Operational Guidelines governing the use and management of the Roster.

This report was prepared by the STAP Secretariat with input from the STAP members.

Prof. Madhav Gadgil  
STAP Chairman

## **1. Introduction**

1. The STAP Roster of Experts has been operational since FY 1997. In October 1997, Addendum 1 of the Roster of Experts, containing 55 experts, was published, bringing the total number of experts on the Roster to 423, 40% of which are from developing countries.
2. Following consultations with the Implementing Agencies and the GEF Secretariat, and in order to enhance the quality of the roster and to strengthen the review process, substantial changes have been made in the management of the roster. It is expected that these changes will have a positive impact on the quality and use of the roster.
3. The main element of the new roster management system is the establishment of an Internet Web site with dynamic web pages for accessing the STAP Roster of Experts Database. The web site, which became operational in August 1999, provides the facility whereby experts can update their CVs on-line, and conduct database searches. In addition, new entries can be submitted on-line. The web site also provides information on GEF and STAP activities. The new management system has been designed to enhance the potential of the roster to provide improved roster services to the GEF family, and to encourage roster experts and the wider scientific and technical community to interact with STAP and GEF on thematic, research and science and technology policy issues.
4. The annual review for FY99 (July 1998 - June 1999) analyses the use and quality of the roster for FY 99 as well as over the last three years. It also sets out the main elements of a new Roster management.
5. Another component of the STAP Roster management system will be an outreach programme for the STAP Roster experts. This is currently under development and will focus on increasing the knowledge of the roster experts on the GEF operational programmes and the guidelines for undertaking reviews of GEF projects. It will also keep them abreast of STAP activities and emerging scientific and technological developments in the GEF.

## **2. Analysis of the Use of the Roster by the Implementing Agencies**

6. In accordance with the guidance given by the GEF Council<sup>1</sup>, the selection of the roster experts for the review of GEF projects, is undertaken by the Implementing Agencies as part of their operational responsibilities in the GEF project cycle. The information on the identity of the reviewers and the performance evaluation questionnaires are received by STAP at the end of each financial year for review and analysis.
7. In order to facilitate STAP's work of monitoring the use of the roster, it would be highly desirable if the Implementing Agencies would report on the use and performance of the roster experts on a quarterly basis following the bilateral meetings. The modalities of the quarterly reporting will be discussed with the Implementing Agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> GEF/C.6/Inf.7 – Terms of Reference of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP)

8. The current analysis of the use of the roster experts is based on the country of citizenship rather than country of residence of the expert. Next year's analysis will include both the country of citizenship as well as residence.

### **2.1 Use of the Roster during FY99**

9. During FY99, 62 projects were reviewed by 65 Roster experts. Of the 62 projects, 27 were in Biodiversity focal area, 16 in Climate Change, 13 in International Waters, 4 in Ozone and two were multiple focal projects.
10. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of the Roster experts used for project reviews in FY99 came from developing countries compared with 18% in FY98 and 6% in FY97. This represents a considerable improvement in the use of roster experts from developing countries. A trend which should be encouraged. When viewed by agencies, 25% of the reviewers selected by the World Bank originated from developing countries, 29% for UNDP, and 67% for UNEP (2 out of the 3 projects).
11. The geographical distribution of the roster experts used from developed countries in FY99 shows a departure from the trend set in FYs97 and 98. In FY99, the nationals of United States of America and United Kingdom accounting for approximately 35% of the roster experts used by the Implementing Agencies, compared with an average of 55% in the previous two years. Of the recipient country experts used, 35% came from Latin America and the Caribbean, 41% from Asia, 11% from Eastern Europe and ex-USSR countries and 11% from North Africa.
12. The same expert from Eastern Europe was used thrice to review 3 of the 12 projects in Eastern Europe and ex-USSR. The choice of the Implementing Agencies may be partly explained by the fact that there are few roster experts from countries of the region, particularly in the biodiversity focal area.
13. The pattern of repeat use of the same roster experts has remained unchanged; approximately 50% of the roster experts selected during FY99 were experts used before by the Implementing Agencies, notwithstanding the fact that 353 out of 423 roster experts have never been used. The reason given to explain this situation is the inadequate knowledge of most of the experts with respect to GEF operations. Due to constraints related to the project cycle, the Implementing Agencies are reluctant to risk using an "unknown" expert who may produce a poor or unacceptable review, causing a delay in project submission.

