



UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System of Turkmenistan

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Report of the Mid-term Evaluation Mission

December 2012

Dr. Phillip Edwards

Acknowledgements

This is not really the work of the Mid-term Evaluator but that of all the staff and people connected with the Protected Area System Project who gave freely of their time and ideas to make the evaluation process a success. There are far too many people to mention by name – and hopefully everyone who contributed is included in the lists of names annexed to this report – but special mention must be made of the Project's Component Manager, Djemshid Khadjiyev, who gave unstintingly of his time in coordinating the provision of much of the information that I required; and Shirin Karryeva who accompanied me during the field mission, and between them answered every question I asked and discussed the points I took every opportunity to raise. Larissa Pavluhina and her team were responsible for either organising or coordinating all of the in-country logistics and thanks to her the whole evaluation process ran like clockwork. I would also like to thank Mrs. Zohre Ovezliyeva without whose considerable skills in English, Russian and Turkmen much of this would not have been possible. All also helped ensure that my everyday welfare was well taken care of, and their many kindnesses have been very much appreciated. The UNDP-CO Resident Representative, Ms. Jacinta Barrins, also shared significant insights and provided a ready and discerning ear to bounce ideas off – her support was most welcome.

Following completion of the Draft Report on 23rd November 2012, review comments were received from the UNDP-CO on 17th December 2012. These comments have either been included into the revised text where these related to factual inaccuracies in the draft, or have been reproduced in full and unedited as footnotes to the appropriate text to ensure a fair and transparent hearing to all parties. The Mid-term Evaluator has made responses to some of these comments. The reviewers are thanked sincerely for their efforts and insights which have undoubtedly improved this final report.

The views expressed in this report are intended to offer an overview of, and some of the lessons learned from, the PAS Project at its mid-point. I have tried to balance my thoughts and offer fair perspectives of what was observed and learned from people far more knowledgeable about the Project than I will ever be. My sincere apologies in advance if anyone should take anything written to be anything other than constructive criticism.

And finally, one of the delights of this sort of work remains that of visiting new and extremely welcoming countries and going home again having made new friends (and in this case renewing some old ones), seen new things, and witnessed with great admiration the dedication and enthusiasm that so many people bring to their work in conserving the important places of the world. I would like to thank them and wish them every success in their continuing endeavours.

Phillip Edwards
Steart, Somerset, England.

19th December 2012

ACRONYMS AND TERMS

Currency of Turkmenistan is the manat. At the time of the terminal evaluation, US\$ 1 = 2.84 Manat.

| | |
|---------|--|
| CO | Country Office |
| et seq. | and sequence (and the following) |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility |
| ha | Hectare(s) |
| ITA | International Technical Advisor |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| METT | Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool |
| MNP | Ministry for Nature Protection |
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| MTE | Mid-term Evaluation/Evaluator |
| NPC | National Project Coordinator |
| PA | Protected Area |
| PAS | Protected Area System |
| PASP | Protected Area System Plan |
| PB | Project Board |
| PIR | Project Implementation Report |
| PIU | Project Implementation Unit |
| PO | Project Office |
| RSPB | Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK) |
| RTA | Regional Technical Advisor |
| TA | Technical Advisor |
| ToR | Terms of Reference |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNDP-CO | UNDP-Country Office |
| US\$ | United States Dollar |

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

| Criterion | Rating | | | | | | Comments |
|---|--------|---|----|----|---|----|---|
| | HS | S | MS | MU | U | HU | |
| PROJECT FORMULATION | | | | | | | |
| Conceptualisation/Design | | | ■ | | | | |
| Stakeholder participation | | | | ■ | | | |
| PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION | | | | | | | |
| Implementation approach | | | | | | ■ | Woeful. See Key Issues in Executive Summary. |
| The use of the logical framework | | | | | | ■ | Logframe revised in inception workshop and agreed but changes never passed on to the NPM when she was recruited and mistake never identified or rectified by anyone involved. |
| Adaptive management | | | | | ■ | | Little evidence of adaptive management having taken place – recruitment of the ITA being about the only case. |
| Use/establishment of information technologies | | | ■ | | | | Good website design. ICT Specialist aware and competent. |
| Operational relationships between the institutions involved | | | | | ■ | | Poor – ownership of Project resides almost solely with UNDP. Some bureaucratic difficulties have arisen over obtaining necessary information but these seem to have been rectified. |
| Technical capacities | | ■ | | | | | Originally very poor. However, current team is good with excellent Technical Advisor now in place supported by outstanding ITA. |
| Monitoring and evaluation | | | | | ■ | | Poor. Basic reporting undertaken but no attention to details that would have shown wrong logframe being used. No use of risk log. Poor follow-up actions. |
| Stakeholder participation | | | ■ | | | | Full consultations with local administrations and local communities. Too little interaction with MNP. |
| Production and dissemination of information | | | | ■ | | | Little produced. New website still under construction looks good and is informative. A few brochures produced. PR group is currently developing a full package of material so things expected to improve. |
| Local resource users and NGOs participation | | | ■ | | | | See stakeholder participation. |
| Establishment of partnerships | | | | | ■ | | Events have conspired to thwart intended partnerships with Succow Foundation and RSPB – no fault of the Project. |
| Involvement and support of governmental institutions | | | ■ | | | | MNP support limited, partly as a result of not being invited to participate. Support over Sumbar as a National Park has wavered but is now firm. Strong support in passing new law. |
| PROJECT RESULTS | | | | | | | |
| Attainment of Outcomes/ Achievement of objective | | | | | | ■ | With exception of new Law on Protected Areas, nothing tangible achieved. Some good work appears to be in progress under Outcome 1 but nothing yet delivered. |
| Achievement of objective | | | | | | | |
| Outcome 1 | | | | | ■ | | |
| Outcome 2 | | | | | | ■ | |
| OVERALL PROJECT ACHIEVEMENT & IMPACT | | | | | | | |

Note: Table format provided in consultant's ToR

KEY POINTS

Key successes – almost negligible, even more so when it has to be considered that the Project is a single month away from its intended end date, but include: development and passage of new Law on Protected Areas (2012) providing legal basis for the establishment of national parks; Working Groups established to develop a protected area system plan, to produce a detailed feasibility study for the proposed Sumbar National Park, and to produce a coordinated package of public relations materials to raise the awareness of key decision-makers and the public – in all cases these are just beginning to produce draft material; a report entitled “Review of International Examples of Protected Area Financing Mechanisms and their Applicability in the Context of Turkmenistan”; and publication of 3rd edition of the Red Data Book of Turkmenistan (but this is not an activity required by the Project Document).

Key problem areas – management by the UNDP-CO has been extremely poor with poor decisions made over the appointment of a NPM, inadequate support to the Project Office, negligence in ensuring the correct version of the logframe has been used; operation of a recruitment system that is not fit for purpose; accounting errors; and insufficient internal and external communication; almost no progress made towards Project outputs until the second half of 2012; inadequate technical understanding both in the UNDP-CO and of the initial NPM to manage a project where the interplay between processes is crucial to its success; and recruitment of an ITA to guide the Project strategically, yet repeatedly ignoring his advice or failing to implement his recommendations.

The Mid-term Evaluation (MTE) of the Project was conducted over a period of 22 days between 30th October and 23rd November 2012 by a single international consultant. It was carried out well behind schedule, 38 months into a 40-month Project. The Evaluation’s ToR is given in [Annex I](#), its itinerary in [Annex II](#) and the list of people interviewed in [Annex III](#). A list of indicators, their end of Project achievement level, together with performance rating is given in [Annex IV](#). After receipt of comments on 17th December 2012, which have been added as footnotes to the main text, the report was finalised on 19th December 2012.

RESULTS

None of the Projects five Objective Indicators have yet been met.

Output 1.1: Protected Areas System Plan – Unsatisfactory. A Protected Area System Plan (PASP) Working Group has been formed and is due to report in December 2012. An international expert produced a report “Review of International Examples of Protected Area Financing Mechanisms and their Applicability in the Context of Turkmenistan” identifying the applicability and potential of sustainable financing mechanisms.

Output 1.2: Assessments of four priority areas –Unsatisfactory. The PASP Group is drafting feasibility reports and SWOT analyses for four priority areas earmarked for expansion of transition to National Park status.

Output 1.3: Sumbar National Park established – Marginally Unsatisfactory. A new Law on Protected Areas (2012) has been drafted and endorsement received from the President which provides a legal framework for the establishment of national parks. Secondary legislation is currently being drafted. A feasibility study for Sumbar National Park is underway and another Working Group is developing a package of public relations materials to raise awareness of decisions-makers and the general public about the concept of national parks.

Output 2.1: Skills and capacity development – Highly Unsatisfactory. A small number of ad hoc training sessions has taken place but there is no structured training programme in place.

Output 2.2: Protected Areas Academy – Highly Unsatisfactory. Space has been identified in the Institute for Desert Flora and Fauna and preliminary purchases made for some necessary equipment but there has been no progress on developing a curriculum and identifying training providers.

