

GLOBAL  
ENVIRONMENT  
FACILITY

ROLE AND MANDATE OF STAP

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. In March 1994, Participants in the Global Environment Facility (GEF) endorsed the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured GEF. Article 24 of the Instrument states that "UNEP shall establish, in consultation with UNDP and the World Bank and on the basis of guidelines and criteria established by the Council, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) as an advisory body to the Facility". Understanding was also reached among Participants that a major item on the agenda for the first meeting of the Council would include discussion on proposals for the establishment of STAP, including its role, function, composition and administrative arrangements.
2. In order to facilitate discussions on STAP at the first meeting of the Council in July 1994, UNEP prepared a paper (GEF/C.1/5), in consultation with UNDP, the World Bank and the GEF Administrator's Office, and based on views expressed by STAP members in the Pilot Phase. The paper outlined issues concerning the establishment of STAP and highlighted possible features which could guide the development of STAP's terms of reference.
3. This revised paper further develops the recommendations made in the July Issues Paper. It benefits from the deliberations of the Council in July, written comments from members of the Council, and subsequent discussions among the Implementing Agencies, the GEF Secretariat, and STAP members. This paper should be read in conjunction with the GEF Secretariat's paper "Proposed GEF Project Cycle" (GEF/C.2/3). If the Council approves the approach recommended for reconstituting STAP, UNEP, in consultation with the GEF Secretariat, UNDP and the World Bank, will develop more detailed terms of reference for the new STAP.

## II. BACKGROUND

4. STAP was established by Participants in the Pilot Phase to advise the Implementing Agencies on generic technical issues related to the implementation of environmental projects and programs under the GEF. Its terms of reference included the provision of criteria and priorities for projects and programs in relation to global environmental objectives.
5. As the Pilot Phase progressed, Participants agreed that STAP should:
  - (a) Be involved in the review of individual projects;
  - (b) Analyze and develop methodologies to address national and global benefits, cost-effectiveness, and incremental costs; and
  - (c) Elaborate a rationale for funding targeted research, country studies, monitoring and other related activities of direct relevance to the GEF.
6. Based on this mandate, STAP's work in the Pilot Phase focused on:
  - (a) Formulating criteria for eligibility and priorities for selection of GEF projects;

- (b) Preparing analytical frameworks for projects in each focal area;
- (c) Compiling a Roster of Experts to be used in the external technical review of projects;
- (d) Reviewing project proposals against the eligibility criteria, assigning priorities to the proposals, and analyzing the portfolio of projects; and
- (e) Preparing a paper on justification for research activities that support the GEF, related environmental conventions, and international scientific assessments.

### III. ASSESSMENT OF STAP'S ROLE

7. The *Report of the Independent Evaluation of the GEF Pilot Phase* and subsequent discussions have raised a number of issues relevant to discussions on the reconstitution of STAP, which can be summarized as follows:

- (a) In order for STAP to perform its role effectively, there is a need to ensure quality in the composition of STAP and consistency in the availability of its members;
- (b) While STAP's assignment of priorities to proposals assisted in eliminating some low priority projects, its comments did not always contribute significantly to the improvement of projects; and
- (c) The pressure on STAP to review individual projects made it difficult for its members to invest sufficient time in developing an overall strategy for each focal area with well-defined programme priorities.

8. The Evaluation Report concluded that a professionally strong and independent body such as STAP is essential for the future of the GEF in order to:

- (a) Provide Participants with advice on a scientifically, technically, economically, socially and legally sound strategy; and
- (b) Serve as an impartial overseer of the implementation of this strategy.

### IV. RECONSTITUTING STAP: SOME IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

9. While the operational policies and strategies of the restructured GEF have yet to be established, it is possible to outline in broad terms certain characteristics that will differ from those of the Pilot Phase. The following factors may be taken into account in developing STAP's terms of reference:

- (a) The volume of the work program is expected to increase substantially;
- (b) The work program will be largely country-driven, drawing on national strategies and action plans;
- (c) The Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change (hereafter "Conventions") will provide the policies, program priorities, and eligibility criteria for the purposes of the Conventions; and
- (d) The GEF will need to establish clear and consistent operational strategies for each focal area.