### **2.2 Analysis of the Use of the Roster over the last three financial years**

14. Out of the 423 experts on the roster, less than 20% (70) have been used by the Implementing Agencies to undertake reviews of the 162 projects submitted to bilaterals during the past three financial years. None of the 55 experts added to the Roster at the beginning of FY98 were used during the previous two financial years. Of the 70 roster experts used by the Implementing Agencies, 29% (20) are from developing countries, namely (6) from the Latin American and Caribbean region, (3) from India, (5) from Asian countries other than India, 5 from Africa, and one from Eastern Europe. 37% of the 70 experts were used repeatedly 23 % (2 to 3 times) and 14% (4 to 6 times).

15. This raises the issue as to whether an “active” roster of 70 experts constitutes a sufficient base for providing scientific and technical opinions on GEF projects. Although the reviewers generally possess the necessary specialized technical knowledge to give an opinion on the scientific and technical soundness of a project, it is recognized, that generally, their knowledge of the local context of the project is insufficient to expose any weaknesses related to the application of the approach in the country or to suggest more than general ways to strengthen the project. The analysis of the CVs of the experts used for project review also suggests that the selection of experts is not necessarily based on the project review requirements in terms of field of and area of expertise, but rather on previous use of and satisfaction with the quality of earlier reviews. As a result, the expertise available on the roster is underutilized.
16. STAP is recommending that for large and complex projects, it may be appropriate to commission two or more experts with complementary expertise to review the project. Complex projects include, but are not limited to, those of a cross-cutting nature, like land degradation, those dealing with complex issues like sustainable use of natural resources requiring knowledge of both ecological and socio-economic/institutional issues, and complex international waters projects.
17. As a follow-up to the analysis of the use of the roster over the first three years of operation, STAP will review a number of critical issues pertaining to the size of the roster, vis-à-vis the number of projects submitted every year, its present expertise vis-à-vis the evolving GEF portfolio, and the gaps in expertise that will arise with the addition of the new Operational Programmes. Although a number of experts will be removed from the roster because they do no longer conform to the criteria for being on the roster (for example if they have joined the UN or STAP), and if they do not respond to the STAP Secretariat’s communications regarding the updating of the CVs, it is expected that the exercise of the filling of gaps in expertise will result in an expansion of the roster.
18. The Implementing Agencies are strongly encouraged to diversify their selection of roster experts and make it more CV-based, and to make use of the new competence that will be available on the roster. A more diversified and expanded use of the roster will be facilitated by the new roster management system, offering the possibility to carry out a roster database search according to discipline and countries of expertise. In addition the active outreach towards the roster experts aimed at improving the knowledge on GEF operations should assist the Implementing Agencies to call upon new experts.

### **3. The Review Process**

19. A quality assessment of the reviews is undertaken by two parties: the Task Manager who selected the reviewer and the STAP members. Standard evaluation questionnaires developed by the STAP are completed by the Task Managers and sent to the STAP Secretariat at the end of the financial year. STAP members also receive the project documents and roster reviews for evaluation on an annual basis.

### **3.1 Ratings of the Reviews**

20. Overall, the quality of the reviews for FY99 was rated adequate to excellent by the Agencies and STAP members, with a few exceptions where the review was considered by STAP members as rather poor, inappropriate or inadequate. Reasons given were a too academic position, lack of objectivity, lack of depth and inadequate coverage of critical issues.
21. As pointed out in the Annual Review of FY98, the root causes of the uneven quality of the reviews; are insufficient knowledge of the institutional and socio-economic reality of the country/region, lack of expertise to cover all aspects of the project, and lack of knowledge of GEF operations and the project cycle. Yet, it was observed that it is unreasonable to expect a reviewer to review all aspects and components with equal attention and competence.

