GEF Project 9193: Conservation and sustainable management of key globally important ecosystems for multiple benefits (Agency: UNDP ID 5696)

Response to Comments from GEF Council (Germany)

UNDP obtained a set of comments from GEF Council on the above mentioned project on 19 April 2016. UNDP shared the comments with key country stakeholders in Kazakhstan involved in the design and ownership of the project. Below is a joint response of the Government, research community and UNDP to the comments of the GEF Council.

Comment 1: *As the co-financing both by CSO and the state seems highly unrealistic, inter alia due to the current economic situation in KAZ, and the status of mentioned state programs is unclear (new phase of Zhasyl Damu program has not been confirmed, the availability of funds envisaged by the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Agriculture for 2014-2018 is unclear and the Strategy for Protected Areas System Expansion until 2030 became inoperative in 2010), Germany requests that the final proposal realistically assesses the co-financing and cooperation potentials and reflect these accordingly.*

Response 1: Two programs, (1) The Forestry Development Sub-Program of the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Agriculture and (2) presently developed national long term forest sector development programme – 2030, are intended to replace the "ZHASYL DAMU" program which was completed in 2014. In particular, the first programme has passed through a technical and scientific council of the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of Agriculture and is subject to be further officially submitted to the consideration of the Parliament of Kazakhstan in 2016. It is expected that the Parliament will enact it by the middle of 2016. The Forestry Development Sub-Program of the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Agriculture stipulates allocation of budgetary resources exceeding US$ 113.4 for forest and protected areas system. This is confirmed by the Government Resolution #449, 15 October 2015 issued by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan. While this is the key program related to the project, there is a number of other related ongoing inter-ministerial programs expected to be implemented between 2017 and 2022 with total amount of KZT 8.1 bln (USD 24 mln) directly related to supporting the forest and protected area systems in the targeted ecosystems. Possible co-financing from other partners and NGOs is certainly going to be pursued at the PPG stage, should the PIF be approved. A conservative estimate which sums only Government and local stakeholder initial co-funding for this project, is presented in annex table below.

	Budget line	Amount, thousand USD						Total:
		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Strategic Plan of Ministry of Agriculture of RK approved by Resolution of Government of RK (period of implementation 2017-2022)								
1	Establishment of Tarbagatai National Park		529,4	582,2	582,2	582,2	291,1	2567,1
2	Nature conservation activities of Zhungar Alatau National Park	403,8	836,9	851,4	851,4	851,4	425,7	4220,6
3	Nature conservation activities of "Kolsai kolderi" National Park	273,5	550,5	553,8	553,8	553,8	276,9	2762,3

4	Nature conservation activities of Almaty Reserve	119,3	240,08	241,6	241,6	241,6	120,8	1204,98
5	Nature conservation activities of Charyn National park	149,8	301,3	303,1	303,1	303,1	151,5	1511,9
6	Aviation forest protection	7461,5	14923,1	14923,1	14923,1	14923,1	7461,5	74615,4
TOTAL:		**8407,9**	**17381,28**	**17455,2**	**17455,2**	**17455,2**	**8727,5**	**86882,28**
Local budget of the Akimat of Almaty region								
7	Nature conservation activities of Taldykorgan forest protection institution	119,8	244,1	245,5	248,5	250	125,7	1233,6
8	Nature conservation activities of Kaskelen forest protection institution	69,2	141,1	144,3	144,9	146,4	73,9	719,8
9	Nature conservation activities of Bakanas forest protection institution	111,5	226,0	229,3	230,8	232,2	116,8	1146,6
10	Pasture improvement in Kerbulak, Uygur and Balkhash regions of Almaty oblast	284,0	568	568	568	-	-	1988
TOTAL:		**584,5**	**1179,2**	**1187,1**	**1192,2**	**628,6**	**316,4**	**5088**
GRAND TOTAL:		**8992,4**	**18560,48**	**18642,3**	**18647,4**	**18083,8**	**9043,9**	**91970,28**

Comment 2: The project addresses very different ecosystems, spread over a large geographic area, partly poorly defined in geographic terms. Intervention areas should be clearly defined and conservation values, threats and expected project impact be clearly geographically linked. As the Snow Leopard (SL) only inhabits mountain grasslands the PIF's link to the parent program is unclear, please provide further clarity. Germany hence suggests that there should be either a focus only on mountain ecosystems or the focus on SL should be given up.

