

# 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 02, 2014

Screener: Douglas Taylor

Panel member validation by: Jakob Granit  
Consultant(s):

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

**FULL SIZE PROJECT    GEF TRUST FUND**

**GEF PROJECT ID:** 5538

**PROJECT DURATION :** 5

**COUNTRIES :** Regional (China, Indonesia, Cambodia, Philippines, Vietnam)

**PROJECT TITLE:** Implementing the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea

**GEF AGENCIES:** UNEP

**OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:** Secretariat for the Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA)

**GEF FOCAL AREA:** International Waters

### 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. STAP welcomes in principle this proposal to implement the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea but is concerned about the regional governance gaps identified in the PIF (see further below). STAP recognizes at the same time the comprehensive set of targets declared for ecosystems addressed under the SAP, which will be essential for monitoring and evaluation purposes. The provision of GEBs related to the South China Sea is a critical issue for the GEF to continue invest in. Hence, from a natural science perspective STAP, with some minor exceptions, does not have substantive comments to make and agrees that the project design is compatible with the previously published SAP.

2. From social sciences perspective, however, STAP is concerned about the longer term sustainability of the investment. The 2008 SAP has not been approved by the littoral countries participating in the SAP process. STAP refers to the findings and recommendations in the 2012 GEF Impact Evaluation of the GEF in the South China Sea and adjacent areas and notes that issues raised in this evaluation are only to a very limited degree considered in the PIF. Specifically this relates to what is noted as the "Reluctance of countries to support initiatives addressing regional transboundary environmental concerns and global environmental benefits" and the "Differences in extent of country support for environmental multilateral mechanisms, and currently heavy dependence of regional environmental mechanisms on donor funding, including GEF support". STAP agrees with the recommendation in the evaluation report that GEF "should more clearly define the role and linkages of regional mechanism/s in the context of its broader regional strategy, and ensure country and donor commitments to increasing levels of co-financing to cover the full costs of regional services by the end of the next phase of support."

3. In the context of this proposal and the subsequent project preparation phase it would mean a careful an in-depth approach to assessing the regional ownership of a cooperative approach as outlined in the SAP and to explore how it could be further built and supported. STAP refers to the STAP issues paper "The Political Economy of Regionalism: The Relevance for International Waters and the Global Environment Facility" (in print) and its three key findings that are relevant during project preparation. The first finding identifies the need to engage with stakeholders to explore how a GEF intervention could synchronize national and regional concerns, incentives and benefits to create a buy in at both the national and regional levels for cooperation. To do to this the preparation phase should undertake a regional governance baseline

analysis that assesses the regional institutional frameworks and how they best could deliver GEBs. It will be critical to understand the regional political and economic context when designing the intervention.

4. STAP notes that the risk table in the PIF is not comprehensive and in particular omits to assess the risk that the Memorandum of Understanding concerning co-ordination of actions undertaken to implement the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea will NOT be signed at Ministerial level during the PPG phase. Further the reluctance to engage in initiatives involving ecosystems in disputed areas is another risk to be considered.

5. A key objective of the proposed project would in STAP's view not be to update the current TDA and SAP but rather to focus on facilitating regional and national level integration and cooperation (component 3) and knowledge based learning (component 2). Investment oriented activities as noted in component 1 could be supported as part of the current implementation of the NAPs and co-financing for those implementation activities be clearly identified so that the GEF finances the incremental costs.

6. From a technical perspective spatial planning is included as an element of the above-mentioned fish refugia project, but is not mentioned within the present PIF, presumably because the SAP, published in 2008, did not deal with the issue beyond its use in engagement of the fishing community. However, STAP advises that the proposed project should take on board the opportunity to apply marine spatial planning (MSP), for example under Component 3, at a strategic level in each participating country to foster inter-ministerial collaboration over geo-spatial issues beyond fisheries and also on the agenda for Component 2 to have MSP inform the work on total economic valuation of coastal systems.

References:

GEF (Global Environment Facility) (2012) Impact Evaluation of the GEF in the South China Sea and Adjacent Areas. Washington, D.C.: Evaluation Office, Global Environment Facility.

Schneiderbaum, F., & Granit, J. (2014). The Political Economy of Regionalism: The Relevance for International Waters and the Global Environment Facility: A STAP Issues Paper. Global Environment Facility, Washington, D.C.

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of GEF (2012). Marine Spatial Planning in the Context of the Convention on Biological Diversity: A study carried out in response to CBD COP 10 decision X/29, Montreal, Technical Series No. 68, 44 pages.

<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>