### **3.2 Adherence to the Generic Terms of Reference (GTOR)**

22. Approximately 50% of the reviewers followed the standard Terms of Reference (TOR) used by the Agencies for technical reviews, which address part but not all the key and secondary issues of the Generic Terms of Reference (GTOR) developed by STAP. Thirty percent (30%) did not follow any TOR, whereas only 20% followed the GTOR.
23. In the previous Annual Review, it was argued that, although following the GTOR does not automatically result in a good review, adhering to the GTOR is beneficial both for the comprehensiveness of a review and for the "review of the reviewer" evaluation process.
24. In order to stimulate the reviewers to address all critical issues and GEF-specific aspects in their reviews, the STAP has prepared focal area-specific annotations to the GTOR. The annotations make it clear that knowledge and understanding of the GEF Operational Programmes is a prerequisite for reviewing GEF projects. The draft version of the annotations is currently being revised to incorporate comments made by the GEF Secretariat and the Implementing Agencies. Once the annotations are agreed upon with the Implementing Agencies, they will be made available to all future reviewers to be used as guidance for conducting technical reviews of GEF projects.

## **4. Response to STAP Roster Expert Comments**

25. The Implementing Agencies are requested by the Council to respond to reviewers' comments and recommendations indicating how the comments of the reviewers are going to be addressed and reflected in the revised project document.
26. Overall, the Agencies responded adequately to the reviewers' comments, outlining how the project document had been revised and how suggestions to improve the project would be taken into consideration at the appraisal and implementation stages. However, in a few projects (less than 10%), STAP members felt that the Agency had not adequately addressed the reviewer's concerns.



## **5. Gaps in Expertise**

27. Notwithstanding the limited number of Roster Experts used over the past three years, an expansion of the roster is necessary to fill the gaps in expertise in well-defined areas. Areas that need strengthening are: International Waters: in particular coral reefs, fisheries, surface freshwater, pesticides and contaminants in transboundary situations; Biodiversity: drylands, sustainable use of biodiversity, sustainable forestry, agro-biodiversity; Climate Change: Renewable Energy Technologies (RETs), energy efficiency, transport and carbon sequestration. Also more socio-economic oriented scientists (such as ethnobotanists) are required in the biodiversity focal area.
28. Filling the gaps in more technical areas, such as RETs and energy efficiency may require that experts employed in the private sector be invited to submit their CVs. However, care will have to be taken to ensure objectivity of the reviews.
29. Furthermore, as a result of the operationalization of the Targeted Research policy, the STAP Roster may be drawn upon to review those proposals for which no STAP member is qualified to give a technical opinion. As the type of expertise required to review targeted research proposals may be quite different from the expertise to review normal GEF projects, STAP will have to select the appropriate experts in those areas identified by GEF as priority areas for targeted research to be included in the roster.

## **6. Management of the Roster**

30. The management of the roster of experts encompasses a number of tasks, the majority of which are performed by the STAP Secretariat. These include updating the information contained in the roster, adding and removing experts on the roster, responding to the needs of the evolving GEF portfolio, publication of the roster, maintenance of the database held in the Secretariat, and tasks related to quality control and outreach. Following consultations held in 1998 with the Implementing Agencies and the GEF Secretariat on roster issues related to the review process, quality and use, and gaps in expertise in the roster, the STAP Secretariat embarked on putting in place a system to facilitate the various management aspects of the roster.
31. Central to the new system is the newly established internet web site with dynamic web pages for accessing the STAP Roster of Experts database. The STAP website offers the possibility for experts to update the data in their CVs on-line, for users to conduct database searches, as well as the submission of new entries on-line. The submissions will be subject to the same screening procedure and selection criteria as in the past. Furthermore, the website provides information on STAP activities and encourages the roster experts to interact with STAP. The URL address of the website is:

<http://stapgef.unep.org/stapweb>

32. The main innovation is giving the responsibility to update the contents of the CVs to the roster experts, while maintaining quality control. Communications are being sent out to the roster experts informing them of the web site and new system, inviting them to update their CVs. For those experts who do not have access to the internet and world wide web, the STAP Secretariat will continue to update their CVs on the basis of information received

from them. From now on, the Implementing Agencies will have access all the time to a continually updated roster.