Response 2: The project is focusing on critical forest ecosystems. It does not intend to focus on a geographic area or one species. The project focus stems from the "systemic" approach (vs. site-based) and the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) philosophy advocated by the GEF 6 Biodiversity Strategy, and has been designed is line with Program 2 of the GEF Biodiversity Focal Area, as well as with corresponding focal area strategies of the Land Degradation and Sustainable Forest Management Focal Areas. The project concentrates on addressing the suite of key root-causes of degradation common to all important forest and woodlands, namely: gaps in the representation of the protected area system with respect to coverage of habitat of globally important species; under-estimated valuation of ecosystem services which does not allow to make right decisions on sustainable resource use; and disengagement of local communities from ecosystem management and restoration. Considering significant level of forest and pasture ecosystem degradation not only within just the Altai or Tian Shan mountains but equally also in the riparian and Saxaul forests, considering that the issues of detachment of communities from forest use are similar in all three types of ecosystems, considering that the issues of unsustainable use of forest and non-timber resources are common in all important forests, considering that all forests are falling under the jurisdiction of the Committee of Forestry and Hunting (and therefore the institutional solution base also allows to work on them effectively), considering the total funding (GEF + co-financing), proponents believe the proposed focus to be ecologically justified, cost effective, institutionally wise and doable within the context of Kazakhstan.

The ecosystem approach employed in the project is similar to previous GEF projects in Kazakhstan, when the focus on wetlands, for example, included work in three different geographic areas in different parts of the country, and the focus of the deserts project similarly included two different geographic regions. Those projects have achieved remarkable success with respect to improving the status of the targeted ecosystems and their management.

With respect to even further refining the areas of intervention, at the PIF stage the following areas have been identified. As has been the case within the GEF cycle, these will be confirmed at the PPG stage, whereby for each site conservation values, site-based threats, and indicator species are going to be provided:

Targeted areas	IBA Codes	Ramsar site codes
Mountain forests and grasslands (Snow Leopard Habitat): o South-West Slope of Zhetysu Ala-Tau o Saur range o Kyrgyz range o Tarbagatai	Kz 068, Kz 069, Kz 071, kz, 072, Kz 073, Kz 074, Kz 075, Kz 076, Kz 077 Kz 078, Kz 079 , Kz 098, Kz 099, Kz 100, Kz 102 (http://database.acbk.kz/iba_view.php)	
Tugai/Riparian ecosystems in Syrdarya, Charyn and Ile river basins	Kz 044, Kz 090, Kz 091, Kz 092, Kz 093, Kz 094, Kz 095, Kz 096, Kz 103	Ili River Delta and South Lake Balkhash, Lesser Aral Sea and Delta of the Syrdarya River
Saxaul ecosystems in Balkhash Lake region		Ili River Delta and South Lake Balkhash,

We would like to clarify that the link to the Snow Leopard parent program is in place since the project does include work in the mountain ecosystems of Altai and Tian Shan where the Snow Leopard is present, part of the project activities naturally are focusing on addressing threats related to this important species as well as to participation in the international cooperation related to Snow Leopard Protection.

Comment 3: Section A.1.1 contains factual errors and misinterpretations that affect the justification of the project based on global environmental values (esp. the status of threatened species). Some "indicator species" are generalists that are not suitable for measuring project impact. Germany strongly recommends to review this section thoroughly for factual errors and to adjust it accordingly.

Response 3: We have revisited Section A.1.1 and adjusted the text for any errors with respect to the status of threatened species, however we not noticed any significant errors or misinterpretations. This section of the PIF was developed and verified by a group of highly qualified scientists (ornithologist, V. Kovshar, Phd., mammologist, K. Plakhov, Phd., Florist, Dr. B. Sultanova and Florist, Academician N. Ogar.) and conservation specialists, using the latest data available in Kazakhstan. The intention of Section A.1.1 is to provide overall description of the biodiversity values of the targeted ecosystems. With respect to concrete sites, as outlined in the project site table above, the pre-selected sites within each of the three ecosystems, are indeed globally important and meet one or more KBA criteria (either Ramsar site or IBA). As further discussed in Annex 1 of the PIF, they may contain "generalist" species which can be indicative of the overall health of the ecosystem, but they certain contain globally important species as part of their KBA designation. A more profound description of biodiversity values of the sites as well as final selection of the biodiversity indicators (including baseline and target population values or threat reduction values) requires further investment of time and resources and is normally carried out at the PPG stage.

