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(STAP)

Statement of Julia Carabias, Chair of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) at the GEF Council meeting, Washington DC, November 19, 2003.

1. Mr. Chairman, distinguished Council members, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to bring you up to date on what STAP III has been doing, and on what it intends to deliver before its term expires next June. But I would first like to thank Len Good for the interest he has taken in STAP. We have had the opportunity to meet on three occasions, and he participated in the last STAP meeting held in October. We hope to maintain this open relationship with him for the benefit of the GEF.

2. Similarly, we have recently had two meetings with the Executive Director of UNEP, Dr. Topfer, to discuss STAP's work. These meetings have been very beneficial in helping us to consolidate the work programme.

3. At the last Council, I presented the triennial work programme developed by STAP for 2002-2005, and to which the GEF Secretariat and the Implementing Agencies have agreed. On this occasion, I want to inform you about progress, and to announce the products we plan to deliver by June 2004. These products include those requested by the GEF Secretariat and the Implementing Agencies, as well as other strategic advice, which STAP considers should be a high priority for the GEF.

4. You may have had an opportunity to review the information note, "STAP: Planned deliverables by June 2004" (GEF/C.22/Inf13). Please allow me to explain briefly what these are, and how we are getting on with them.

5. With respect to the Operational Programme on "Reducing the Long Term Costs of Low Greenhouse Gas Emitting Energy Technologies" - OP7 as it is usually called - a brainstorming session with experts has been held. The underlying premise hitherto of OP7 has been that GEF projects can "buy-down" the cost of these technologies to competitive levels. But the resources that would be needed to achieve this laudable end are well beyond what GEF can devote to climate change. STAP's advice therefore is that GEF needs to make a major shift in the way it operates. The GEF will still need to support technologies under this programme, but it must take on a much larger role as a facilitator, for example by establishing inter-government and industry partnerships across and within countries, and by ensuring that enabling policy environments are put in place in which these technologies can flourish.

6. With respect to the new focal area for POPs, we held a workshop with experts in October. A central theme for POPs is how to eliminate them with appropriate technologies. There are plenty of existing and emerging innovative technologies which can get rid of persistent organic pollutants, but which do not involve combustion. (Burning POPs produces by-products, which are detrimental to both the environment and human health.) The GEF needs to know how to go about making an informed choice about which technology will work best in a particular set of circumstances. This means making proper risk assessments, compiling an inventory of the particular wastes involved, analysing the soil in which POPs are found, and looking at what

services would be required to make a proven technology work. STAP is preparing this advice for the GEF.

7. Similarly, in December we will hold a further workshop to examine simple and low-cost methods to measure the presence of POPs.

8. With respect to the Operational Programme on “Sustainable Land Management” – known as OP15, a meeting of experts was held in the margins of the International Rangeland Congress. This provided a broad framework to deal with the root causes and negative effects of land degradation. STAP’s advice will be in the form of best practice guidelines for the restoration and rehabilitation of drylands, and recommendations outlining what to do, and what not to do. It will also advise on how to deal with both biophysical issues and sustainable livelihoods, which were discussed extensively at the last Council meeting.

9. These are the main products, on which work is already quite well advanced, where STAP is working on how to deliver the best scientific and technical information to the GEF. In the coming months, we also will work on groundwater management, and a publication on biosafety.

10. However, it is also important to identify knowledge gaps, which require targeted research. We are very interested in providing the Council with some targeted research priorities. We have started a consultation process to identify targeted research activities for the sustainable management of protected areas in the face of global environmental change.

11. A meeting of experts has already taken place where a first diagnosis was made on the types of research activities that are required. After this, the document underwent a broad consultation within the scientific community at the World Parks Congress in Durban. It has now been presented to the GEF’s biodiversity Task Force, and we are scheduled to meet this Friday to discuss their comments. We hope, if a good understanding can be reached that everyone will agree quickly to identify targeted research priorities for the GEF, so that these can be delivered at the next Council meeting. (The document can be accessed on the STAP web site.)

12. In addition to formal advice on GEF focal areas, STAP plays an important role in the M&E work programme. Panel members are also contributing to the work being done on performance-based allocations, the private sector review, the local benefits study, and knowledge management.

13. In addition to addressing precise and specific issues related to the focal areas, STAP also believes it is very important to devote substantial time to issues which it believes will be crucial in the GEF’s third phase. In the next four months, we will devote our efforts to writing a document with a global perspective, on the current state of knowledge about the interlinkages between biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, international waters and persistent organic pollutants, and about the types of interventions which might best deal with these interlinkages. I would especially like to thank Habiba Gitay, the STAP Vice-Chair, for her work on this.

14. We think that it will be very important to discuss this advice at a high-level meeting with the GEF Secretariat and the Implementing Agencies. We hope they will agree to such a meeting, and that it can be held before the next Council meeting.

15. We think that STAP's work on interlinkages could potentially be very helpful to the GEF as it moves more into cross-focal area issues, such as adaptation to climate change, the mainstreaming of biodiversity, integrated ecosystem management (OP12) and agrobiodiversity (OP13).

16. To disseminate STAP's work more broadly, a new STAP website has been launched (stapgef.unep.org). It houses the new STAP roster of experts, provides background information on STAP, access to STAP meeting reports and workshop documents, information on future STAP activities, and links to related sites.

17. I have talked about STAP's advice in the GEF focal areas, its corporate activities and the importance of STAP taking a longer-term view. The remaining way in which STAP advises the GEF is by maintaining a roster of experts who review projects to ensure scientific and technical soundness. The Panel decided to close the previous roster and all participants were thanked for their contribution. A new roster has been established with about 250 experts, 100 of which are new. I hope this will provide a high quality service to meet the new needs of the GEF, particularly in the new programme areas – POPs and land degradation – and the emerging priority of biosafety.

18. As I mentioned, it has been extremely helpful for STAP to have direct contact with the CEO of the GEF and the Executive Director of UNEP. The exchange of views has greatly assisted the Panel in orienting its activities. Over the next few months, I hope it will be possible to hold similar high-level meetings with the other Implementing Agencies. STAP also needs to develop a closer relationship with the scientific and technical bodies of the Conventions. We will therefore be inviting the chairs of these bodies to our next meeting to discuss the potential interlinkages between the Conventions from a scientific perspective.

19. In closing, I would like to acknowledge the very close working relationship which has developed between the Panel, the GEF Secretariat, UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank. This is key in order for STAP to deliver timely, pertinent and sound scientific advice to the GEF. Without this relationship, STAP cannot carry out its responsibilities. We also need feedback from the GEF. We want to know how our advice has been taken into account, and if it has been useful to the GEF.

20. We are here to serve the GEF. This is our commitment.

21. Thank you.