

U.S. Comments on the spring 2012 Intersessional Work Program

Mexico—UNDP--Strengthening Management Effectiveness and Resilience of Protected Areas to Protect Biodiversity under Conditions of Climate (GEF Project Grant: \$10,172.727). GEF ID=4763

We believe this proposal has technical merit and is consistent with the Government of Mexico's long term plans and objectives. This project proposal stands to contribute significantly to the conservation of Mexico's biodiversity and is based on sound scientific and technical analyses. We believe that it will also help to sustain the capacity of protected areas to deliver environmental services, and will strengthen the country's capacities for biodiversity protection and management. Furthermore, this project will contribute to the implementation of Mexico's National Strategy for Climate Change in Protected Areas.

Dominican Republic—UNIDO--Stimulating Industrial Competitiveness Through Biomass-based, Grid-connected Electricity Generation (GEF Project Grant: \$1,300.000). GEF ID=4747

We have two concerns about this project and would like to review the full proposal to ensure that it addresses these questions and concerns.

First, we share the STAP question on what type of biomass will be used and if there is sufficient volume of biomass for the project to be sustainable. The proposal does mention in a footnote that agricultural waste such as rice husk residue will be used but doesn't provide details for the cost of the materials and transport, nor the actual volume available.

Second, the Secretariat Review document asks how the government will manage the GEF funding, and if 2.5 MW is enough to cover the total energy needs of the Free Trade Zone. Additionally, part of the economic rationale for this project is based on current average electricity costs of \$0.18 per kWh, versus a cost of \$0.10 for biomass-based power. Industrial users often receive a much discounted rate from the "normal" rate. Another question is how does the biogas project compare to natural gas? In this light, we have some concerns about the financial viability of the project. In particular, we would like to know whether the fairly modest savings resulting from switching from natural gas to biomass will warrant the overall cost and long-term viability of the project.

Ukraine-Unido- Introduction of Energy Management System Standard in Ukrainian Industry (GEF Project Grant: \$5,550.000). GEF ID=4784

We would recommend that the project look to USAID's Municipal Heating Reform Project (MHRP) that has been working in municipal heating sector since about 2009 and has partnered with 38 cities throughout Ukraine: (http://mhrp.org.ua/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2&Itemid=5).

Uzbekistan—UNDP--Reducing Pressures on Natural Resources from Competing Land Use in Non-irrigated Arid Mountain, Semi-desert and Desert (GEF Project Grant: \$2,313.600). GEF ID=4600

We commend this timely proposal as improved food security and reduced environmental degradation in Uzbekistan as a whole require that the urgent problems facing non-irrigated lands in this country be addressed in the near future.

Russian Federation—UNEP--ARCTIC Conserving Biodiversity in the Changing Arctic (GEF Project Grant: \$5,733.944). GEF ID=4665

We believe that the overall goals of the project are positive and address important biodiversity conservation priorities. However, we agree with the STAP that the project is not ready to be recommended at this time. The project proposal lacked cohesion and requires more focus and detail on the objectives of the project.

Further, we found the project too complicated and ambitious for the implementation during just a four-year period with requested resources, and with the large number of actors and partners it is going to involve.

It's also unclear exactly how this GEF proposal will benefit and streamline work with ongoing efforts, such as that of WWF-Russia and the CAFF working group of the Arctic Council. Many of the "expected outputs" need to be institutionalized over the course of 20 years or more (such as 1.3.2) and are not tasks that can be accomplished and checked off as complete in the timeframe allotted. It is also not clear how the establishment of a park in Chukotka or an international agreement is tied to the outcomes.

Finally, while indigenous communities are mentioned in the proposal, we would like to see a more concrete explanation of ways in which they would be engaged. Should the project significantly involve the region's indigenous peoples, its capacity to positively impact biodiversity would be enhanced and the project could complement other efforts such as the proposed Beringia Shared Heritage Sister Park Arrangement.