10. In addition, there are a number of evolving factors, such as the roles of the Convention bodies and the GEF's own organizational arrangements, which will require some flexibility in the establishment of STAP's mandate, composition and role.

11. Given these new demands, two issues emerge which are relevant to the development of STAP's terms of reference:

- (a) **A balance between the need for strategic scientific advice and technical reviews of individual program or project proposals for GEF funding.**

Independent advice on GEF strategies and projects can enhance the credibility and effectiveness of the GEF. STAP's involvement in strategy issues would help ensure the overall scientific and technical integrity of GEF initiatives, as well as provide a comprehensive and global scientific perspective for the development of GEF work programs. At the same time, an independent assessment of activities proposed for GEF funding would help ensure that projects have a sound scientific and technical basis, and that the highest quality proposals are funded. The Pilot Phase experience suggests, however, that an investment of significant additional resources would be required for STAP to review individually the large number of projects and maintain a global strategic perspective. Therefore, a balanced approach in relation to project review is essential, requiring the identification of those entry points in the project cycle where external reviews of projects by STAP provide the greatest value added; and

- (b) **The need to clarify the nature of the "advisory role" with respect to the relative extent of proactive and reactive involvement.**

In defining STAP's mandate and role, it is necessary to consider whether it should be primarily "demand-driven" -- reviewing and commenting on strategies, guidelines and projects -- or whether the GEF could benefit from a STAP that is more proactive and recommends, on its own initiative, certain strategies, priorities, and options. Restricting STAP to demand-driven advice might reduce the ability of the GEF to make full use of the experience and expertise of STAP members. At the same time, STAP will be established to advise the GEF, and

should therefore be fully responsive to the Council's requirements. A balanced approach could be achieved by establishing certain criteria for STAP involvement, including standard products required of STAP on a regular basis, which would provide STAP the opportunity to take initiatives, while providing also for responsiveness to selective demand.

## V. MANDATE

12. Given these considerations, STAP would be established as an objective advisory body to the GEF with a mandate to provide strategic scientific and technical advice on GEF policies, operational strategies, and programs. GEF procedures may require STAP's advice on critical scientific and technical issues, including those to be submitted to the Council. For focal areas in which the GEF is not operating as a convention's financial mechanism, STAP would develop scientific and technical criteria and provide scientific and technical advice on priorities for GEF funding. STAP's mandate would be that of the custodian of a comprehensive scientific perspective in the GEF, including over-arching global issues. As an advisory body, STAP need not be vested with any clearance authority.

## VI. ROLE

### Options

13. Four possible options have emerged in discussing STAP's role in the GEF. Broadly, these options can be summarized as follows:

14. **Option One: Full project review and limited strategic advice.** This option would envisage a STAP that would primarily review individual GEF projects and provide limited scientific advice on selected strategic issues. This option, however, would not adequately respond to the views expressed by the Council, the conclusions of the Independent Evaluation, and the recommendations of STAP that the GEF should draw on independent scientific advice in the development of overall strategies in the focal areas of the GEF. Therefore, this option need not be considered further.

15. **Option Two: Full project review and strategic advice.** This option would involve STAP members being fully engaged at both project and strategic levels of GEF activities. It provides for an independent, high level review of all project proposals for GEF funding. The time and skills required for reviewing all projects would suggest that STAP, supported by a larger Secretariat, would be dependent on working groups of experts to conduct the reviews. The working groups would submit technical opinions to the full STAP for its consideration and recommendations. This option would be technically feasible, but would add a significant "load" to the project cycle and have substantial financial implications. Full implications of this option are summarized in Box 1.