Comment 4. *The PIF describes the insufficiencies of PA management and enforcement, but the aimed increase of area coverage would exacerbate this problem. Assumptions about unsustainable legal hunting quotas are poorly justified, while actual and potential benefits of well-regulated hunting are not mentioned. Serious conflicts (e.g. between forest users and PAs in the Altai region) are not mentioned. Private financing bears the risk of exploitation through influential and wealthy groups. These factors can lead to the alienation of current land users, and the reassignment of land-use rights to third parties. The viability of intended PA expansion and the associated risks for conservation and livelihoods need to be carefully assessed.*

Response 4: Expansion of the Protected Area system in Kazakhstan is one of the country's priorities in the implementation of the Aichi Targets. There are problems and deficiencies in the PA management system, but they are not so critical as to hinder work to expand the PA coverage for under-represented species. Compared to other countries in Central Asia, the investment of state finance in conservation is almost ten times higher than any Central Asian countries. The project stems from the baseline fact that Government of Kazakhstan has a national plan to proceed with expanding its protected areas system as confirmed by the Government Resolution #449, 15 October 2015 signed by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The GEF funding would allow for the expanded PA system to improve its efficiency and better integrate communities. With GEF support in the past projects, the Government expanded its PA estate in wetland, steppe and desert ecosystems, whereby not only the management of those newly created PAs has improved, but also those projects had positive repercussions in the form of raising the central government understanding and skills in the area of PA management and providing alternative financial schemes for engagement of communities in sustainable resource management at the boundaries or within the PAs.

We have added emphasis in the PIF to the issue of unsustainable hunting quotas. At the PPG stage we are also going to study experience of other countries in the area organizing sustainable hunting and depending on the results of this feasibility analysis, this activity will then be elaborated in the project.

The proponents admit existence of the certain conflicts between forest users and forest agencies (Leskhos) due to inadequate forest land management plans for areas adjacent to the protected area. This is precisely where this project could be instrumental. By private forest ownership the proponents do not mean transfer of forests to "influential and wealthy" groups; rather it is about allowing community ownership of forests. The legal basis for this exists, and also in the 23rd article of the forest code of the Republic of Kazakhstan it addresses the potential conflicts of interest. With this projects the proponents are looking to review this legal base to allow for full and effective community engagement and avoidance of conflicts. We understand that as we work on proposing expansion of PA estate in forests, all these issues need to be carefully considered and worked on, and the project does intend to have a system and balanced strategy on resolving existing and potential land use conflicts as it proposes PA expansion. This is a matter of thorough project strategy building at the PPG stage.

Comment 5. *The conservation of ungulates through sustainable hunting and the inclusion of forest users are only vaguely addressed in the PIF and the direct involvement of local communities in the management and use of game species as well as the illegal trade in Saxaul is not mentioned at all. In line with the STAP review, we recommend adopting and adapting "a well-tested approach, such as the Namibian CBNRM initiative", including pilot projects for community-based wildlife management based on experiences by GIZ and Panthera in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Pakistan.*

Response 5: With respect to directly involving communities in sustainable hunting or sustainable Saxaul management schemes, the proponents plan to carefully study relevant examples from other countries, learning from international experience before proposing a Kazakhstan tailored scheme. We would welcome any support, advice and partnership with any organization with experience in this area and will be happy to work together at the PPG stage.

Comment 6: *Germany seeks clarification on how planned activities will lead to intended project impacts, especially regarding how the valuation and integration of ecosystem services will be included in decision making and how the development of land use plans translates into sustainable pasture management.*

Response 6: The project plans to employ UNDP Targeted Scenario Analysis (http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/environment-energy/environmental_finance/targeted-scenario-analysis.html). This tool is designed to help the Government and communities decide on the best model of forest / ecosystem use in each of the targeted ecosystems. The targeted scenario analysis incorporate ecological as well as economic values, and once it is conducted, decisions will be made by either community or Government (depending on who has the jurisdiction over the area in question) on modifying the forest use plan so that it fits the results of the targeted scenario analysis. A properly conducted Targeted Scenario analysis will bring the most sustainable decision, which in term is the way to ensure that forests in question are managed sustainably in the long run. The details of the Targeted Scenario Analysis can be found on the link above, and a detailed plan of conducting it and building its results into updated forest use plans was going to be constructed at the PPG stage.