KEY ISSUES

With the notable exception of the passage of a new Law on Protected Areas, the Project has delivered no tangible achievements at a point six weeks short of its intended finish date – a truly awful performance. Although there has been some vacillation by the Government over their support for a National Park at Sumbar, most of the responsibility for this failure has to be shouldered by the UNDP-CO which has mismanaged the implementation through a series of bad or slow decisions and lax administration that includes inadequate support to, and supervision of, the Project Office; inadequate attention to basic details – wrong logframe used, no risk log completed, mistakes in the accounts, poor monitoring and follow-up; operation of a recruitment system that is not fit for purpose; and insufficient internal and external communication, particularly with the MNP. The technical understanding of the Project within the UNDP-CO has also been low, a situation that really should have been recognised during its development, yet six months elapsed after appointing a completely inexperienced project manager before the position of ITA was advertised and an additional seven months before he was contracted. The Project has also coincided with a number of changes in the UNDP-CO that to outside eyes appear to have been mismanaged – the centralisation of project administration into a Project Implementation Unit that began in August 2011 but with no Head of Unit appointed until June 2012; reorganisation of projects' management to be under two Component Managers not hired until mid-September 2012; and all taking place without a Resident Representative in the CO between end of January and start of July 2012. The Project has also been without a Project Manager since the appointee fell ill in November 2011 (and resigned at the end of January 2012). No attempt was made to replace her – a Team Leader of a group of consultants being asked to step into the breach without recognition or salary for her increased responsibilities and then no renewal of her contract – she worked in a voluntary capacity for some seven weeks before a new contract as Technical Advisor was available; disgraceful treatment of a person who has worked hard to turn this Project around and on whose endeavours a chance for saving it may be built. It is not surprising that the option of closing the Project has been discussed, yet the MTE advocates that it is given a chance to succeed for its aims are important both for the country and for global biodiversity. There are clear signs that things are changing for the better – the Project now has a stable and properly organised management team supported by an increasingly efficient support team in the PIU; there is a new Resident Representative who is making significant improvements to the functionality of various levels of management; there are effective and high quality teams of consultants working on the Protected Area System Plan, the feasibility study for Sumbar National Park, and on a public relations package; and the Government has recently recommitted to Sumbar becoming a national park and to increasing their ownership of the Project. On the basis of this, the MTE makes a number of recommendations to be met by the end of March 2013 to extend the Project to achieve a successful conclusion. These include:

- *Place the project under remedial measures by removing it from the Environment and Energy Programme for 12 months and placing responsibility for its delivery directly under the Deputy Resident Representative;*
- *Suspension of all technical tasks after 31st December 2012 while detailed Project planning is undertaken and remedial management actions are completed;*
- *UNDP-CO to provide UNDP-GEF with a list of measures as to how the CO's recruitment processes will be streamlined and made fit for purpose;*
- *UNDP-GEF to agree to a no-cost extension of between 18 and 24 months to allow enough time for the re-constituted Project to succeed; and*
- *Constitute the Project Board with a wider membership and commit to two meetings per year to provide proper strategic oversight.*

Recommendations are listed on pages 35-36.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

1. The Monitoring and Evaluation Policy at the project level in UNDP/GEF has two overarching objectives, namely to promote accountability for the achievement of GEF objectives through the assessment of results, effectiveness, processes and performance of the partners involved in GEF activities; and to promote learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on results and lessons learned among the GEF and its partners, as basis for decision-making on policies, strategies, programme management, and projects and to improve knowledge and performance. With this in mind, this Mid-term evaluation (MTE) was initiated by UNDP Turkmenistan as the GEF Implementation Agency for the *Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System of Turkmenistan* Project to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of Project activities in relation to the stated objectives, and to produce possible recommendations on how to improve the management of the project until its completion.

2. The MTE was conducted over a period of 22 days between 30th October and 23rd November 2012 by a single international consultant. It was carried out well behind schedule, 38 months into a 40-month Project. The approach was determined by the terms of reference ([Annex I](#)) which were closely followed, via the itinerary detailed in [Annex II](#). Full details of the objectives of the MTE can be found in the TOR, but the evaluation has concentrated on assessing the concept and design of the Project; its implementation in terms of quality and timeliness of inputs, financial planning, and monitoring and evaluation; the efficiency and effectiveness of activities carried out and the objectives and outcomes achieved, as well as the likely sustainability of its results, and the involvement of stakeholders. The report was finalised on 19th December 2012 after receipt of comments on 17th December.

3. The Evaluation was conducted through the following participatory approach:

- extensive face-to-face and Skype interviews with the project management and technical support staff, including some members of the Project Board (PB). Throughout the evaluation, particular attention was paid to explaining carefully the importance of listening to stakeholders' views and in reassuring staff and stakeholders that the purpose of the evaluation was not to judge performance in order to apportion credit or blame but to measure the relative success of implementation and to determine learn lessons for the wider GEF context. The confidentiality of all interviews was stressed. Wherever possible, information collected was cross-checked between various sources to ascertain its veracity, but in some cases time limited this. A full list of people interviewed is given in [Annex III](#).
- face-to-face interviews with senior members of the Ministry for Nature Protection and the Director of Sunt-Hasardag Zapovednik, location of the proposed Sumbar National Park;
- a thorough review of project documents and other relevant texts, including the Project Document, logframe, Inception Report, and monitoring reports, such as annual progress and financial reports prepared for UNDP, GEF, annual Project Implementation Reviews (PIR), annual work plans, relevant correspondence, and other project-related material produced by the project staff or partners; and
- a field visit to the Sunt-Hasardag Zapovednik.

4. Wherever possible the MTE has tried to evaluate issues according to the criteria listed in the *UNDP-GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy*, namely:

- Relevance – the extent to which the activity is suited to local and national development priorities and organisational policies, including changes over time.
- Effectiveness – the extent to which an objective has been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved.

- Efficiency – the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible.
- Results – the positive and negative, and foreseen and unforeseen, changes to and effects produced by a development intervention. In GEF terms, results include direct project outputs, short-to medium term outcomes, and longer-term impact including global environmental benefits, replication effects and other, local effects.
- Sustainability – the likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially and socially sustainable.

5. The original logframe in the Project Document was revised and restructured during the Inception Workshop held on 20th November 2009. This logframe with two Outcomes, five Outputs, and 15 indicators has been used throughout as the basis for the this evaluation (see Annex IV), and the MTE has evaluated the Project’s performance against these according to the current six-point evaluation criteria provided to it by the GEF. This is reproduced in Table 1 for clarity.

TABLE 1: CRITERIA USED TO EVALUATE THE PROJECT BY THE FINAL EVALUATION TEAM

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Highly Satisfactory (HS) | Project is expected to achieve or exceed all its major global environmental objectives, and yield substantial global environmental benefits, without major shortcomings. The project can be presented as “good practice”. |
| Satisfactory (S) | Project is expected to achieve most of its major global environmental objectives, and yield satisfactory global environmental benefits, with only minor shortcomings. |
| Marginally Satisfactory (MS) | Project is expected to achieve most of its major relevant objectives but with either significant shortcomings or modest overall relevance. Project is expected not to achieve some of its major global environmental objectives or yield some of the expected global environment benefits. |
| Marginally Unsatisfactory (MU) | Project is expected to achieve some of its major global environmental objectives with major shortcomings or is expected to achieve only some of its major global environmental objectives. |
| Unsatisfactory (U) | Project is expected not to achieve most of its major global environment objectives or to yield any satisfactory global environmental benefits. |
| Highly Unsatisfactory (U) | The project has failed to achieve, and is not expected to achieve, any of its major global environment objectives with no worthwhile benefits. |

6. The results of the evaluation were conveyed formally through a de-briefing meeting to the Resident Representative and some staff of the UNDP-CO, and some Project members on 13th November 2012 prior to the lead evaluator’s departure from Turkmenistan.

PROJECT CONCEPT AND DESIGN

7. The concept for this Project originated from the Government of Turkmenistan/UNDP’s *Improvement of Protected Areas System in Turkmenistan (EcoNet)*¹ Project (Atlas # 15015) that was completed in 2006. This project, which planned a system of protected areas based upon a systematic analysis of Turkmenistan’s biodiversity conservation and sustainable use needs and the necessary institutional strengthening to manage such a system, highlighted the absence of, and the desirability for developing, national parks within Turkmenistan. Subsequently, with strong backing from the then Minister of Nature Protection, Mr. Makhtumkuly Akmuradov, feasibility studies were carried out by Russian consultants at three sites. Neither these, nor the suggested enabling amendments to the Law on protected areas, were immediately acceptable to the Government, and the process slowed and then

¹ Not to be confused with the regional GEF-funded medium-sized project “*Development of the Econet for Long-term Conservation of Biodiversity in the Central Asia Ecoregions*” (ECONET) (No GF/2010-03-03) implemented by UNEP and executed by World Wide Fund for Nature’s Russian Programme Office.

halted with the change in Government resulting from the death of the former President Niyazov. The idea was resuscitated with GEF support in 2007 and a concept note was submitted in 2007. The Project entered the GEF pipeline in June 2008 with the approval of the Project Identification Form (PIF), and the Project Document and associated papers were prepared with a PDF-B grant in 2008-09. These were approved at the Local Project Approval Committee meeting on 22nd July 2009 and endorsement by the GEF CEO followed in the same month as a Medium-sized Project as part of Strategic Objective Biodiversity #1 Catalysing the Sustainability of Protected Area (PA) Systems and in keeping with Strategic Programme (SP) 3: Strengthening Terrestrial PA Networks and SP 1: Sustainable Financing of PA Systems at the National Level of the GEF Business Plan.

