

## **Statement of STAP Chair to GEF Governing Council, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2002**

Chair, distinguished members of the GEF Council, colleagues from the GEF Secretariat, the Implementing and Executing Agencies, the Conventions and the NGOs,

It is with a sense of great fulfillment that I exercise the privilege of addressing this august body for the eighth and last time as the tenure of STAP II draws to a close. I have tremendously enjoyed my four years as a member of the GEF family, sharing its concerns and being a part of its efforts in the cause of the global environment, feeling completely at home in its open, democratic style of functioning. For it is only in such an atmosphere that scientists can perform and fully realize their potential. As Mirza Galib, a great poet of the Indian subcontinent puts it:

*'Nashae rangase hai vashude gul*

*Mast kab bande kaba bandhate hai!"*

Just as flower buds, drunk on their own colors, would never agree to stay closed; so would those with a creative spirit, poets, scientists, and artists never accept to be constrained in a strait-jacket. We in STAP II are grateful to you, the Council, and other members of the GEF family for creating an atmosphere in which we could flourish and give our best, working closely and harmoniously with all of you.

This has permitted us to make several worthwhile contributions. To mention just a few; we have helped develop the scientific and technical basis for the GEF policy frameworks of the agrobiodiversity, integrated ecosystem management, and persistent organic pollutants

OPs; the Action Plan on Land Degradation, and the policy framework on forest and biodiversity. We have led the development of GEF's strategic thinking on adaptation to climate change, and alerted the GEF family to the implications of power sector reform for energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies. STAP II is continuing to work in the area of POPs focussing on innovative technologies for their elimination and disposal. Given the ongoing deliberation within the GEF family on this issue, this activity will have to be carried over to GEF III. To facilitate this process, we have prepared a draft outline that is appended to the Report of the Tenth Meeting of STAP.

Of course, there is always room for doing better. All of us on the STAP therefore greatly appreciate the opportunity to share with you our reflections on how S&T may add further value to its contributions to the GEF in addressing the challenges of global environment. These reflections are contained in a separate document placed before you.

Since this document would be the major focus of the discussion on this Agenda Item 5, I propose to only briefly touch on a few highlights of STAP's work in this presentation. These relate to the Workshop on Adaptation to Climate Change, the Brainstorming on Sustainable Transport, the Sourcebook on Community Based Approaches to the Management Of Degraded Lands, and the paper on the S&T Priorities for consideration of STAP III.

STAP is happy to have played a useful role in developing the strategic thinking in the context of adaptation to climate change. When we first began to explore this issue, the thinking had advanced little beyond construction of sea walls around islands. As you will see from

the full report of the workshop placed before you, there is now available a wealth of understanding on a whole spectrum of issues. The recommendations of the Workshop emphasize that adaptation measures should be so designed as to support sustainable development activities. Such an integration of adaptation measures into mainstream development calls for a multi-stakeholder approach, with close interaction with the private sector in adaptation planning and implementation, since private investment exceeds official development assistance in most developing countries. Equally importantly, it is essential to work closely with local communities to work out the adaptation measures appropriate to any specific locality.

Interestingly enough, the Brainstorming on Sustainable Transport also brought up a similar observation. This Brainstorming was a result of the realization that the Transport OP is today dominated by projects emphasizing sophisticated, expensive technologies such as fuel cell buses. Yet there are lower cost, people friendly options that hold great promise and for which there are available excellent case studies such as the Bus Rapid Transit System of Quito in Ecuador. The discussions at this Brainstorming too highlighted the significance of locality specific understanding. Thus it turns out that the Bus Rapid Transit System of Quito not only reduces GHG emissions, it for the first time permits senior citizens mobility because the system's buses and bus stops have helped greatly reduce street crime. This important people friendly consequence would not have been brought out but for the involvement of participants with on-the-ground experience.

The Sourcebook on Case Studies on Community Based Approaches to the Integrated Land and Water Management is also motivated by the realization of the relevance of local knowledge to the GEF programmes including the Africa Land and Water Initiative and the OP#12 on Integrated Ecosystem Management. The specific objectives of the case studies are to compile, synthesize, and disseminate good practices in community-based applications of integrated land and water management, including traditional systems. The case studies will assist in understanding different community-based management systems, their origins, the rationale for their adoption, major practitioners, management practices and their institutional framework (e.g. decision-making processes) and the enabling environment needed to sustain these systems. The Sourcebook is progressing and we hope to complete it before the end of STAP II tenure in June 2002. In the meantime we are happy to make available to you a brochure that gives an overview of its contents.