The land use plans in those districts where grasslands/pastures dominate will be designed with direct engagement of ecologists on the one hand and communities on the other. Once the updated land use plans are in place, and specific conditions for pasture use (areas, rotation, fertilization, cattle density, fodder, etc), community pasture management schemes will be agreed formally within the project and launched. Rich experience from previous and parallel GEF projects from other ecosystems where cattle management was involved (semi deserts or wetlands) as well as experience from other Central Asia countries will be studied in depth, and detailed actions plans for these activities are going to be developed at the PPG stage.

Comment 7: *The actual situation regarding the Green Economy process in KAZ should be reflected in the proposal and there should be cooperation with sectorial agencies responsible for infrastructure to reduce threats for species.*

Response 7: The project proponents are closely following the political developments in the country and will certainly provide the latest information on each and every relevant program at the time of its submission. The Government would like to stress that that despite all the difficulties, sustainable natural ecosystem conservation remains one of the key directions in the Green Economy Concept approved by the Government of RK in May 2013. The project team will insure cross-ministerial cooperation, as has always been the case under GEF projects. The proponents understand that implementation of all principles of NBSAP calls for effective inter-ministerial coordination and cooperation and allows to reduce the burden of loss of biodiversity, and this principle will be translated into the project partnership strategy to be developed at the PPG stage.

Comment 8: *Using DNA markers for the SL monitoring program by at least 4 research institutions and 1 laboratory is unrealistic given the technical requirements and costs and comparably small population of the species in the country. Germany strongly suggests to consider collaborating with established and experienced foreign research institutions instead, which would far more realistically allow for technical quality and cost efficiency.*

Response 8. The proponents would like to stress the importance of using national capacities (and improving them) as a basis for such activities. At the same time, the team is prepared to discuss with any international experts the setup of the monitoring system to make sure that it fits within the national biodiversity monitoring system on the one hand, while is also cost-effective.

Initial Response to Comments of STAP

Comment: STAP acknowledges UNDP's proposal on "Conservation and sustainable management of key globally important ecosystems for multiple benefits" in Kazakhstan. The project seeks to improve the status and management of key ecosystems in arid, riparian, forest and grassland areas which are threatened due to several reasons. A wide range of activities are proposed, including landscape management, integrating economic and environmental evaluation into national planning, creating an enabling environment for improved local management of resources, and enhanced enforcement of wildlife. STAP appreciates that the proposal seeks to address the root causes of ecosystem degradation, however it will be essential to improve on the logic and other design aspects so the project outcomes are realistic and better linked to its parent program Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Conservation Program.

Response: The proponents will use the time and resources available at the PPG stage to improve the logic and other design aspects of the outcomes. We adjusted the project description at this stage to clarify that the project's overall philosophy is is not about any particular region or any particular species but rather about improving the status and management of key conservation important forests and woodlands. One of them includes the landscapes of the Snow Leopard, which is why there is a formal link to the parent program. This will be further elaborated in the full size project documentation.

Comment 1. STAP recommends strengthening the links between the activities, outputs, outcomes and the objective. For example, the problem statement (drivers and root causes of degradation) mixes minor issues (e.g. no census of snow leopards), with symptoms (e.g. land conversion) and causes (highly centralized governance, lack of property rights, economic growth); therefore, the concept does not provide a coherent cause-effect logic for how these are related. Similarly, the pathways whereby SFM/SLM indicators and data will be translated into ecosystem outcomes need to be developed in addition to the pathways linking protected areas, landscape management and snow leopard conservation that are needed to reach the objective.

Articulating a theory of change in the project design can help address this issue, and strengthen the likelihood of achieving the proposed global environmental benefits. When developing the theory of change, the following issues should be addressed: i) involve stakeholders in the development of the theory of change; ii) explore whether the objective can be achieved through incremental changes (adaptation) to the social-ecological system, or whether transforming the system will be required; iii) develop impact pathways that are needed to achieve the changes required to meet the objective (step ii); and, iv) adjust the theory of change to capture learning, including learning that evolves through adaptive management.

UNDP might consider using the Resilience, Adaptation Pathways and Transformation Assessment (RAPTA) to develop the theory of change, and identify options for adaptive management. RAPTA will be soon available at www.stapgef.org, or by writing to the STAP Secretary, Thomas Hammond: Thomas.Hammond@unep.org

Response: Bearing in mind the overall forest and woodland focus of the project, we have tentatively revisited the section on drivers and root-causes of degradation to outline some of the linkages. As has normally been the case within the GEF cycle, a proper root-cause analysis will be based on investment of time and resources at the PPG stage. As advised by STAP, we are going to use the theory of change and will consider employing specific instruments such as RAPTA. The PPG team will get in touch with the STAP for advice in planning and carrying out this analysis.