**BOX 1**  
**OPTION TWO: FULL PROJECT REVIEW AND STRATEGIC ADVICE**

- There could be an increase in cost if the STAP arrangements considered in this option duplicate the internal technical review processes of the Implementing Agencies;
- Organizing and managing the STAP review process, including the meetings of working groups, could require the STAP Secretariat to maintain a larger staff;
- The review process in this option will involve an additional step in the project cycle, which would be inconsistent with the Independent Evaluation's recommendation that multiple upstream project reviews be reduced;
- Logistical problems in organizing meetings of STAP working groups could delay project development;
- Placing the emphasis of technical reviews outside the agencies' decision-making process could adversely affect "buy-in" by agency staff in project development and quality control;
- STAP's independent, objective status could be affected by its members being held accountable for decisions on individual projects;
- Persons of the calibre proposed for STAP membership are unlikely to have the time, expertise, or inclination to be involved in substantive project reviews; and,
- Staff of the Implementing Agencies would need to attend the meetings of both the working groups and the full STAP to discuss their projects.

16. **Option Three: Strategic advice and selective project review.** This option would envisage a STAP consisting of leading scientists advising the GEF on a broad range of strategic scientific and technical issues, while maintaining a limited, but significant, role in the project review process. In this case, STAP would consist of a core group of high-level strategic scientific thinkers and ad hoc working groups to provide specialized technical opinions when project-related issues require STAP's further attention. The option would provide for selective review of projects by STAP in certain circumstances and at specific points in the project cycle, either on its own initiative or at the request of the Council or Chief Executive Officer. STAP would use a mix of approaches, including standardized minimum procedures and information requirements for the technical review of projects, which would provide the basis for STAP to initiate its own selective reviews of projects based on clearly defined criteria approved by the

Council; the development of a Roster of Experts, consisting of internationally-recognized specialists, to review individual projects through the Implementing Agencies' technical review process; and, strategic scientific and technical reviews of the GEF portfolio. The operational implications of Option Three are summarized in Box 2.

**BOX 2**

**OPTION THREE: STRATEGIC ADVICE AND SELECTIVE PROJECT REVIEW**

- The establishment of an additional step in the project cycle would be avoided;
- Lower administrative demands on the STAP Secretariat would allow for lower operating costs;
- The technical review by experts from the Roster within the agencies' technical review processes would help ensure that there is adequate interaction on all aspects of project design between agency specialists and external experts;
- Well-defined entry points for STAP's intervention, backed by Council-approved, clearly established procedures and information requirements for technical reviews, would allow for a sufficient and effective contribution by STAP to the decision-making process;
- The ability of STAP to initiate additional reviews on a selective basis would help ensure the credibility and integrity of the agencies' operations; and,
- The cost of STAP's selective review of projects would remain a very small percentage of the overall cost of the GEF's work programs.

17. **Option Four: Only strategic advice.** This option would envisage STAP members focusing entirely on strategic scientific and technical matters. The independent assessment of proposed GEF projects would be done by experts selected from the STAP Roster. Under this option, there would be no selective reviews of projects by STAP and therefore STAP working groups would not be required. In view of the fact that the predominant thinking favors some role for STAP, albeit limited, in the project review process, this option has not been considered further.

18. Based on the analysis of implications summarized in Boxes 1 and 2, it is proposed that Option Three be considered by Council as the basis for developing STAP's terms of reference. STAP's primary function would be to advise the GEF on strategic scientific and technical issues, while at the same time playing a role in helping ensure the independence of technical reviews in the project cycle, rather than reviewing individually all project proposals. This option is



significantly less costly than some other alternatives, while safeguarding the requirement for thorough technical reviews. The specific elements of STAP's role in strategic scientific and technical issues and project review, as envisaged in Option 3, are elaborated in the following paragraphs.

