

# Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, administered by UNEP, advises the Global Environment Facility  
(Version 5)

## STAP Scientific and Technical screening of the Project Identification Form (PIF)

Date of screening: February 21, 2014

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### I. PIF Information *(Copied from the PIF)*

**FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND**

**GEF PROJECT ID:** 5528

**PROJECT DURATION :** 4

**COUNTRIES :** Macedonia

**PROJECT TITLE:** Achieving Biodiversity Conservation through Creation and Effective Management of Protected Areas and Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Land Use Planning

**GEF AGENCIES:** UNEP

**OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:** Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning

**GEF FOCAL AREA:** Biodiversity

### II. STAP Advisory Response *(see table below for explanation)*

Based on this PIF screening, STAP's advisory response to the GEF Secretariat and GEF Agency(ies):  
**Consent**

### III. Further guidance from STAP

2. STAP welcomes the submission of this project concept intended to expand the national system of protected areas and improve their management effectiveness, as well as support the inclusion of biodiversity considerations in national land use planning.

Overall, the framework is adequate. The objective (although lengthy) is clear. The components support the realization of the objective, and the outcomes and outputs are generally consistent. However, even at this stage in the project's development, consideration should have been given to at least preliminary outcome indicators. For Outcome 1.1, for example, increase in protected area coverage could easily be an indicator. With regard to outputs, these could also be tightened considerably and revised for greater clarity. For example, Output 1.1 could be shortened to establishment of new national parks and other protected areas. The 12% is a target and the rest of the wording relates to national or regional processes or standards and activities to be undertaken. Consideration could be given to changing Component 1 to two components and adjusting the Outputs accordingly. The two components could be 1) expanding the protected area system and 2) improving protected area management effectiveness. This would result in greater clarity. Some of the outputs listed under Outcome 1, notably 1.1.2, 1.1.3 and 1.1.4 could also be placed under Outcome 2, since the information that they will generate will contribute to biodiversity sensitive land use planning. Considering that Outcome 1 is intended to also improve protected area management effectiveness, it is surprising that no outputs are related to this, aside from cursory mention of training of personnel and use of the METT. This should be rectified moving forward.

The problem definition and threats are presented in a very general manner and will, of course, require further elaboration during the PPG phase. The extent of threats, trends and impacts require attention and should be supported by scientific or statistical evidence. The baseline description, while extensive, is essentially a summary of past and ongoing projects and programmes and requires more focusing and relating to the objective of the project and the specific expected outcomes. The presentation of root causes and barriers is rather superficial and not precise and will require further elaboration during the PPG stage. The listing of what are referred to as barriers on p.8 really is a list of issues "these are neither root causes nor barriers for the most part. There is a need to dig deeper here and make adjustments to the project as deemed necessary.

The presentation of GEBs is done in a manner where the benefits are inferred or assumed by default. More specificity would be welcome in this regard. Some stated GEBs, such as setting a scientific baseline (p.14), cannot be considered to be GEBs per se (this would be a national benefit). The measurement of GEBs is also something that will need considerably more thought moving ahead. While this project introduces some innovation to Macedonia, it offers little innovation from a GEF perspective.

Following from the above, a number of assumptions, which appear to be incorporated into this proposal, should be explicitly addressed and perhaps empirically tested. For example, one such assumption (p.13) is that improving the policy and capacity environment will result in improved management effectiveness. Much more than just that will be required to effect desired change. Another assumption is that investments in community based mainstreaming activities (p. 14) will lead to global environmental benefits. Both are reasonable assumptions (and approaches) but merit explicit monitoring over the life of the project to determine to what degree these investments actually lead to changes in biodiversity status.

Since the project builds upon past work and is well tied into ongoing processes (including EU accession), the description of its sustainability potential is adequate. However, more consideration should be given to actual and specific factors in this area to ensure sustainability of investments post-project. In addition, means of ensuring scaling-up of the project's advances, accomplishments and lessons should be detailed further in the next stage of its development.

The description of the stakeholders is adequate, although more effort should be made in defining their specific roles in the project. There is good pre-existing expertise amongst national academic institutions and their inclusion is a strength of the proposal.

Concerning the risks, their definition is acceptable but the mitigation measures should be further developed since at present they are not particularly specific. For some reason the mitigation strategy for risk 1 cites four project components when in fact there are only three. For risk 5 (climate change), it appears that text is missing from the end of the accompanying sentence describing the country's adaptation capacity. During the PPG, consideration should be given as well to gender differentiation, at the community level especially.

The definition of coordination mechanism(s) to be employed certainly needs further development. One other project that should be considered when refining the full project document is in Shebenik-Jablanica national park in Albania, currently being implemented with the support of Italian Cooperation.

Please note that the use of the term "virgin forests" should be reconsidered, or at used with reference from the scientific literature. It is now known that there extremely few truly "virgin" forests in the world. Their existence in Europe should at least be supported by specific scientific studies. The use of the term "old-growth forest" or "ancient forest" appears more reasonable.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
<b>1. Consent</b>	<p>STAP acknowledges that on scientific or technical grounds the concept has merit. However, STAP may state its views on the concept emphasizing any issues where the project could be improved.</p> <p>Follow up: The GEF Agency is invited to approach STAP for advice during the development of the project prior to submission of the final document for CEO endorsement.</p>
<b>2. Minor revision required.</b>	<p>STAP has identified specific scientific or technical challenges, omissions or opportunities that should be addressed by the project proponents during project development.</p> <p>Follow up: One or more options are open to STAP and the GEF Agency:            (i) GEF Agency should discuss the issues with STAP to clarify them and possible solutions.            (ii) In its request for CEO endorsement, the GEF Agency will report on actions taken in response to STAP's recommended actions.</p>
<b>3. Major revision required</b>	<p>STAP has identified significant scientific or technical challenges or omissions in the PIF and recommends significant improvements to project design.</p> <p>Follow-up:            (i) The Agency should request that the project undergo a STAP review prior to CEO endorsement, at a point in time when the particular scientific or technical issue is sufficiently developed to be reviewed, or as agreed between the Agency and STAP.            (ii) In its request for CEO endorsement, the Agency will report on actions taken in response to STAP concerns.</p>