33. The web site also offers the possibility to submit new entries on-line to the STAP Secretariat. A password is required to send the CV form. The new CVs will be held in a separate database, until they are downloaded and screened by the STAP Secretariat and the STAP members for possible inclusion in the roster, taking into account the needs of the GEF portfolio, the number of experts already on the roster with similar expertise, and the need for geographical and gender balance. Once selected, the new experts' CVs can be automatically appended to the main database. This system will allow the STAP Secretariat to respond fast to gaps in expertise identified by the GEF Secretariat and the IAs.
34. The new management system will be further supported by an outreach programme which will inform them through the web and mailings of STAP activities and on GEF policies and developments impacting on the science and development communities, such as the operationalization of the targeted research policy. A first information package will be sent out before the Council meeting, containing basic information on the GEF project cycle, operational programmes, examples of good reviews, and focal area-specific annotations developed to guide the experts in writing comprehensive reviews based on a good understanding of the objectives of the operational programmes.
35. Occasionally, electronic discussion will be held on the website to canvas the opinion of scientists on thematic issues GEF needs scientific input on. The first electronic forum on sustainable use of forests which was initiated in August was concluded in November, 1999. The outcome of the fora will serve as an input to STAP's strategic advice to GEF.
36. Minor modifications in the review process are proposed to better streamline the quality control mechanism: instead of an annual submission of evaluation questionnaires by the IAs and of the "review of the reviewer" by the STAP members, a quarterly system will be adopted. This will also allow the STAP Secretariat to have a better overview of the use and the quality aspects of the roster throughout the year. The quarterly reporting on the performance of the roster reviewers will be facilitated by the on-line availability of the evaluation questionnaire.
37. The newly established web site with dynamic web pages for accessing the STAP roster of experts will greatly facilitate the inclusion of new entries, as it is now possible to submit CV forms on-line. Limitations to the number of CVs received by the STAP Secretariat are set by the password requirement for submission on-line. The CV forms are being held in a separate database and can be appended automatically after screening and selection by STAP.

## STAP Web Site

### A. Introduction

The newly established STAP web site seeks to achieve two objectives:

1. Reach out to the roster experts by giving access to information on STAP activities and giving them the opportunity to interact with STAP through the STAP Secretariat, and encourage them to update the data in their CVs;
2. Provide a system that a) gives access to the IAs to a continuously updated roster, b) can respond quickly to demands for specific expertise from the IAs, c) facilitates information flow between the IAs and the STAP Secretariat.

Presently, the STAP web site has the following features:

#### **I. Dynamic Roster Database web pages**

- General information about the roster
- Operational Guidelines
- Guidelines for Technical Reviews, in draft
- Roster News, for information on new developments in content and management of the roster
- Submit Evaluation Questionnaire, for Task Managers to send to the STAP Secretariat by e-mail
- Consult the Roster

Under Consult the Roster the following options are available:

- **View all available experts:** names listed alphabetically, click on CVID number to view CV.
- **Custom Search,** to carry out a search according to name, focal area, sub-focal area, discipline, nationality, countries and region of experience.
- **Update Information,** for the expert to update information contained in the four tables that make up the CV form, under password protection.
- **Submit a CV,** for the Implementing Agencies and STAP members to submit (or invite to submit) a new CV for consideration by the STAP to include in the Roster, under password protection. New CVs are being held in a temporary database. After screening and selection, the new CVs can be automatically appended.

Instructions are given to the users on how to proceed with updating and filling out the forms. The custom searches are facilitated by drop-down lists showing the options.

#### **II. The STAP Forum** web page is intended to provide a discussion forum under STAP member's guidance on GEF-relevant scientific and technical issues.

**III. The feedback** page is under development and will allow roster users, roster experts and the scientific and technical community to give feedback on the roster, web site and related services.

#### **B. Facilitating the Information Flow between the STAP Secretariat and the IAs**

Presently the web site has three features stimulating an increased information flow: feedback, an electronic form for comments to send to the STAP Secretariat, the possibility to submit/invite to submit a new CV for inclusion in the roster and the evaluation questionnaire.

In order to facilitate the annual analysis of the use of the roster, it is suggested that information on the reviewer (name), the review and his/her performance evaluation are sent to the STAP Secretariat at the same time as the submission of the project to the bilateral.

Regarding the filling of gaps in expertise, STAP would also welcome the input from the roster users on which existing areas need additional experts or which new areas need to be added. The possibility to submit electronically new CVs and their automatic inclusion after screening and selection by the panel should speed up the process of the filling of gaps considerably.