

O'ZBEKISTON RESPUBLIKASI
TABIATNI MUHOFAZA QILISH
DAVLAT QO'MITASI



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Date:	09 AUG 2005
From:	STATE COMMITTEE FOR NATURE PROTECTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN
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08 August 2005

To: **Mr. Delfin J. Ganapin,**
Global Manager,
GEF Small Grants Programme

CC: **Fikret Akcura**
UNDP Resident Representative in Uzbekistan

Subject: Letter of Interest for participation of Uzbekistan in the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP).

Dear Mr. Ganapin,

I am writing in my capacity as the Chairperson of the State Committee for Nature Protection of Uzbekistan, the leading state authority in charge of environment, and on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan by this letter I would like to kindly request to consider Uzbekistan for participation in the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP). We are sincerely interested to host this Programme in Uzbekistan, fully aware of its implementation modalities and accept to participate in it under the Programme's principles and procedures. Following you will find selected features that we believe allow Uzbekistan to use the SGP in fulfilling its obligations under the environmental conventions.

Uzbekistan is a signatory of the major UN Environmental Conventions, namely the Framework Convention on Climate Change (accession on June 20, 1993) and Kyoto Protocol to the convention (accessed on August 20, 1999), Convention on Biological Diversity (entered into force in Uzbekistan on October 17, 1995), Convention to Combat Desertification (ratified on August 31, 1995), and others.

Because of the wide spread damaging agricultural practices and overexploitation of the biological resources, many natural ecosystems are seriously modified, habitats are heavily fragmented and isolated. This significantly affects their sustainability and the very existence. As a response to the commitments to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Uzbekistan, with the support from GEF and UNDP, developed and is currently implementing National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (entered into force on April 1, 1998). At this stage, the Government of Uzbekistan in cooperation with UNDP as an Implementing Agency, and with support from GEF, launched Assessment of Priority National Capacity Development needs for Implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and Establishment of Clearing House Mechanism Structures. Additionally other GEF supported projects are underway assisting Uzbekistan to protect globally significant biodiversity.

The economy of Uzbekistan and its energy sector is largely dependant on carbon-based fuels. Only 13% of the total energy in Uzbekistan is generated by a clear energy resource – hydropower. The

emissions of the energy sector to the atmosphere of Uzbekistan accounted for 119 million tons of carbon dioxide alone in 2000. In conformity with its obligations under the Framework Convention on Climate Change, Uzbekistan undertakes serious steps to address the problems of climate change. Much has been done by donor community to start implementation of Clean Development Mechanism projects in Uzbekistan but yet we need to accelerate this process even more. The Government of Uzbekistan has implemented a number of projects to develop and up-scale utilization of renewable energy with support of UNDP, ADB and other donors. Presently we are aware that UNDP strives to undertake a GEF-supported initiative on development of the National Strategy and Action Plan on Renewable Energy.

Most of the territory in Uzbekistan is covered by deserts and semi-deserts. The desiccation of the Aral Sea and land degradation resulting from damaging agricultural practices even more exacerbate a problem of desertification, soils and water salinization, erosion and reduction of soils productivity and the rural population of Uzbekistan is particularly exposed to its consequences. Uzbekistan ratified the Convention to Combat Desertification and Deforestation and attempts to comprehensively address the problem of land degradation in the country. A number of projects are implemented with support of ADB, GTZ and other donors. UNDP is also currently developing a proposal for GEF MSP related to sustainable land use and management.

To better address existing environmental problems, a great importance is now placed on closer work with local communities and civil sector. In the course of various projects and programmes implemented in Uzbekistan by UNDP in cooperation with the Government, local population becomes more aware of and deeper involved in processes of creation of sustainable livelihood mechanisms, which helps reconciling interests of environment protection and local development.

The results of another GEF-supported project "National Capacity needs Self Assessment" will identify existing strengths and weaknesses in national capacity to meet obligations under global environmental conventions and will develop an action plan on the following steps that need to be taken to deeper streamline environmental concerns into national development policy.

The community of environmental NGOs is steadily developing in Uzbekistan. More local communities are being involved into environmental initiatives around the country. The Government of Uzbekistan fully realizes that to widen positive environmental benefits that are aimed at during implementation of the existing GEF-supported projects in the country, the experience and best practices of the latter should be up-scaled through broader involvement of local communities and NGOs. A number of NGOs and CBOs carry out solid work in environmental education, advocating for sustainable development, monitoring of the status of the environment and other areas. In 2004 at the initiative of the environmental NGOs and the State Committee for Nature Protection of Uzbekistan a forum of environmental organizations "Ecoforum" was established. The forum brings together all active NGOs and community based organizations, which are concerned with environmental situation in the country and are enthusiastic about making a real change. Involvement of the leading governmental agency responsible for environmental protection in the work of the environmental NGOs association clearly demonstrates commitment of the Government to further strengthen the movement for sustainable development in Uzbekistan.

UNDP, WB, the European Union, USAID, Swiss Development Cooperation and other donors encourage the development of community-based organizations and their cooperation with the national and local governments. UNDP supports CBOs in Uzbekistan through its programmes such as "Enhancement of Living Standards" and "Sustainable Income Generation". So does World Bank and other donors through various initiatives. Recently established National Charity Fund for Protection of the Genetic Pool of the Aral Sea region becomes very proactive in supporting environmental initiatives in the northwest part of Uzbekistan. Availability of GEF's Small Grants Programme in Uzbekistan will further stimulate and promote conservation of globally significant biodiversity, sustainable use of biological and other natural resources, energy efficiency and renewable energy development, soil and water resources protection, etc.

We strongly believe that the presence of the SGP in Uzbekistan will help to provide local population

with a better chance to improve environmental situation in their localities and promote sustainable utilization of natural resources at the same time delivering global environmental benefits. I sincerely hope that you will give the request of Uzbekistan to host the GEF Small Grants Programme your highest consideration.

Many thanks in advance for your support.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Bory Alikhanov
Chairman of the State Committee for Nature
Protection of Uzbekistan/GEF Political Focal Point
in Uzbekistan