Notably enough the Priorities paper also emphasizes the significance of local expertise. We have arrived at this perception on the basis of many experiences. Let me mention here just one of them, during the course of the Selective Review of the pioneering Ethiopian project on farmer based conservation of crop genetic resources. An important component of this project is the Community Gene Banks. These are large-scale seed storage facilities focusing on traditional cultivars. These facilities were designed without any understanding of or inputs from the age-old systems of seed storage in this ancient center of plant domestication. When we talked to the farmers they explained that rodents were a serious menace, and that they always

stored seed in bamboo or rattan containers coated with mud and dung to foil rats. The plastic containers being used in the Community Gene Banks were a poor choice for the rats could easily bite through them. At the same time the farmers mentioned that were the Community Gene Banks to go in for locally fabricated seed containers, not only would those be better seed storage devices, their use would create employment and contribute towards the significant objective of poverty alleviation.

This brings me to the request to STAP at the last Council meeting to examine the possibility of including knowledgeable individuals from indigenous communities in the STAP Roster of Experts. STAP fully endorses the value of bringing such local knowledge, experiences, techniques and traditions on board. However, it is logistically difficult to do so through this particular route of inclusion in the STAP Roster of Experts. This is because most such indigenous community and other local experts would neither have the means of communication, nor the technical background and language skills to work with GEF IAs. I myself work a great deal in the field with barefoot ecologists, but even though I know four Indian languages I often have to use interpreters in working with them.

To facilitate the engagement of these local experts, STAP feels that GEF should give serious thought to the possibility of involving a national or regional STAP roster expert early in the project cycle right from the concept stage. Such an expert could, in turn, be encouraged to consult other knowledgeable colleagues from amongst the roster experts, from their own scientific and technical networks, as well as from amongst indigenous and other local communities. This appears

to STAP the best way of involving members of indigenous and other local communities in GEF projects. GEF Council might like to consider earmarking additional funds specifically for this purpose, since it offers very effective means of capacity development.

I would now like to go on to summarize the suggestions we have offered in order to add further value to STAP's contributions to GEF. These may be grouped under six major themes.

A) Nurturing STAP's identity and building institutional memory:

- 1. An overlapping system of STAP membership should be instituted involving the following elements: (a) Each STAP member will have a three year term, (b) One-third of the old members will retire and be replaced every year. In the longer term, consideration may also be given to the possibility that (c) A Chair will serve for two years, and (d) STAP members themselves will elect a new Chair every two years from amongst the members who have completed one year of their three year term.*

B) Understanding GEF functioning:

- 2. Each STAP member should be involved in an S&T focussed selective review that may be organized in conjunction with the Secretariat Managed Project Reviews in the very first year of her/his tenure.*

C) Establishing effective communication, and putting scarce time resources to optimal use:

- 3. Corporate demands may be conveyed to STAP as and when they arise in a written and structured manner.*

4. *STAP should regularly interact with the CEO, Assistant CEO, and the Executive Coordinators to set priorities for the STAP work program.*
5. *Secretariat and IAs be requested to provide specific written feedback in relation to STAP strategic advice and the selective reviews.*

D) Mobilizing wider scientific community:

6. *Specific mention of S&T community as a component in the stakeholder participation annexe.*
7. *Establishment of S&T Networks and focal points in order to strengthen GEF at the regional/sub-regional levels, particularly in targeted research.*
8. *Corporate identification of targeted research priorities while leaving the option open for agencies to identify targeted research projects*
9. *Establishment of an S&T forum.*

E) Better management and utilization of the Roster of Experts:

10. *Encourage more extended involvement of GEF roster experts over the project cycle beginning with the concept stage.*
11. *Encourage simultaneous involvement of two reviewers in a project, with at least one of them being from a recipient country.*

F) Capitalizing on STAP's strengths as an inter-disciplinary body:

12. *Encourage STAP to work on forward looking issues of relevance to GEF.*

Today is Akshaya Trutiya, a day we celebrate by preparing the seed beds in anticipation of the coming summer monsoon. It is a most auspicious day for those who work with the earth. I am glad that STAP II has had the privilege of laying before you these suggestions as well

as our perceptions of the scientific and technical priorities for the next phase of GEF on such a propitious day.

Permit me to close by once again thanking the Council, other members of the GEF family, the Conventions and colleagues from NGOs for making the work of STAP II such a rewarding experience. I am particularly grateful to our host agency, the UNEP. On my own behalf and that of my STAP colleagues, I would like to express our appreciation of the proficient STAP Secretariat for the excellent support and follow-up they have provided to the Panel over the past four years. I would like to conclude by thanking my wonderful colleagues on the STAP for their unfailing co-operation, their able support and constant encouragement.

Thank you.