### Strategic Scientific and Technical Role

19. A STAP consisting of high level independent experts would best be utilized to advise the GEF on overall strategic scientific and technical issues, rather than on individual projects. In fulfilling this role, STAP would provide a forum for integrating the best-available expertise on science and technology, including their social, economic and institutional aspects. Along these lines, STAP would function as an important conduit between the GEF and the scientific community at large, promoting and galvanizing state of the art contributions.
20. STAP's strategic scientific and technical role would be as follows:
  - (a) Advise the GEF on the state of scientific and technical knowledge in each focal area, highlighting policy and operational implications for the GEF;
  - (b) Provide scientific and technical advice to the GEF on specific strategic matters, such as cross-cutting issues; scientific coherence of GEF operational strategies and programs, and their consistency with GEF policies and objectives; and, integration of national and global environmental benefits in GEF interventions;
  - (c) Advise on the development of a research agenda for the GEF, by identifying applied/targeted research which would improve the design and implementation of GEF projects, and by reviewing the research work of the Implementing Agencies and the GEF Secretariat;
  - (d) Review, and advise the GEF on, scientific and technical aspects of GEF operational strategies and guidelines, including those for monitoring and evaluation;
  - (e) Advise the GEF in the preparation of reviews of lessons learnt from the GEF work program, by recommending long-term research on scientific and technical aspects of GEF initiatives, which would identify patterns of practices that can inform future GEF operations, particularly in projects involving demonstration technologies and innovative methodologies. STAP could provide guidelines for such research and advise on capacity building needed to enable centers of excellence to carry out the research; and,
  - (f) Participate in the editorial review board for GEF scientific and technical publications, that has been established by the GEF Secretariat.
21. As part of its strategic role, STAP would be required to provide a number of specific products on a regular basis. Box 3 lists examples of possible STAP products.

**BOX 3**  
**EXAMPLES OF PROPOSED STAP PRODUCTS ON STRATEGIC ISSUES**

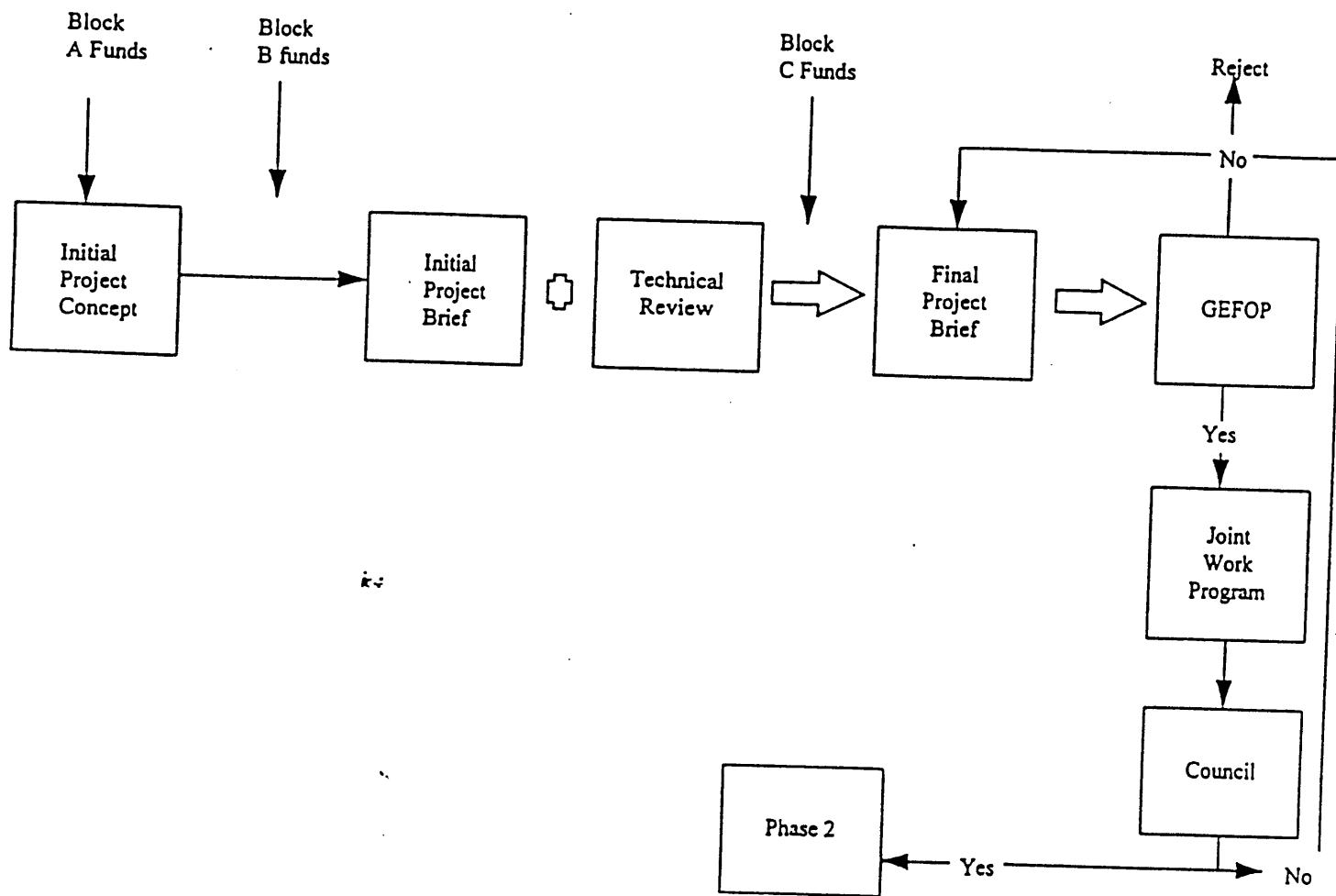
- Periodic reports on the state of science (including an analysis of relevant international environmental assessments), as it relates to the GEF, including recommendations for a GEF research agenda;
- Triennial STAP Report to the Assembly on the broad scientific and technical issues that emerged during the preceding phase of the GEF and on emerging issues and gaps;
- Reviews of the scientific and technical aspects of GEF operational strategies and programs; and,
- Occasional papers of scientific and technical nature for publication in the GEF working paper series.