8. The Project itself is functional and typical of many similar projects designed at the time with an emphasis on expanding the existing protected area system to improve its representation and coverage, improving the institutional frameworks and individual capacity to enable adequate management of the expanded system, and development of a pilot site to demonstrate some new aspect of protected area management – in this case development and establishment of Turkmenistan’s first national park. The Project Document is generally argued coherently and is well written in places. However, there are a number of key flaws in the design that have had a major detrimental impact on its subsequent implementation. These include:

- No explicit agreement to establish Sambar as the first national park: While the general policy framework points to Sumbar as the most likely site for a national park, especially in light of the Presidential Decree “*On National Environmental Action Plan of President of Turkmenistan Saparmurat Turkmenbashi*” (N^o. 6007 of December 2, 2002) (see paragraph 58), there is nothing in the Project Document, which is a signed contract between GEF and the Government, explicitly stating that Sumbar will be the agreed pilot site. While the MTE agrees that such a statement would be unusual, unfortunately in this case, its absence has had consequences for the implementation of the Project so far (see paragraph 23).
- Over-ambition: Changing legislation for whatever reason takes time, and lots of it. In a country where decision-making is as centralised as it is in Turkmenistan, without the patronage of the President or one of his very close advisors, amending existing laws and introducing new concepts into the law is going to be a long and involved affair and, crucially, largely outside of the Project’s control. To expect this to be possible within three years is naïve and contrary to experience from the region available at the time of the Project’s design – the *Establishment of Nuratau-Kyzylkum Biosphere Reserve*” project (PIMS #1271) in neighbouring Uzbekistan failed to achieve its aim of establishing that country’s first Biosphere Reserve in a four-year period (2003-2007); the mid-term evaluation of the “*Conservation of Tugai Forest and Strengthening Protected Areas System in the Amu Darya Delta of Karakalpakstan*” (PIMS # 2109) also in Uzbekistan undertaken in 2008 also pointed to the fact that this five-year project would struggle to achieve a similar designation². Given the vacillation of the Government, the weakness of the Ministry of Nature Protection, and the absence of its Minister championing its cause, three years becomes hopelessly optimistic unless one or more of these factors changes or the President or one of his closest advisors can be persuaded to support the cause.
- Lack of capacity: It is well known in Turkmenistan that the pool of national expertise is both small in terms of individuals and limited in both scope and depth of knowledge. The Project Document even lists

“Poor systemic, institutional and individual capacities for protected areas planning, management and financing”

as the second long-term barrier to the proposed

“reconfigured system of protected areas that is designed to protect a representative sample of Turkmenistan’s biodiversity under an effective and adaptive management regime”.

² In fact it eventually did, but outside of its allotted time span.

Yet these limitations appear to have been ignored in the design for the Project's implementation. On one level there is no experience of the issues surrounding the establishment of national parks because the whole concept is without precedence in the country, so it seems strange that implementation was designed to be solely through national expertise when clearly the situation was ripe for an International Technical Advisor – something subsequently deemed to be necessary. On another level, given the generally low capacity levels of the MNP and local government and the need for multiple new ideas to be introduced, no allowance has been made for this in regard to the overall duration of the Project – three years being particularly short in such circumstances and even more so in a country with a very strong bureaucracy.

Logical Framework and Revisions

9. The logical framework was generally adequate and uncomplicated, with an agreeable number of indicators, and since the timeframe for the Project's formulation had been relatively rapid, the Project Document and logframe were believed to have been effectively up-to-date and not in need of major reorganisation to meet a changed enabling environment. However, the Inception Report notes that:

“The most significant weakness is that the link between the threats and barriers ... and the Objective and Outcomes as in the Logframe, is not very strong or direct. Not all the Indicators satisfy the SMART³ criteria, in particular some are not entirely Specific to the respective Outcome ... Some of the Baselines are not entirely clear and ... all Targets are as at End of Project – there are no milestones or timelines to measure progress.”

As a result, during the Inception Workshop, the Outputs and Activities were restructured to make Outcome 1 more coherent and comprehensive while focussing Outcome 2 on capacity building, in the process adding a new Output 2.2 dealing with a training centre for PA planning, management and operations. The new logframe was revised to reflect the improved logic of this approach and a number of changes made to the indicators, deleting some and making a number of others more SMART. Unfortunately, for reasons discussed below the revised logframe was not actually used subsequently by the Project due to mistakes (see paragraph 20, second main bullet).

10. The following are the key objectives formulated under the Project's revised logframe and these have been used throughout this evaluation as the basis for assessment (see also [Annex IV](#)):

Objective

To create an enabling environment for the establishment of a functional, effective and ecologically coherent system of Protected Areas

Outcome 1

Expanded Protected Area System to improve PA representation and coverage.

Outcome 2

Adequate institutional and individual capacity is in place for the management of the PAS.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

11. UNDP signed the Project Document with the Government of Turkmenistan on 20th August 2009, thereby commencing the Project, yet the PIR indicates that first disbursements were not made until March 2010, a full six months later. A UNDP-GEF Project inception workshop was organised and held on 20th November 2009 and a final Inception Report produced in February 2010.

³ “Good Indicators must possess certain qualities – they must be: **Specific, Measurable, Achievable + Attributable, Relevant, Timely + Targeted.** In English, the first initial of each of these qualities, taken in sequence, spells SMART. However, this acronym is lost in translation”.

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

12. The Project has been executed in accordance with the standard rules and procedures of the UNDP National Implementation Modality but with direct payments (thereby UNDP is acting as a business agent to provide those services). The Project's implementing partner agency is the **Ministry of Nature Protection** (MNP). UNDP has acted through the Project Document to enter into contractual arrangements with physical and legal persons on their behalf, and to make direct payments against all categories of the project budget, and to manage project funds, including budget planning, monitoring, revisions, disbursements, record keeping, reporting and auditing that all observe UNDP rules.

13. Financing contributions have been in cash from GEF (US\$ 950,000) and UNDP (US\$ 60,000); plus in-kind co-financing from the Government of Turkmenistan (US\$ 1,990,000), and parallel financing from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) (US\$ 238,400), and the Michael Suchow Foundation (US\$ 210,000) but see also paragraph 26 for further discussion of this co-funding); Total: US\$ 3,548,400.

14. The Project has worked with a range of stakeholders to differing degrees and with various levels of success. However, there is very little evidence that the primary stakeholders have been significantly involved. The MNP, the Project's implementing partner, does not appear to be involved in any meaningful way. Apart from the Deputy Minister in his role as the National Project Coordinator, there is no evidence that any staff have been deployed to work with the Project's management to learn from, or gain experience with them related to the identification, designation, or management of national parks or the wider protected area system. The Project appears to be working in isolation from the Ministry and displays no ownership. Similarly, the National Institute of Desert Fauna and Flora is little engaged; true it houses the Project's office, has supplied technical information regarding the protected area system, and one or two members of the Institute have been engaged as national experts, but it remains rather as an adjunct than being actively involved. Only the zapovedniks appear to be a participating partner, and here the MTE has only experience from Sunt-Hasardag since there was no time to visit the other reserves. Certainly the staff of Sunt-Hasardag, which will form the core of the proposed Sumbar National Park, have been engaged both as participants and direct beneficiaries, with some staff acting as consultants and the Director assisting with official arrangements for discussions with the local government authorities. The latter, the velayats⁴ and etraps, appear to have been reluctant partners; they have engaged quiet energetically and mostly enthusiastically once official bureaucratic procedures have been complied with, but remain hesitant of cooperation and giving necessary information until such authorisation has been given. Local people from the villages in and around the proposed Sumbar National Park also appear to have been engaged according to the consultants comprising the Sumbar Working Group, but the MTE came across no evidence that other Ministries or academic institutes had yet been involved. This maybe because the Project has produced so little to date that their involvement would be premature. As a result, and particularly on the basis that the MNP should be better engaged, the MTET evaluates stakeholder participation as **Marginally Unsatisfactory**.

NATIONAL LEVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Project Oversight

15. Project oversight has nominally been undertaken at the strategic level by an inter-institutional Committee, known in this Project through the application of UNDP's results-based management nomenclature as a **Project Board** (PB). The PB has been chaired by the National Project Coordinator (see next paragraph) who is the Deputy Minister of Nature Protection. The Project Document states that:

⁴ Velayat is the equivalent to a Russian Oblast or State/Region; Etrap is equivalent to a Russian Rayon or County/District.

“[The Project Board] will meet according to the necessity, but not less than once in 6 months, to review project progress, approve project work plans and approve major project deliverables. The PSC is responsible for ensuring that the project remains on course to deliver products of the required quality to meet the outcomes defined in the project document.”