Comment 2. STAP suggests reducing significantly the scope of the project initially, and expanding as experience is gained. For instance, the project might focus on:

• *using the practical development of a protected area (or a small number of protected areas) to build the capacity of the protected area agency, strengthen guidelines, policy, and legislation on protected areas;*

• *developing a pilot community land use project in the buffer zones of these protected areas, using an on-ground process to develop national guidelines and capacities. It is likely that Kazakhstan could quickly adopt and adapt a well-tested approach, such as the Namibian CBNRM initiative which combines tourism and hunting to incentivize local communities to rehabilitate habitat and protect wildlife, including endangered species;*

• *developing a snow leopard conservation program that is linked to the above.*

In this way, the project develops communities-of-practice that learn by doing at field level, but are sufficiently connected at the national level to unlock barriers and institutionalize lessons and capacities. This approach might have more impact - start small and use pilot initiatives to identify and address root causes, barriers and opportunities.

Response: We would like to clarify that the focus of the project is not on any single area or species. It focuses, in a system way, on biodiversity important forests, woodland and associated riparian and grassland ecosystems. The project focus stems from the "systemic" approach (vs. site-based) and the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) philosophy advocated by the GEF 6 Biodiversity Strategy, and has been designed is line with Program 2 of the GEF Biodiversity Focal Area, as well as with corresponding focal area strategies of the Land Degradation and Sustainable Forest Management Focal Areas. The project concentrates on addressing the suite of key root-causes of degradation common to all important forest and woodlands, namely: gaps in the representation of the protected area system with respect to coverage of habitat of globally important species; under-estimated valuation of ecosystem services which does not allow to make right decisions on sustainable resource use; and disengagement of local communities from ecosystem management and restoration. Considering significant level of forest and pasture ecosystem degradation not only within just the Altai or Tian Shan mountains but equally also in the riparian and saxaul forests, considering that the issues of detachment of communities from forest use are similar in all three types of ecosystems, considering that the issues of unsustainable use of forest and non-timber resources are common in all important forests, considering that all forests are falling under the jurisdiction of the Committee of Forestry and Hunting (and therefore the institutional solution base also allows to work on them effectively), considering the total funding (GEF + co-financing), proponents believe the proposed focus to be ecologically justified, cost effective, institutionally wise and doable within the context of Kazakhstan. The ecosystem approach employed in the project is similar to previous GEF projects in Kazakhstan, when the focus on wetlands, for example, included work in three different geographic areas in different parts of the country, and the focus of the deserts project similarly included two different geographic regions. Those projects have achieved remarkable success with respect to improving the status of the targeted ecosystems and their management

At the same time, the proponents agree with the main argument of STAP on the importance of firstly showing how things work on the ground in order to show case how this can be replicated further. Partly this is already reflected in the PIF as there are practical activities at the community and site-level in Outputs 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 2.2.2 and 2.2.3. We take note of concrete advice of STAP with respect to learning from other countries in the areas of organizing sustainable hunting or tourism. At the PPG stage, proponents will do careful feasibility studies for all proposed on the ground activities and will be able to analyze site specific threats, related root-causes, as well as document intended activities and their impacts in scientifically proved way.

Comment 3. *STAP recommends researching what similar conservation/integrated economic and environment management approaches have worked elsewhere, particular in Central Asia. Learning from past, or on-going, projects (including other projects in the parent program) will strengthen the evidence used to design the project and underpin the sustainability of the proposed activities. For example, the project developers might look into the lessons and successes on creating an enabling environment for community and private investments (output 2.2.2) in South Africa and Namibia, two countries with extensive experience on these issues. Additionally, STAP recommends drawing on best practice of community rhino/wildlife management in Namibia for output 3.*

Response: Thank you for the comment, we take note of this and will consider the mentioned experience when conducting relevant feasibility studies at the PPG stage.

