



Statement of Yolanda Kakabadse, STAP Chair, at the Opening of the Thirtieth Meeting of the GEF Council

Washington, DC
5 December 2006

1. Chair, distinguished Council Members, thanks once again for the opportunity to brief you on the rapid progress being achieved within STAP in response to your adoption of the proposals made at the last meeting and also those changes that STAP itself has made to improve its effectiveness.
2. I am happy to report that the opportunity for STAP to respond to the challenges made to its past performance has been taken up and changes are well under way with the assistance of the new and existing Members of STAP, who met for the first time as the new STAP4 in October. We have also successfully appointed a new STAP Secretary, and are consolidating the Washington-based Secretariat to fulfill the commitment to engage consistently with the GEF Secretariat and especially to better participate in inter-agency Task Forces to strengthen the advice of STAP as an input to operational decisions.
3. At our recent STAP4 meeting in October the STAP benefited greatly from the advice of the CEO and Chair in a brainstorming event on enhancing the relevance of STAP in the GEF, attended by STAP Members, staff of the GEF Secretariat and the Implementing Agencies. STAP has taken seriously the advice provided and in response is committed to prioritizing its work to focus on the project cycle, and to assist with delivering a more strategic work program to the GEF Council, to advise on a limited number of strategic, innovative, or controversial projects (at entry point), and to work with the GEF throughout the cycle of these projects. It also commits to making better use of the targeted research modality. Regarding the Roster, STAP is currently redefining the use of the Roster to apply it selectively and earlier in the project cycle. Reaffirming the strategic role of STAP, it will renew its efforts to translate new knowledge, for example from the Millennium Assessment or from Convention subsidiary bodies, into actionable policy advice.
4. I am also pleased to report that UNEP, as the provider of the STAP Secretariat, is actively undertaking a review of ways and means to better connect STAP to its considerable science-based expertise, monitoring network and data, for example, within the Division of Early Warning and Assessment. UNEP is also committed to the development of a more strategic approach to working with STAP through its Divisions, for example, the Division of Technology, Industry, and Economics, Paris, and expert centres such as the UNEP Risø Centre on Energy, Climate and Sustainable Development.

5. I would like to move on to describe what we have been doing to follow up our promises to deliver our advice regarding Biofuels, Land Degradation, and on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Groundwater.
6. Firstly, I am pleased to report that our final version of the report on the GEF-STAP Workshop on Liquid Biofuels has now been delivered, which further extends the advice that I summarized to you in my last report, emphasizing the importance of adequate safeguards regarding environmental and food security and the need to apply regionally and even country specific standards.
7. At the GEF Assembly there was a well attended Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Forum, supported by STAP members, which took place a day before the opening of the GEF Assembly, 28 August 2006 in Cape Town this landmark event emphasized the global benefits and local livelihood issues related to land management, highlighted the cross-sectoral aspects of the topic, and identified opportunities for innovation in land management. The forum also marked the launch of the GEF-UNEP-FAO Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands project, the progress of which STAP intends to closely follow.
8. I am also pleased to report that the synthesis of three studies on land degradation is available for your consideration, to provide greater clarity on the issues of global benefits and incremental reasoning in this focal area. The conclusions that can be drawn from the studies are: that the clearest and best-researched linkage is between land degradation and climate change; that international freshwater basins are critically linked to the status and function of terrestrial ecosystems; there are significant gaps in our knowledge in how land degradation affects vegetation productivity but also how a change in productivity has knock-on effects on biodiversity; and that numerous indirect impacts on the global environment occur through impacts on human society. These indirect but cumulative effects need significantly increased attention, as part of a combined global environmental and development action strategy.
9. Finally, in this section on our strategic inputs to the GEF focal area strategies, STAP has just successfully convened the SIDS, Groundwater and Interlinkages Workshop in Trinidad in November. This was the third in a connected series of workshops focusing on groundwater, which in the words of the GEF Secretariat, “exemplifies, possibly better than any other element of the natural environment, the concept of interlinkages which STAP is striving to translate into operational guidelines for the GEF for addressing desertification, climate change adaptation and the protection of groundwater dependent ecosystems, such as wetlands.” The workshop examined the need to coordinate efforts across regional SIDS bodies and expertise centres, in the light of groundwater management priorities and challenges. The full report will be available for your next meeting.
10. Looking ahead, STAP has already started to participate in the review of strategic priorities for GEF and through its collaboration with the GEF Secretariat is advising on the focal area strategies, and STAP has also agreed to include substantive work on strategies in its next meeting in February to enable it to better advise the CEO.
11. Evaluation of the performance of the GEF is the function of the Evaluation Office (EO), however STAP has the key role of providing science assessment, and a new

modality is being actively explored to integrate into the EO the skills of STAP in programmatic review. Additionally, STAP is committed to exploring with the EO the catalytic role of GEF and its influence on science and society; several practical steps are being taken at present by the STAP Secretariat and the EO to implement this collaboration.

12. We will also bring substantive findings of our analyses on Carbon Capture and Storage; on Adaptation to Climate Change, to include project development guidelines, and criteria for prioritizing projects; and the identified gaps and opportunities in the field of Energy Efficient Buildings.
13. By the time of your next meeting in June 2007 STAP will have finalized its proposed new Terms of Reference for the STAP and its members. We are determined to bring for your consideration a proposal that reflects the need to have a dynamic, modern and effective mechanism to ensure good science in to the GEF
14. Finally, I would like to thank the Chair again for her strong engagement and interest in our STAP4 meeting, where the open and constructive brainstorming has done so much to clarify the strategic advantage of STAP within the GEF, and builds on the work that I had previously reported.