

# Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, administered by UNEP, advises the Global Environment Facility  
(Version 5)

## STAP Scientific and Technical screening of the Project Identification Form (PIF)

Date of screening: April 08, 2014

Screener: Douglas Taylor

Panel member validation by: Jakob Granit; Annette Cowie  
Consultant(s):

### I. PIF Information *(Copied from the PIF)*

**FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND**

**GEF PROJECT ID:** 5739

**PROJECT DURATION :** 4

**COUNTRIES :** Regional (Kazakhstan, Russian Federation)

**PROJECT TITLE:** Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Natural Resources Management in the Ural River Basin

**GEF AGENCIES:** UNDP

**OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:** UNOPS; Ministry of environment and water resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan; Ministry of Natural resources and environment of Russia

**GEF FOCAL AREA:** Multi Focal Area

### II. STAP Advisory Response *(see table below for explanation)*

Based on this PIF screening, STAP's advisory response to the GEF Secretariat and GEF Agency(ies):  
**Minor revision required**

### III. Further guidance from STAP

1. This is a comprehensive proposal with the ambition to consolidate several lines of baseline work to address multiple barriers to sustainable use of the Ural Basin natural resources in a complex region.
2. The PIF describes in adequate detail the range of challenges and barriers to sustainable river basin management jointly faced by Russia and Kazakhstan, and STAP agrees that a systematic approach to collate and share information about the status of the Basin and to propose options for stress reduction is timely. There are a number of issues within the proposed design of the project that should be addressed as discussed further below.
3. An assumption appears to be made in the PIF (see narrative under Component 2) that the existing Russia-Kazakhstan intergovernmental Commission for Joint Use and Protection of Transboundary Water Basins would be the most appropriate coordinating transboundary governance vehicle. This assumption should, however, first be tested under Component 1, given that both inter-ministerial and transboundary cooperation, covering a wider range of scientific, technical and social topics than currently addressed by the Commission, would be required.
4. Given the emphasis put by the PIF and other publications on the importance of the Ural river and its connection to the Caspian Sea for sturgeon, it is welcome that there is a proposed pilot activity focused on sustainable fisheries and linkage to SLM within the narrative for Component 3. The Component description summary table (section B) however focuses largely upon land-based management issues and needs revision. It could be questioned if such a pilot activity should be included at this stage in the cooperation.
5. STAP agrees that the suggested pilot activities are likely to be appropriate however, there appears to be illogical programming for these, which are proposed to be defined at PPG stage, rather than targeted outputs to be determined through work undertaken through the proposed TDA. It may be, as a result of the TDA, that needs for a wider toolkit of well-tested methodologies and best practices will be identified. If however the project proponents determine that sufficient baseline information and experience of relevant interventions already exist through the wide range of relevant projects already active then there would be no

need to waste time developing a comprehensive TDA, and instead should move to collate and implement the already researched actions into a SAP.

6. The risk section in the PIF notes that the only identifiable risk that may hinder the ability of the project to reach its objective is the lack of political support at the highest executive level. The risk table further includes low risk of failure of demonstration projects (from a science perspective) but does mention a linked risk of lack of buy in from potential stakeholders for pilot projects. This would have the effect of raising the risk level for this component to at least medium risk. In the case of the population of herders and other pasture users the PIF does not present reasons why the risk may not be high (=substantial) regarding lack of buy-in achieved either for pilot projects or for implementation of best practices resulting.

7. Also not mentioned in the risk table is the question of stakeholder buy-in which, if ineffective, will likely result in little engagement of civil society and the wished-for change of behaviour regarding land and water use. The present Russia-Kazakhstan Intergovernmental Commission for Joint Use and Protection of Transboundary Water Basin has been criticized in the past for not making its deliberations public, which may present a barrier not dealt with in the PIF.

8. Together these are severe risks and STAP therefore advise that the project preparation phase should put a strong focus on foundational activities (component 2) and building the knowledge (component 1) and less of a focus on pilot activities. Investment oriented activities would be important but could follow after the institutional aspects have been clarified and adequate buy in to cooperation is demonstrated.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
<b>1. Consent</b>	<p>STAP acknowledges that on scientific or technical grounds the concept has merit. However, STAP may state its views on the concept emphasizing any issues where the project could be improved.</p> <p>Follow up: The GEF Agency is invited to approach STAP for advice during the development of the project prior to submission of the final document for CEO endorsement.</p>
<b>2. Minor revision required.</b>	<p>STAP has identified specific scientific or technical challenges, omissions or opportunities that should be addressed by the project proponents during project development.</p> <p>Follow up: One or more options are open to STAP and the GEF Agency:            (i) GEF Agency should discuss the issues with STAP to clarify them and possible solutions.            (ii) In its request for CEO endorsement, the GEF Agency will report on actions taken in response to STAP's recommended actions.</p>
<b>3. Major revision required</b>	<p>STAP has identified significant scientific or technical challenges or omissions in the PIF and recommends significant improvements to project design.</p> <p>Follow-up:            (i) The Agency should request that the project undergo a STAP review prior to CEO endorsement, at a point in time when the particular scientific or technical issue is sufficiently developed to be reviewed, or as agreed between the Agency and STAP.            (ii) In its request for CEO endorsement, the Agency will report on actions taken in response to STAP concerns.</p>