**Role in Project Review**

22. The proposed role for STAP 's involvement in the project cycle seeks to balance the following elements:
- (a) **Efficiency:** STAP's participation should be part of a streamlined project cycle that provides a cost-effective external review and does not add to the lag between work program approval and project approval;
  - (b) **Effectiveness:** STAP's participation in the project cycle should contribute to significant improvements in the scientific soundness and technical quality of projects through rigorous independent reviews and high quality objective advice to the GEF; and
  - (c) **Credibility:** as an objective external body, STAP should help ensure that the GEF's operations are based on high quality scientific and technical advice.
23. The GEF Secretariat has prepared a paper for the Council entitled "Proposed GEF Project Cycle". Box 4 shows the steps proposed in that paper to develop a project description for inclusion in the joint work program. The following paragraphs outline a role for STAP in relation to these steps which balances the elements in paragraph 22, while avoiding the need for STAP's review of individual projects.

**BOX 4  
GEF PROJECT CYCLE**

**PHASE ONE**



24. At the technical review stage (as shown in Box 4), arrangements for STAP's role would include the following:

- (a) STAP would develop and maintain a Roster of Experts consisting of specialists in the scientific and technical areas relevant to GEF operations;
- (b) Each GEF project proposal would require an external technical opinion by at least one expert from the Roster;
- (c) STAP would standardize the types of information needed in the technical review process and establish generic guidelines for the terms of reference for external

technical reviewers, in consultation with the GEF Secretariat and Implementing Agencies. The terms of reference of the experts would include providing STAP with a report on the proceedings of the Implementing Agencies' technical review process and recommending whether further STAP involvement is necessary;

- (d) STAP would develop criteria, for Council review and approval, in accordance with which STAP could initiate additional reviews on a selective basis;
- (e) STAP would continuously update and revise the Roster, and advise the GEF Council on technical review procedures, based on its assessments of the quality of the Implementing Agencies' technical review process, including reviews by experts on the Roster;
- (f) STAP would inform the Implementing Agencies of its requirements for documentation to be made available to its members for all projects throughout the project cycle so that it has a complete perspective on GEF operations. In addition, STAP would have access to current documentation for GEF-funded projects. This would assist it to identify instances that may require its detailed review of projects, as well as ensure that its strategic scientific and technical advice is based on a full knowledge of GEF operations;
- (g) STAP would selectively review, in accordance with criteria approved by the Council, individual project proposals; and,
- (h) STAP would review all targeted research project proposals.