In the event, the Project Board has met just once a year, on 21st June 2010, 20th May 2011, and 28th March 2012 – an inadequate frequency, especially for a project with the level of problems that this one has had. The minutes of the meetings do not reveal how long the meetings sat for. The Project Document states that the PB,

“may include in its composition representation of the following stakeholders: MNP (FFPD, NIDFF, SPNT, Environmental Service Caspekokontrol); UNDP; Makhtumkuli etrap; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Economy and Finance; Ministry of Agriculture; State Committee on Tourism and Sports; Turkmen Union of Hunters and Fishers Society; Succow Foundation; and WWF.”

but in reality the PB has been constituted much more narrowly with that in 2010 comprising just three people – the NPC and the UNDP Programme Specialist on Environment and his Assistant. In 2011 this had broadened to also include the Heads of the Departments of Flora and Fauna Protection, and coordination of international programmes, as well as UNDP’s Deputy Resident Representative. It is notable that the minutes of the 2012 meeting show that

“The Project Board members agreed on the necessity of holding the Project Board meetings twice a year with the participation of the representatives of Magtymguly etrap Hyakimlik, Director of the National Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna and Director of the Syunt-Hasardag State Reserve.”

and although another meeting is said to be planned for the end of November 2012, this still hardly comprises “not less than once in 6 months” required by the Project Document. Furthermore, while the 2011 and 2012 minutes show that there was some discussion about the poor delivery of the Project, this appeared to revolve mainly around the lack of technical specialists within the country, the Government’s vacillation over the exact nature of the Project, and the constraints imposed by the lack of a legal framework for national parks – but nothing about the delays brought about by the UNDP-CO’s bureaucracy. Strangely, a discussion on the requirement of the MNP for a taxidermist to be paid for by the Project features prominently in the minutes for 2011 and 2012.

Project Direction

16. Overall guidance and coordination of the project implementation has been the responsibility of the **National Project Coordinator** (NPC⁵), a part-time position held by Mr. Jumamurad Saparmuradov, Deputy Minister of Nature Protection. The NPC is a state employee and is an unpaid position covered by the Government’s in-kind contribution to the Project. He has been responsible for overseeing the execution of the Project on behalf of the Government, for achieving the Project’s objectives, and has been accountable to UNDP for the use of Project resources.

Project Management

17. Day-to-day implementation has been the responsibility of a **Project Office** (PO), which was housed in the National Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna in Ashgabat. The composition of the PO has been complicated and has been a cause of concern. Initially, there was a **National Project Manager** (NPM), a position filled by Ms. Jamal Hanmedova from 19th April 2010 until 29th November 2011 when she took extended sick leave, and she eventually resigned on the grounds of ill-health on 31st January 2012. Although the MTE was unable to contact Ms. Hanmedova, uncorroborated but consistent information from some interviewees suggests that part of this was on account of stress from the Project. On 25th July 2011, UNDP had appointed Ms. Shirin Karryeva as

⁵ Referred to as the National Project Director in the Project Document.

Team Leader to pull together the work of the initial expert group (see paragraph 20, first main bullet). With the absence and then resignation of Ms. Hanmedova, Ms. Karryeva was asked unofficially to take charge of the Project, but without any formal acknowledgement of her role from the UNDP-CO – she remained employed as a Team Leader on a Team Leader’s salary⁶ and with a Team Leader’s ToR; something that the Evaluator thinks is likely to be against UNDP’s rules of employment. That arrangement remained in practice until the expiry of her contract as a Team Leader on 14th September 2012 during which time the UNDP-CO made no attempt to advertise for a Project Manager, largely because of further internal organisational changes it was preparing to make. These changes involved the creation of the new posts of Component Managers – one for the Climate Resilience Development Programme (under which this Project was grouped) and one for the Low Emissions Programme – with existing Project Managers reformed as Technical Advisors⁷. During this period, the post for Team Leader had been advertised, and Ms. Karryeva was interviewed on 17th September 2012. Her contract was finally available for signature on 9th November (with an official start date of the 1st). Incredibly, during the intervening seven weeks Ms. Karryeva continued to work voluntarily without salary as Project Manager/Technical Adviser while the new Component Manager – Mr. Djemshid Khadjiyev – bedded into his new post (from 12th September). Her frustration with the delay resulted in a number of widely circulated e-mails requesting resolution of the situation in which she found herself which, while she admits was a mistake on her part, should not be used to cloud the fact that the UNDP-CO was remiss in its own actions that led to the frustration in the first place. The parallels with the Khazar Project⁸ which was without a National Project Manager or Chief Technical Advisor for the last 14 months of its life are disturbing – the only times the Evaluator has witnessed this on 20 evaluations for GEF have both been for projects involving the UNDP-CO for Turkmenistan.

18. The PO has been advised by an **International Technical Advisor**, a post held throughout by Mr. Michael Appleton but importantly only since 19th May 2011 since the position was not included originally in the Project Document but was added when it became apparent that no expertise on national parks could be contracted nationally (see paragraph 8, third bullet). The ITA provides strategic technical direction to the Project through home-based work and a number of in-country missions (three to date) and associated reports. The PO also originally comprised a full-time **Project Assistant**, a post held by Ms. Ayna Allerberdiyeva, before the UNDP-CO’s reorganisation noted above. Concurrent with the move to centralise the project management function of the Energy, Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction Portfolio, the existing Project Assistants were brought together in August 2011 and grouped into a central Project Implementation Unit (PIU) where each took on a specialised function (human resources, procurement, finance, and logistics) with a new Head of PIU joining in June 2012 to supervise them. This PIU now services all projects operating within the Portfolio.

Implementation Approach

19. The implementation of this Project has been woeful – quite the worst at the mid-term that the Evaluator has ever seen. This appears to have been brought about by the conjunction of a number of significant issues within the UNDP-CO – inadequate technical understanding and supervisory management; a bureaucratic system that has become too complex and fearful that it can no longer respond quickly to a Project’s needs; significant internal reorganisation; and a centralised Government decision-making system that can appear fickle to those having to deal with it. Common to all is poor communication.

⁶ **UNDP-CO comment:** *Shrin’s contract as Team Leader was SB5 level, which is the level used for project manager posts. This means that changing ToR and amending the contract would not lead to salary increase, which is possible only in case of re-advertisement. This was the reason for non-formal request for temporary assumption of management duties. Her current contract as NTA is SB4 level.* **MTE response:** What a strange arrangement. Why would you be paying the Team Leader of a consultancy team the same amount as a Project Manager who has a much greater responsibility; and more than National Technical Advisor who also has a much greater responsibility? Perhaps this is another area that should be reviewed.

⁷ **UNDP-CO comment:** *Functions of project manager were split between component manager and technical advisor, with CM focusing on management and NTA on planning and technical advice.*

⁸ *Conservation and Sustainable Use of Globally Significant Biological Diversity in Khazar Nature Reserve on the Caspian Sea Coast PIMS 3157 for which this Evaluator undertook the terminal evaluation.*

20. Technical and supervisory inadequacy – the UNDP-CO appointed a recent Masters-graduate with no project management experience to the role of NPM. Given the widely-acknowledged lack of technical and managerial capacity within the country, this is perfectly understandable, although apparently an experienced candidate did apply. However, in making such an appointment, it is beholden upon the UNDP-CO to provide adequate managerial support to, and technical oversight of, that NPM and in both cases the CO failed. Three key examples follow:

- Decisions were made to recruit a team of national experts to undertake the Project by simply dividing the activities detailed within the Project Document into similar-sized packages without thought or understanding about the processes required to bring about successful delivery of the Outcomes – most of the tasks required multi-stage, planned processes rather than single expert reports, and there is no evidence that either the NPM or the supervising UNDP-CO officer gave any consideration to the links needed between the tasks or the requirement for coordination between the consultants. Consultant ToRs’ largely required preparation of reports as standalone documents without integration with the work of other experts and without knowing how their tasks fitted in with others or with the whole logical structure of the project. Six-month contracts were let for processes expected to take three years to complete. As the ITA states in his first report:

“Development of ToR should have been preceded by identification of the process (and its stages) in developing a Protected Area System Plan (PASP) and creating Sumbar National Park.

The ToRs have largely been taken directly from the activities in the ProDoc; it has not been understood that activities in the ProDoc are not necessarily the same as tasks in the ToR of an individual consultant. Many of these activities are in fact processes which require sequences of activities to achieve the required outputs, including studies, consultations, negotiations etc. For example the preparation of a 5 year management plan and annual work plan for Sumbar National Park cannot be allocated just to one short term consultant; it should involve a participatory process over several months or more. Moreover this can only been done once the main parameters in the design of the Park have been established (size, area, location, main functions, legal basis, zonation, institutional arrangements etc.)”

Three examples provided by the ITA to the MTE are:

- A national expert on annual work planning was engaged to prepare a “*detailed Annual Work Plan for the first year of the National Park organisation*”, without any reference to the establishment of the national park or development of its management plan – tasks which had been allocated to other consultants.
- A national expert on SWOT analysis was engaged (among other things) to “*assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) of each PA establishment option and selecting a preferred option*”. However the ToR made no reference to what the PA establishment options were. Identification of these options was the separate task of the National Expert “*on assessment of feasibility for scaling up of priority areas*” and the two consultants were not aware of each other’s work.
- A national expert on ecotourism and monitoring was engaged with ToR that included two totally unrelated tasks requiring entirely different skills and backgrounds, namely i) identification of the role of the private and NGO sector in recreational and tourism enterprise development opportunities in protected areas; and ii) identification of the reporting requirements to monitor management effectiveness of protected areas and the protected area system.

It is not surprising that the consultants, who apparently were working in a vacuum having never had sight of the Project Document, were mystified and confused and the ensuing reports deemed valueless by the ITA after his recruitment. Yet as if this were not bad enough, once this had

been pointed out to the UNDP-CO by the ITA, the bureaucratic system required this work to be continued to completion and be signed off by the ITA in order for payments to be made to the consultants – more wasted time and money just because the contracts could not be terminated once the mistake had been recognised and admitted.