Comment 4. *For the activities on ecosystem restoration and ecosystem valuation (Component 2), more information, and analyses, will be needed. Specifically, it will be important to detail how ecosystem valuations will translate into land use incentives, and outcomes in Kazakhstan.*

Response: The project plans to employ UNDP Targeted Scenario Analysis (http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/environment-energy/environmental_finance/targeted-scenario-analysis.html). This tool is designed to help the Government and communities decide on the best model of forest / ecosystem use in each of the targeted ecosystems. The targeted scenario analysis incorporate ecological as well as economic values, and once it is conducted, decisions will be made by either community or Government (depending on who has the jurisdiction over the area in question) on modifying the forest use plan so that it fits the results of the targeted scenario analysis. A properly conducted Targeted Scenario analysis will bring the most sustainable decision, which in term is the way to ensure that forests in question are managed sustainably in the long run. The details of the Targeted Scenario Analysis can be found on the link above, and a detailed plan of conducting it and building its results into updated forest use plans was going to be constructed at the PPG stage.

Comment 5. *Additionally, for component 2 the project developers could consult the following paper that characterizes the socioeconomic and agro-environmental challenges on recultivating abandoned croplands. The paper also focuses on the trade-offs between carbon stocks and biodiversity conservation, which might be useful information for designing the project. Meyfroidt, P., et al. "Drivers, constraints and trade-offs associated with recultivating abandoned cropland in Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan". Global Environmental Change 37 (2016) 1-15.*

Response: Thank you, this is noted and will be taken into account at the PPG stage.

Comment 6. *Component 3 as it stands is currently very broad, seeking to achieve outcomes on law enforcement, tourism and hunting management, ecological monitoring, and cross-border participation. A less ambitious focus is more likely to be successful.*

Response: The PIF currently indeed lists activities that address the underlying problems. The main idea of housing them in a separate component is that unlike the two previous components, Component 3 requires most of the international cooperation. International cooperation in the area of wildlife management or protection of signature species, or models of sustainable hunting, require a lot of learning. Our intention is to use the PPF phase to establish relevant partnerships with international organizations with experience in these areas. As PPG studies are completed, we refine the list of activities, group them better and supply corresponding budget tags for them.

Comment 7. *STAP recommends defining a multi-stakeholder plan that is built on a stakeholder analysis. This will be important because the project will work across sectors and scales, which increases the chances that diverse knowledge and governance arrangements will exist. Accounting for these issues is important for achieving the project outcomes that focus on strengthening landscape approaches for ecosystem management.*

Additionally, the stakeholder analysis and plan will assist with understanding which stakeholders should be engaged, at what stage and for what purpose(s) (e.g. to achieve what outputs and outcomes). A well-functioning stakeholder plan will also be important to deliver knowledge among stakeholders and to establish a learning framework for the project. Currently, this information is not described in the PIF.

Response: Thank you. Thorough stakeholder analysis and setting up of the implementation partnership is a standard important activity of the PPG stage, and we will duly take note of the STAP advice when conducting it.

Comment 8. *For all three components, it will be important to describe in detail the social, economic, and biophysical aspects. This will determine the social-ecological structure and function of the target areas which will be important to integrating protected areas into the wider landscape (Component 1); identifying areas of potential conflict between biodiversity conservation and agricultural/livestock production activities (Component 1); enabling and engaging communities in ecosystem restoration activities such as reforming land tenure, timber and non-timber markets, improved pasture management(Component 2); and revise hunting and tourism practices (Component 3), and will guide the identification of which of these many proposed interventions are the highest priority.*

Response: We agree, this will be duly taken into account when developing a detailed project design at the PPG stage.

Comment 9. *Additionally, STAP recommends defining the spatial scale of each intervention (e.g. community) and their relationships with the scales above (e.g. watershed); and below (e.g. household) to understand the full effect of the intervention. For example, the project intends to modify, or put in place, an enabling environment to engage widely communities and the private sector in ecosystem management in the wider landscape (Component 2). Understanding the links between scales will assist in analyzing the full effect of legislative and regulatory instruments and how they need to be modified in order to achieve the intended outcome.*

Analyzing cross scale interactions also will enable the project outcomes to be better linked to its parent program "Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Conservation Program".

Response: We appreciate the comment on the definition of the spatial scales, and will duly take into account when designing detailed project activities at the PPG stage.

Comment 10. *STAP recommends building a knowledge management and learning component into the project, or linking it to the program learning. It can benefit the monitoring and assessment of the project and program.*

Response: Thank you for this comment. In UNDP Implementation, knowledge management and learning are default activities that we sometimes miss to specifically include in the project. We have made a note in the PIF and will consider the most appropriate place for such activities and will describe them in detail at the PPG stage.