25. After the technical review stage and prior to Phase Two (which represents the period between Council approval and further development for approval by an Implementing Agency), as shown in Box 4, STAP's role with respect to reviewing projects would be at the request of the Council or as agreed between the Chief Executive Officer and the Chairperson of STAP. The STAP Chairperson would participate in meetings of the GEF Operations Committee, which will review and recommend the joint work program to be submitted to the Council.

26. During Phase Two of the project cycle, STAP could be requested by the Council or Chief Executive Officer to advise on the scientific and technical aspects of projects that have been significantly modified after Council approval.

27. In Phase Three of the project cycle (which represents the period following Implementing Agency approval of a project), STAP's role would be primarily part of its strategic advisory functions as follows:

- (a) Attend the annual Project Implementation Review to review the status of the portfolio and assess potential strategic scientific and technical issues;

- (b) Advise on special topics for evaluation, and on terms of reference for evaluation processes; and,
- (c) With the approval of the Chief Executive Officer, on a selective basis and in consultation with the Implementing Agencies, conduct ex-post evaluations of the strategic scientific and technical aspects of project implementation, particularly those that are innovative, or contain research, monitoring and assessment components.

## VII. RELATIONSHIP WITH CONVENTION AND ASSESSMENT BODIES

28. STAP will need to interact with several other scientific and technical bodies. These include the subsidiary bodies on scientific, technical and technological advice of the Conventions on Biological Diversity, Climate Change, and Desertification, the international assessments by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and the ozone assessments under the Montreal Protocol. The different mandates and roles of these bodies will need to be taken into consideration in developing STAP's terms of reference. The role of STAP and its relationship with convention and assessment bodies will need to evolve in line with future developments related to these entities. STAP's activities should not duplicate their work.
29. STAP's role could be considered complementary to the subsidiary bodies on scientific, technical and technological advice of the Conventions on Biological Diversity, Climate Change, and Desertification, and the inter-governmental assessments. For example, STAP's comparative advantage could lie in the multi-issue orientation of its membership as related to the four focal areas (which would enable it to address cross-cutting issues) and its objective scientific status (which would enable it to review and synthesize scientific and technical information relevant to the GEF from within and external to the Convention and assessment processes).
30. Cooperation and coordination between STAP and these bodies could be enhanced through:
- (a) Arrangements for common memberships in STAP and/or its working groups, which could promote greater collaboration. One option is to have the chairpersons of the subsidiary bodies and assessments as ex-officio (non-voting) members of STAP and/or its working groups, thus maintaining the scientific and technical objectivity of STAP while promoting a close cooperative relationship; and
  - (b) Mechanisms for meetings and consultations between the leadership of STAP and the subsidiary bodies of the Conventions and assessment panels.
31. The Chairperson of STAP could develop practical working arrangements with these bodies.

## VIII. STRUCTURE

32. Taking into account work load, the advisory nature of the panel, and the need to advise the GEF on both high level scientific strategic issues and project-related matters, it is proposed that STAP be structured in two tiers:

- (a) **A core STAP of about 12 members, consisting of eminent individuals.** They would be responsible for providing strategic scientific and technical advice and assisting in mobilizing necessary expertise. The objective would be to keep the group as small as practically possible, while ensuring the necessary breadth of experience. Tenures for the core STAP members would be essential for ensuring independence and continuity.
- (b) **Thematic, issue-based ad hoc working groups, consisting of technical experts from relevant fields, possibly led by a designated core STAP member, which would provide the permanent nucleus for continuity in the working groups.** These ad hoc working groups would be established to enable STAP to obtain specialized technical opinions as needed. The working groups could also be designed as resource groups for the Implementing Agencies on specific technical aspects of project design and provide advice on technological options, cost-effectiveness, and related social issues.