- The Inception Workshop took place before the appointment of a Project Manager, a very unusual occurrence. Normally, writing an inception report is the job of the NPM – it is after all a report of what the NPM has done during the inception period to gain a full understanding of the Project, reflect changes in the operating environment, and develop a strategy for implementation. Instead, an international consultant was hired to undertake this without any understanding of the limitations that this brings – namely that the NPM when hired will still have to go through a period of orientation/inception anyway. Yet apart from this, what is absolutely astounding is that the logframe, which was revised and agreed during the Inception Workshop with the changes recorded in the Inception Report, was never adopted by the newly-recruited NPM. Instead, the original logframe from the Project Document was used as a basis for the first annual work plan ... and has continued to be used ever since. It is baffling that she either never had sight of the Inception Report or that if she did she did not recognise the changes to the logframe that she had to adopt. While it maybe understandable that an inexperienced NPM could make such a mistake, it is wholly incomprehensible that the UNDP-CO did not recognise the mistake either immediately or subsequently – the original logframe has been used throughout the Project to date, including in the ToR for the mid-term evaluation.
- No checks have apparently been made by the UNDP-CO on the Project's accounting practices which also suggests that the quarterly expenditure reports are not being used properly to manage and oversee the Project. As will be seen below (see paragraph 25), project management costs are running at or just over budget, while disbursements on Outcomes are at 20-30% of budget. Therefore, either project management is being almost totally ineffective at delivering the Project which should have set alarm bells ringing at a very early stage (which there is no evidence for), or there are accounting errors which should have been rectified quickly (there are and they have not been).

21. Inflexible bureaucracy – the recruitment system operated by this UNDP-CO has effectively killed this Project. The issues behind it are complex and beyond this evaluation to decipher and rectify, however there is burgeoning evidence that it is not currently fit for purpose (and not only with regard to this Project since as a senior member of the MNP noted “*in the last few years all projects with UNDP go very slowly*”). Examples include:

- recruitment of the NPM took eight months (Project commenced 20th August 2009 NPM contracted 19th April 2010);
- recruitment of the ITA took seven months (application made in October 2010; appointment made 19th May 2011);
- recruitment of national experts took seven months (ITA's second report (December 2011) recommends their recruitment as “*a matter of urgency*”; contracted July 2012);
- recruitment of personnel to functional teams contracted over extended periods rather than together (e.g. PR Working Group);
- contract of Team Leader of PR Working Group not extended because selection panel queried the level of experience of her CV after she had demonstrated exemplary performance during her first incumbency in the role, leaving team leaderless at the time they need to be drawing their work together; and
- numerous instances of contracts being signed up to six weeks after the date stated on the contract, e.g. ITA appointment made 19th May 2011; contract signed end of June 2011 (which means lost time since duties often cannot be performed in the country without an official contract).

A more complex example, but one that again resulted in the prevention of the required work involves the GIS Expert. This Expert was contracted for six months on 1st January 2012 to develop the maps necessary for the Protected Area System Plan (PASP). The contract was available for signature on 7th February 2012 (six weeks lost). The Project budget was not yet open because of delays with the Annual Work Plan, so he borrowed money from other experts to travel. When the Project budget was opened in May, it became apparent that the total amount of travel expenses would exceed the US\$ 400 maximum limit applied to a Request for Services and that a driver would need to be hired. The tender for the driver was issued on 6th June and the driver was finally hired ... after the GIS Expert's contract had expired. An extension was requested for the Expert and he was re-hired on 12th September. Two months later the driver's contract expired on 9th November and this now needs an extension. The Component Manager is delaying signing the authorisation of the extension until he receives a report from the Expert to say what he has done to date. While this last example cannot be laid completely at the door of the recruitment process, it does illustrate the consequences of an inflexible system exacerbated by inadequate planning and anticipation from the Project's management.

22. Internal reorganisation – the UNDP-CO has undergone a number of significant changes during the lifetime of the Project, most notably the reorganisation of the Environment and Energy Programme to consolidate and centralise the management of projects (see paragraph 17). This has undoubtedly been time-consuming and disruptive, both to the UNDP-CO and those involved in the Project. That such reorganisation coincided with the period between one Resident Representative leaving (end January 2012) and the next arriving (start July 2012) is at best an unfortunate coincidence; the evaluator wonders whether delaying such major changes to the arrival of the new senior management team to ensure concurrency with their ideas might not have been more beneficial – again perhaps another illustration of the lack of forward planning and anticipation that seems to characterise this CO. The consequence is that roles and responsibilities of new posts have not been defined clearly. Gaps are present and duplications apparent, both of which have led to certain crucial areas of management or tasks relating to the Project not being identified and hence not being undertaken, leading to yet more delays. Communication remains poor at many levels since although there appears to be mass circulation of e-mails within the office, a) such communication informs only but does not identify responsibilities for follow-up actions; and b) communication with partners remains poor – both the MNP and UNDP-GEF in Bratislava complained of not being informed about many issues⁹.

23. Government vacillation – as indicated above (see paragraph 8), the Project Document did not directly identify Sumbar as the priority site for the first National Park. Since Project commencement it is clear (particularly from the ITA's three reports) that the Government has wavered between a number of options – a National Park in Sumbar (based on Sunt-Hasgardag); a National Park in Archabil (based on Central Kopetdag); a World Heritage site nomination for Kugitang; and a World Heritage nomination and management plan for Badhyz. The uncertainty generated by this situation resulted in confusion with resources being split between a number of initiatives, and a danger that through competition with each other that none would be implemented fully. Inevitably such confusion caused delays.

24. The result of all this is that, with one notable exception (the passage of the new Law on Protected Areas 2012), it is very difficult to determine any substantive delivery. Although there has been an increase in activity since July 2012 and three Working Groups have been formed (see paragraphs 40, 44, and 45), and the new Resident Representative has made significant efforts to rectify deficiencies in the UNDP-CO, on the evidence to date, the implementation approach is evaluated as Highly Unsatisfactory (but see also paragraph 52).

⁹ **UNDP-CO comment:** RTA was regularly informed about the project issues, mostly through telecommunication and in some face-to-face meetings with project staff. **MTE response:** Not according to the RTA when he was interviewed, nor in subsequent e-mails!

Project Progress and Financial Assessment

25. Total disbursement of funds to the end of October 2012 (the most recent figures available to the MTE) amounted to US\$ 384,228 (see Table 2). If Project spending can be taken as a crude measure of the progress of implementation, then the view already opined, that the Project is achieving little of the progress originally envisaged, is reinforced since this sum represents only 38.0% of the total budget projected in the Project Document, with 94.4% of the Project period elapsed (34 out of 36 months). Table 2 also shows that total spending on both of the Outcomes is substantially less than this, with that on Outcome 1 being 33.4% and that on Outcome 2 of just 21.6%. However, and significantly, project management costs remain high at 82.9% but with those from GEF funds at 111.2%. There are two possible explanations of this – a) that management effort has been at the levels expected but has delivered little of the outputs expected; and b) that some costs have been misallocated from outcomes to Project Management. While the former is the main explanation (see the section on Project Results below), a quick perusal of the more detailed accounts also showed many examples of the latter.

TABLE 2: TOTAL DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS BY OUTCOME BY SOURCE TO 31ST OCTOBER 2012 (US\$) AGAINST TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET AS IN THE PROJECT DOCUMENT (FIGURES ROUNDED)

| | GEF | | | UNDP | | | TOTAL | | |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| | Budget | Actual | % | Budget | Actual | % | Budget | Actual | % |
| Outcome 1 | 601,500 | 200,545 | 33.34 | 0 | 512 | + | 601,500 | 201,057 | 33.43 |
| Outcome 2 | 253,500 | 54,699 | 21.58 | 0 | 13 | + | 253,500 | 54,712 | 21.58 |
| Proj. Man. | 95,000 | 105,624 | 111.18 | 60,000 | 22,835 | 38.06 | 155,000 | 128,459 | 82.88 |
| TOTAL | 950,00 | 360,868 | 37.99 | 60,000 | 23,360 | 38.93 | 1,010,000 | 384,228 | 38.04 |

SOURCE: UNDP from Atlas. Note, it is outside the scope of the MTE to independently verify the financial figures contained in any of the tables and figures presented here through an audit.

26. Analysis of Government co-funding has not been able to be included since although the Project Document shows US\$ 590,000 to be cash and US\$ 1.4 million as in-kind, in fact none of the former has been provided in cash form (and certainly not through the Project's accounts). It is further understood that the original calculations assumed this "cash" co-funding would take the form of rent foregone for office space and similar; yet the MTE has always understood that this was in-kind co-funding. Of the other co-funding (Michael Suchow Foundation), there are no records of co-funding being received or spent, and any contributions to the Project are therefore assumed to be parallel financing and un-traceable through ATLAS; and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' (RSPB) contribution was always identified as parallel funding. Curiously, the Project Document makes no mention of this, except on the last page in the final financial summary table. The MTE understands that it was to be provided through synergies provided through parallel activities on Important Bird Areas (capacity building for identification, designation, management, and monitoring), for RSPB staff time, and funds for equipment. With the inability of this Project to begin meaningful work in 2010 and the expiry of the RSPB's MoU with the Government at the end of that year, such parallel funding was never used. The RSPB has indicated that should they be successful in signing another MoU at the end of 2012, and should this Project continue beyond that time, similar opportunities for cooperation and parallel financing are likely to be possible.

27. Table 3 gives the figures for the disbursement of GEF funds by Outcome against budget in each of the years as per the Project Document. Figure 1 illustrates these figures showing the actual amount disbursed in each period by Outcome, and Figure 2 shows the cumulative percentage of the budget disbursed. These Figures illustrate a number of points, that:

- a) the common pattern of slow spending at the start of the Project is prolonged here to about 18 months;
- b) work when it did begin in 2011 concentrated on Outcome 1 (the abortive contracts to the initial group of consultants (see paragraph 20, first main bullet), but then has decreased sharply;

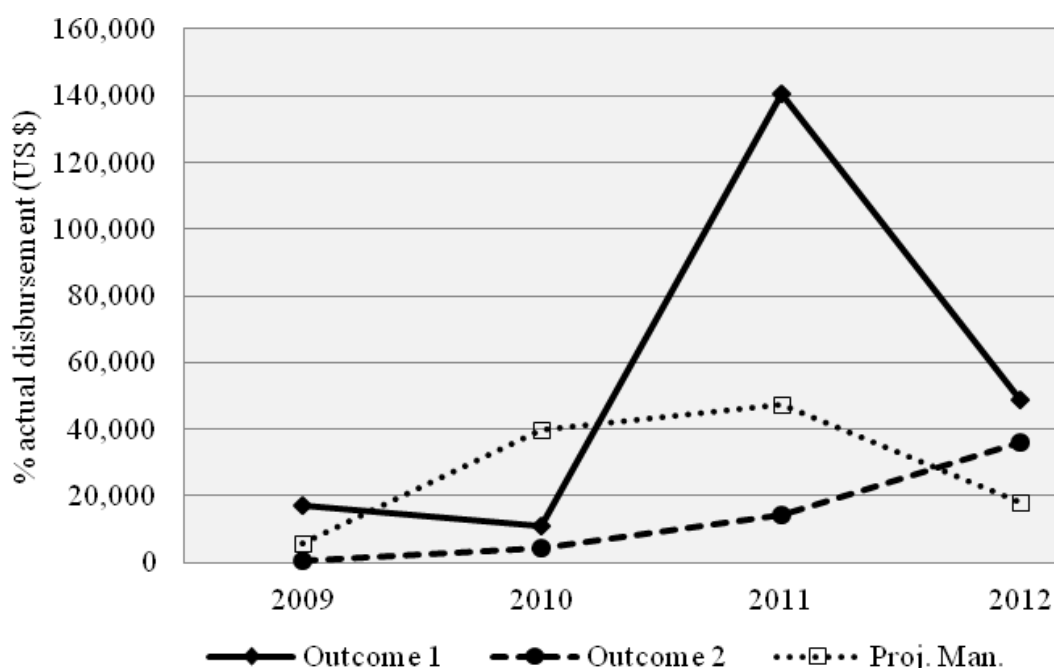
- c) work on Outcome 2 has been effectively ignored; and
- d) project management costs appear to be running at or slightly above budget (but see paragraph 25);

TABLE 3: TOTAL DISBURSEMENT OF GEF FUNDS (US\$) BY OUTCOME BY YEAR AGAINST BUDGET AS IN THE PROJECT DOCUMENT

| | 2009 | | | 2010 | | | 2011 | | | 2012 | | |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| | Budget | Actual | % | Budget | Actual | % | Budget | Actual | % | Budget | Actual† | % |
| Outcome 1 | 19,296 | 17,287 | 89.59 | 88,000 | 10,924 | 12.41 | 249,300 | 140,612 | 56.40 | 171,600 | 49,009 | 28.56 |
| Outcome 2 | 2,520 | 528 | 20.95 | 22,315 | 4,517 | 20.24 | 91,600 | 14,244 | 15.55 | 149,700 | 35,938 | 24.01 |
| Proj. Man. | 17,329 | 5,616 | 32.41 | 28,325 | 39,929 | 140.97 | 50,500 | 47,571 | 94.20 | 33,500 | 18,124 | 54.10 |
| Total | 39,145 | 23,431 | 59.86 | 138,640 | 55,370 | 39.94 | 391,400 | 202,427 | 51.72 | 354,800 | 103,071 | 29.05 |

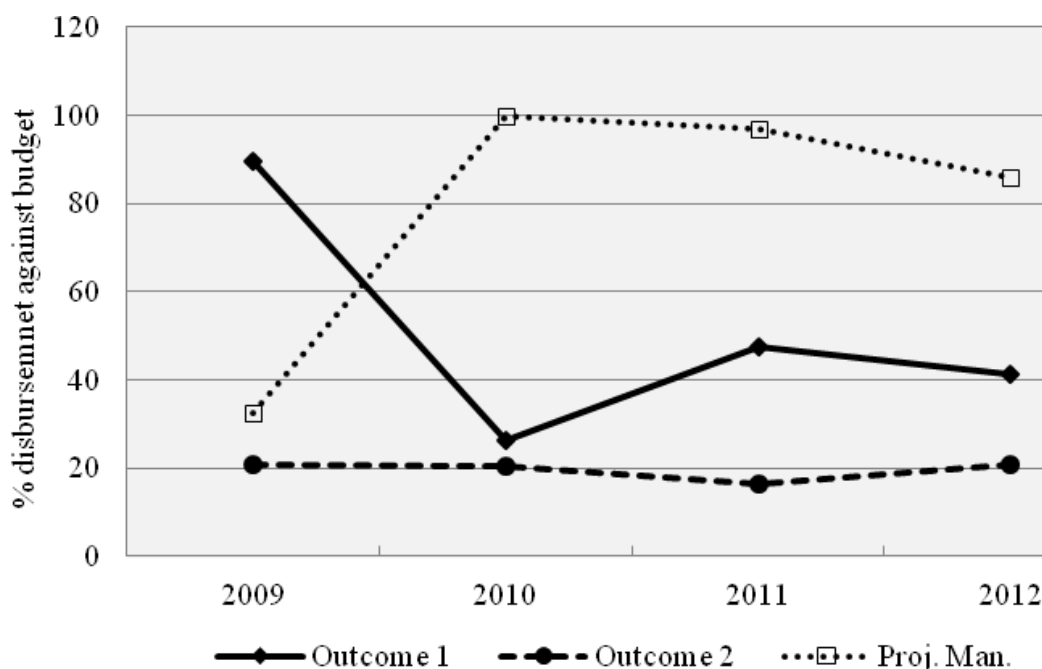
SOURCE: UNDP from Atlas. †: figures for 2012 actual are to 31st October only, while 2012 budget is to year end.

FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE DISBURSEMENT OF GEF FUNDS (US\$) BY OUTCOME BY YEAR AGAINST BUDGET AS PER PROJECT DOCUMENT



SOURCE: PMO/UNDP from Atlas.

FIGURE 2: CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE DISBURSEMENT OF GEF FUNDS (US\$) BY OUTCOME BY YEAR AGAINST BUDGET AS PER PROJECT DOCUMENT



SOURCE: PMO/UNDP from Atlas.

Cost effectiveness

28. This is generally poor – high costs and low results with little being achieved by the Project for the expenditure of US\$ 384,228. Most of this sum appears to have gone on the large number of contracts let to national experts during 2011 before the ITA was recruited. The only plus side of not having a NPM or a replacement for most of 2012 is that project management costs have declined, but this is also due in part to the organisational changes introduced by the UNDP-CO. Concern had been expressed by GEF over the funding of the Component Managers, since GEF rules do not allow funds to be used for UNDP staff; but the Component Managers are not UNDP staff members but project positions whose salaries are shared between a number of projects constituent to each component. This Project currently pays for 30% of the relevant Component Manager’s salary, but it remains to be seen whether “one-third of a Project Manager” is enough to manage the Project. The new Project Implementation Unit (PIU) however is probably more costly than having a single Project Assistant since there are four Project Assistants (each one paid for by an individual project) plus a Head of PIU, 20% of whose costs are met by this Project. Furthermore, the sustainability of a PIU with four people specialising in a single one of four tasks is all when and good all the while four projects are extant to pay for this – but what happens when one of these closes and there is no replacement? The issue is outside of the MTE’s ToR but it remains pertinent to the long-term viability of the arrangement.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

29. Project monitoring and evaluation has been evaluated as **Unsatisfactory**. Monitoring and evaluation of Project activities have been undertaken in varying detail at three levels:

- i. Progress monitoring
- ii. Internal activity monitoring
- iii. Impact monitoring

30. Progress monitoring has been barely adequate and has been made through four quarterly reports and an Annual Project Report (APR) covering the calendar year (Jan-Dec) to the UNDP-CO. The

annual work plans have been developed solely by the NPM or by her stand-in replacement, the Team Leader, who has produced a draft according to a template supplied by the UNDP-CO. This draft has been submitted to the UNDP-CO for its comments, and these were then incorporated into a final version for onward transmission and approval by the Project Board, and subsequently sent to the UNDP-CO and to the MNP for formal approval. In many cases these have been several months late; in 2012 following the NPM's absence, as late as May with consequential delays in opening the annual budget and the knock-on effects from that. The PO has also ensured that the UNDP-CO received quarterly progress reports providing updates on the status of planned activities, the status of the overall project schedule, the products completed, problems incurred, and an outline of the activities planned for the following quarter, but details of their timeliness are unknown. These report formats contained qualitative estimates of technical progress and quantitative estimates of financial disbursements. The UNDP-CO generated its own monthly financial reports from Atlas from data provided by the PO. These expenditure records, together with Atlas disbursement records of direct payments, served as a basis for expenditure monitoring and budget revisions when required. The UNDP-CO has also required delivery projections along with work plans and procurement tables (derived from the annual work plans) that are updated quarterly by the PO. These should have served as an additional monitoring tool, especially for quantitative estimates of the project progress, but the evidence is that most of these tools have not been used for monitoring and adaptive management purposes, they have simply been signed off without attention to the details – a bureaucratic necessity rather than a useful management aid.