33. In addition to the core STAP members, the ad hoc working groups would consist of external experts from the Roster. Specialists from the Implementing Agencies and the GEF Secretariat could be invited to participate depending on the issue.

34. The notion of independence of STAP would be vested in the core group, which would supervise and review the work of the ad hoc working groups. Such a two-tier approach would accommodate the dual needs of strategic advice and limited project cycle involvement.

## IX. COMPOSITION

35. The scientific integrity of STAP would best be served by the appointment of members in their individual capacity. In appointing STAP members, quality of scientific expertise would be a primary factor, while sensitivity to geographic representation and gender balance will be necessary. Members would be drawn from a broad base of relevant scientific expertise from within and outside of government, including the social sciences. Experts will also be sought with knowledge about the scientific processes of conventions and relevant international assessments.

36. The nature of the panel's mandate suggests the following characteristics in STAP members:

- (a) **Recognized world leaders in specific fields, but with an ability to bridge across scientific, technological, economic, social and policy issues;**

- (b) Experience in the management of science, with a good sense of the issues in the implementation of complex international initiatives; and,
- (c) Some understanding of the organizational and operational setting of the Implementing Agencies would be desirable.

37. STAP's Chairperson will be called upon to play an important role in providing strategic leadership in STAP. The Chairperson would be responsible for setting the panel's agenda, acting as STAP's spokesman in various fora, and managing STAP's work between meetings. STAP would also have a Vice-Chairperson.

38. Given the nature of the commitment by core STAP members, the Chairperson would need to be contracted to work approximately half-time on GEF matters and other members would be contracted for approximately two months per year, including attendance at meetings and preparatory work. Members of the ad hoc working groups, whose membership would vary depending on the expertise required, would be compensated for work undertaken. Levels of compensation should be commensurate with the level of excellence required in STAP.

39. Ensuring the quality of STAP would depend largely on the selection process of its members. This would be complemented by provisions in the terms of reference on conflicts of interest, the Chairperson's authority to recommend removal of members, removal of the Chairperson, and security of tenure.

#### X. SECRETARIAT

40. STAP and its ad hoc working groups would be served by a Secretariat. This Secretariat will be provided by UNEP. Under the guidance of the STAP Chairperson, its responsibilities would be to manage STAP's budget, arrange STAP meetings, organize the flow of documents to STAP members, assist members in the preparation of documents, help ensure follow-up on STAP's requirements and requests, and assist in the initial screening of candidates for the Roster.

41. UNEP would appoint a senior level manager to supervise the day-to-day functioning of the STAP Secretariat, which would consist of a small but adequate number of professional staff with the appropriate expertise to effectively carry out the management, coordination, research, and analysis functions necessary to support STAP. In addition, the STAP Chairperson would be provided with budgetary resources to contract necessary temporary assistance at his or her permanent base.

42. In determining the location of the STAP Secretariat, efficiency, cost and functional effectiveness considerations are important. Several factors would affect the effective functioning of the Secretariat, including the interactions between:

- (a) The STAP Chairperson and members;
- (b) Members among themselves;

- (c) STAP and the GEF Council, the GEF Secretariat, UNEP's scientific and technical staff, the other Implementing Agencies, Convention Secretariats, and the scientific community.

Taking these considerations into account and after appropriate consultations, the Executive Director of UNEP will take a decision on the location of the STAP Secretariat.

## XI. APPOINTMENTS

43. The independence of STAP would best be guaranteed by making the nomination process open and informal. A Search Committee will be established by UNEP to receive nominations and recommend a short list of candidates for appointment. Appointments will be made by UNEP, in consultation with UNDP, the World Bank, and the GEF Secretariat. In view of the central role of the Chairperson of STAP, it would be appropriate for the Committee to first recommend a Chairperson, who could then participate in the search for other members of the panel.