31. From the quarterly reports, the UNDP-CO has prepared Quarterly Operational Reports (150-word fixed-format) which have been forwarded to UNDP/GEF Regional Coordination Unit in Bratislava, and in turn submitted to UNDP HQ and to GEF. The major findings and observations of all these reports have been given in an annual report covering the period July to June, the Project Implementation Report (PIR), which is also submitted by the PO and UNDP-CO, to the Regional Technical Adviser (RTA) at the UNDP-GEF Regional Centre in Bratislava, for review and official comments, followed by final submission to GEF. The PIRs were not circulated in full to the Project Board since the translation was considered too time-consuming an exercise, but the section on indicators, delivery, main achievements, risks and issues were translated for the attention of the NPC to agree and through this means, national government has been kept abreast of the Project's implementation progress, as well as verbally during PB meetings. Since the PB has not included representatives of the Velayats (Provinces) or Etraps (Districts), local government does not appear to have been kept informed. The NPM/Team Leader has been in daily communication with the UNDP-CO by phone or e-mail regarding progress, the work plan, and its implementation, and perhaps 2-3 times a week through face-to-face meetings, although it is noted that these are always held in the UNDP-CO and never in the PO. Furthermore, the UNDP-CO does not appear to have made any field visits to the Project site. The 2011 PIR prevaricates under the "*List the dates of site visits by CO staff*" section stating:

"There is a mechanism for regular visits, meetings, project boards and other events that enable periodic discussions over the project implementation. Working level discussions take at least once a week either face-to-face or via virtual messaging services. The project board is convened once in six months, the latest one was conducted in May 2011."

and the copy of the 2012 PIR shared with the Evaluator has no such section and therefore no information recorded. Note the [deliberate?] inaccuracy in the above quote relating to the frequency of PB meetings which at that stage had taken place only twice in 23 months of the Project's life. The Project risk assessment has not been used in any effective way, the risk log showing that it has been updated just once by the UNDP-CO. A single risk has been identified:

"Government not yet has identified a pilot national park [sic]"

which is strange considering the raft of risks emanating from the UNDP-CO itself such as slow recruitment, lack of a formal NPM, restructuring of the Environment Portfolio, and more; all of which pose substantial risks of delay to the Project, many of which have come to pass. The Project has been subject to a mandatory internationally implemented audit undertaken by an independent company

appointed by open tender, and some of the major procurements for the Khazar Reserve have been selected at random for audit by UNDP's Office of Audit and Investigation.

32. Internal activity monitoring appears to have been adequate but since few activities have been undertaken, there has not needed to be much, especially in 2010-11. The Project Document, implemented through quarterly work plans, has been used as the over-arching framework. Existing groups of consultants have worked largely independently from the PO, but the new Technical Advisor appears to monitor her work well and has maintained enough of a level of communication with them to assist them in any problems and to maintain an overview of progress. Apart from the absence of a Team Leader in the PASP Working Group, the consultants expressed satisfaction over the general level of current management. Contracts issued to consultants have all been on a performance basis – payment being made on achievement of milestones.

33. Impact monitoring has not yet been necessary since none of the Project work has resulted in impacts. The Evaluator was encouraged that the PR Working Group had undertaken a baseline survey of people's awareness of the issues of national parks both in Magtymguly near Sumbar, and in Ashgabat, not just to guide their work on developing a coordinated package of PR materials but also to form a baseline against which to measure its effectiveness.

PROJECT RESULTS

IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE INDICATORS

34. Development objectives, those things that the project will *contribute towards*, are best assessed independently of the project and at portfolio level. None are provided in the logframe of this Project. However, the immediate objective is something that the project is trying to achieve *in its lifetime* or shortly thereafter, and is a key element in the M&E framework because it defines the project's target. In the case of this Project, the revised logframe contains five indicators for the "Objective" (taken to be the immediate objective), none of which have been achieved (see [Annex IV](#)).

- Coverage (ha) of the PA system
 - The coverage of the protected area system remains at 1,934,200 ha since the Project has not yet expanded any existing reserve nor established any new ones. However, increases in this indicator are unlikely to be made incrementally but in large amounts as the national park(s) and reserves are established.
- Financial sustainability scorecard for PA System
 - A decrease from 31% to 25.9% is recorded at the time of the MTE, but no reason is available since the format and scoring system of the scorecard itself has changed between the baseline and the MTE – baseline score derived on 23rd May 2009 is 60 out of 196; MTE derived on 16th November 2012 is 57 out of 220.
- Capacity assessment scorecard for PA System
 - Systemic – 53%; Institutional – 38%; Individual – 33%. The MTE has found there to be arithmetic errors in baseline scores reported in the original and revised logframes and these have been corrected. The scores at the mid-term show a minimal increase for the systemic level mainly due to the adoption of the new Law on Protected Areas 2012, but there are setbacks at the institutional level believed to be due to limited understanding of the importance of building trust among stakeholders and weaknesses in the elaboration of sound monitoring and evaluation tools.

- Endorsement of the PASP by Government
 - No protected area system plan has yet been developed so no endorsement is currently possible. Progress is very slow, but the first draft of the reports that will be used to develop the PASP have been submitted to UNDP-CO for comment.
- Extent of representativeness (types); ecological basis for boundaries; ecological corridors and other linkages
 - Nothing concrete has yet been done and the baseline is still to be determined. However, a review of the ecological basis for the protected area system is current and once it reports the baseline and the extent of representativeness and gaps will become apparent.

GEF-4 TRACKING TOOLS

35. The tracking tools required by GEF-4, i.e. the management effectiveness tracking tool (METT), the financial sustainability scorecard, and the capacity scorecard have been completed by the Project experts and are attached as an Excel file to the submission of this report. The METT scores, the financial sustainability, and capacity scores are all included as indicators in the results framework (see Annex IV). The METT scores have been achieved for seven of the eight Zapovedniks, with the eighth one not yet complete because the visit to assess it is scheduled for between submission of the draft and final versions of this report. The financial sustainability score has fallen from 31% to 25.9% but the reasons cannot be elucidated because the MTE has no copy of the baseline. Capacity scores are reported in the third bullet point of the paragraph immediately above.

SUMMARY EVALUATION

36. Overall, the Project *Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System of Turkmenistan* has failed to achieve, and without significant changes is not expected to achieve, any of its major global environment objectives with no worthwhile benefits, and hence the MTE evaluates it as **Highly Unsatisfactory**. With the notable exception of the passage of a new Law on Protected Areas, the Project has delivered no tangible achievements at a point six weeks short of its intended finish date – a truly awful performance. Although there has been some vacillation by the Government over their support for a National Park at Sumbar, most of the responsibility for this failure has to be shouldered by the UNDP-CO which has mismanaged the implementation through a series of bad or slow decisions and lax administration that includes inadequate support to, and supervision of, the Project Office; inadequate attention to basic details – wrong logframe used, no risk log completed, mistakes in the accounts, poor monitoring and follow-up; operation of a recruitment system that is not fit for purpose; and insufficient internal and external communication, particularly with the MNP. The technical understanding of the Project within the UNDP-CO has also been low, a situation that really should have been recognised during its development, yet six months elapsed after appointing a completely inexperienced project manager before the position of ITA was advertised and an additional seven months before he was contracted. The Project has also coincided with a number of changes in the UNDP-CO that to outside eyes appear to have been mismanaged – the centralisation of project administration into a Project Implementation Unit that began in August 2011 but with no Head of Unit appointed until June 2012; reorganisation of projects’ management to be under two Component Managers not hired until mid-September 2012; and all taking place without a Resident Representative in the CO between end of January and start of July 2012. The Project has also been without a Project Manager since the appointee fell ill in November 2011 (and resigned at the end of January 2012). No attempt was made to replace her – a Team Leader of a group of consultants being asked to step into the breach without recognition or salary for her increased responsibilities and then no renewal of her contract – she worked in a voluntary capacity for some seven weeks before a new contract as Technical Advisor was available; disgraceful treatment of a person who has worked hard to turn this Project around and on whose endeavours a chance for saving it may be built. It is not surprising that the option of closing the Project has been discussed, yet the MTE advocates that it is given a chance to succeed for its aims are important both for the country and for global biodiversity. There are clear signs that things are changing for the better – the Project now has a stable and properly organised

management team supported by an increasingly efficient support team in the PIU; there is a new Resident Representative who is making significant improvements to the functionality of various levels of management; there are effective and high quality teams of consultants working on the Protected Area System Plan, the feasibility study for Sumbar National Park, and on a public relations package; and the Government has recently recommitted to Sumbar becoming a national park and to increasing their ownership of the Project. On the basis of this, the MTE makes a number of recommendations to be met within a defined timescale to extend the Project to achieve a successful conclusion.

37. Key Project achievements are almost negligible, even more so when it has to be considered that the Project is a single month away from its intended end date, but include:

- Development and passage of new Law on Protected Areas (2012) providing legal basis for the establishment of national parks;
- Working Groups established to develop a protected area system plan, to produce a detailed feasibility study for the proposed Sumbar National Park, and to produce a coordinated package of public relations materials to raise the awareness of key decision-makers and the public – in all cases these are just beginning to produce draft material;
- a report entitled “*Review of International Examples of Protected Area Financing Mechanisms and their Applicability in the Context of Turkmenistan*”; and
- publication of 3rd edition of the Red Data Book of Turkmenistan¹⁰ (but not an activity required by the Project Document).

37. The main problem areas identified by the MTE are that:

- management by the UNDP-CO has been extremely poor with poor decisions made over the appointment of a NPM, inadequate support to the Project Office, negligence in ensuring the correct version of the logframe has been used; operation of a recruitment system that is not fit for purpose; accounting errors; and insufficient internal and external communication;
- almost no progress made towards Project outputs until the second half of 2012;
- inadequate technical understanding both in the UNDP-CO and of the initial NPM to manage a project where the interplay between processes is crucial to its success; and
- recruitment of an ITA to guide the Project strategically, yet repeatedly ignoring his advice or failing to implement his recommendations.

38. A summary evaluation by Project Output is given in Table 4 and a more detailed summary of the level of achievements made against the indicators of success contained in the logframe is given in Annex IV. Results are discussed below by Project Outcome and key sectoral or cross-cutting issues are then discussed in the ensuing section.

TABLE 4: EVALUATION OF THE END OF PROJECT SITUATION AS PER THE REVISED LOGFRAME

| Component | Evaluation* | | | | | |
|---|-------------|---|----|----|---|----|
| | HS | S | MS | MU | U | HU |
| <i>Outcome 1 Expanded Protected Area System to improve PA representation and coverage</i> | | | | | | |
| Output 1.1 Protected Areas System Plan | | | | | | |
| Output 1.2 Assessments of four priority areas | | | | | | |
| Output 1.3 Sumbar National Park established | | | | | | |
| <i>Outcome 2 Adequate institutional and individual capacity is in place for the management of the PAS</i> | | | | | | |

¹⁰ **UNDP-CO comment:** This activity was reflected in final 2011 PIR **MTE response:** Given that it was not in the Project Document and the minutes of the PB Meeting of May 2011 only that agreement was made to assist the MNP with its publication, the reasoning for this decision remains opaque and questionable.

| Component | Evaluation* | | | | | |
|--|-------------|---|----|----|---|----|
| | HS | S | MS | MU | U | HU |
| Output 2.1 Skills and capacity development | | | | | | |
| Output 2.2 Protected Areas Academy | | | | | | |

* Note: HS = Highly satisfactory; S = Satisfactory; MS = Marginally satisfactory; MU= Marginally unsatisfactory; U = Unsatisfactory; HU = Highly unsatisfactory.

PROJECT OUTPUTS

39. This section attempts to provide an overview of the main achievements of the Project. Although it is not intended to be a comprehensive account, it is unfortunately less complete than normal because very few concrete results have been achieved by the Project and it has been difficult to determine exactly what activities the Project has undertaken given the swathe of implementation problems it has faced. Reporting of these activities is further complicated by the fact that despite the logframe being officially changed, the Project has continued to report its activities and finances according to the original version. Since the revised version is actually the official version, the MTE has attempted to report activities according to this version. Those activities completed under the initial tranche of consultancies prior to the ITA's recruitment in May 2012 (see paragraph 20, first bullet) are not considered here.

Outcome 1: Expanded Protected Area System to improve PA representation and coverage

Output 1.1: Protected Areas System Plan

40. A Protected Area System Plan (PASP) Working Group has been formed comprising three experts in biodiversity, management planning and monitoring, and GIS, supported by an environmental lawyer and a finance expert. Unfortunately the Group lacks a Team Leader, although the MTE understands that such a person has now been identified and was due to sign a contract towards the end of the MTE's in-country mission. A workshop for all stakeholders, led by the ITA, was held on 15-17th May 2012 to look at methodologies for preparing a PASP, particularly with regard to identifying gaps in the representativeness of the current system and identifying potential sites to fill them. The NPM and CTA of the project in Uzbekistan "*Strengthening Sustainability of the National Protected Area System by Focusing on Strictly Protected Areas*" (PIMS 2111) attended and provided details of their excellent methodology, but unfortunately because of delays in the recruitment of the PASP experts, those experts attending the workshop were all still applicants and not recruits. The MTE understands that as a result, not as much attention to the proceedings was paid by the experts later recruited because their status in relation to the Project was not yet fixed. Consequently, the workshop's value was diminished, and it is understood that the methodology used in Uzbekistan is not actually being used by the PASP Working Group. The Group has undertaken roundtable workshops with three of the five Velayats involved.

41. An international expert in the financing of protected areas was hired and undertook a mission in July 2012 including holding a workshop where a wide range of current ideas for sustainable financing of protected areas were presented to, and discussed with, an audience including the directors of the existing reserves, the NPC, staff of the MNP, and project experts. Representatives of the mass media were also present. Despite the ITA making a written recommendation¹¹ that:

"The national PA financing expert should be recruited as soon as possible and should prepare a dossier of information with advice from the international consultant. The international consultancy mission should be delayed until this information has been gathered to a satisfactory standard."

this was not done and the value of the mission diminished through there being insufficient baseline data. A report "*Review of International Examples of Protected Area Financing Mechanisms and their*

¹¹ Recommendation 8, Third Mission Report.

Applicability in the Context of Turkmenistan” identifying the applicability and potential of sustainable financing mechanisms that are commonly used elsewhere in the world to protected areas in Turkmenistan was presented.

Output 1.2: Assessments of four priority areas

42. In September 2010, a roundtable training event was held with Michael Succow Foundation on opening Central Kopetdag as Archabil National Park. The MTE has no further details regarding this. In the second Mission Report of the ITA (December 2011), it was recommended that experts should be hired “*to conduct rapid feasibility studies for three of the four sites (excluding Central Kopetdag)*” and goes on to state that “*negotiations should take place with the Succow Foundation to complete this task in early 2012*” on the basis of the Project Document and a specified budget line. The report notes that a financial proposal to complete this work was made to the UNDP-CO, but apparently was not accepted. It goes on to state that:

“Consequently there has been no progress on this activity. It is now probably too late to arrange these activities in the spring season, which is the best period for rapid field assessments. I see little point in continuing with this activity before the system plan is completed, which should provide a rational basis for future site prioritisation.”

And Recommendation #2 states very clearly that:

“The feasibility studies should be postponed until after the completion of the draft system plan. If required and based on the system plan a set of rapid feasibility studies should be considered for the Spring of 2013.”

Yet despite this, the PASP Group has been working since early July 2012 and draft feasibility reports and SWOT analyses have been prepared for four priority areas earmarked for expansion of transition to National Park status – namely Bolshoy Balkhan, Central Karakum, Central Kopetdag, and Kugitang Zapovedniks. It is notable that not only does the UNDP-CO recruitment system have a mind of its own that takes no account of the seasonality highlighted by the ITA, but that what project management there is on the Project also ignores his direction on which sites to work on – Central Kopetdag being included by the PASP group when the ITA expressly excludes it. The feasibility studies are reportedly 70% complete, but the Evaluator had no way of assessing this since all drafts are currently in Russian.

Output 1.3: Sumbar National Park established

43. One of the biggest constraints noted by the PB in the early part of the Project was the absence of a legal framework to enable the establishment of national parks as a category of protected area in Turkmenistan. The biggest success of the Project to date has been the drafting and subsequent endorsement of the new Law on Protected Areas (2012) to replace the previous one passed in 1993. The Law was drafted by a legal expert engaged by the Project during March-August 2011, who reviewed the existing legal framework and the experience of other countries, as well as the international conventions and IUCN categories. His work, in consultation with the MNP, led to a draft that included Biosphere Reserves and Botanical Gardens and Zoological Parks along with National Parks. After discussion and approval of the draft by the Minister for Nature Protection, it was received by the Cabinet of Ministers in November 2011 for distribution for comment throughout Government departments. After minor amendments and a second round of consultations, it was placed before Parliament and after a four-month process it was adopted and received Presidential signature on 31st March 2012. Such smooth and quick adoption of legislation is unusual and indicates a strong commitment of the Government to the Project despite conflicting signs elsewhere (see paragraph 58 *et seq.*), and those involved should be congratulated. Currently the Legal Expert is working through a second contract on the secondary legislation such as the regulation of the legal status of national parks; on ecotourism; and on the establishment of Sumbar National Park itself. There will also need to be changes to other Laws such as the Forest Code and the Law on Nature Protection to ensure consistency. The Legal Expert noted that access to an international legal expert on protected areas, preferably one who spoke Russian, would be a major help with this.

44. On 19th May 2012 a roundtable meeting was held with all the staff of the zapovedniks as part of the ITA's first field mission to the proposed Sumbar National Park. It was led by the proposed Team Leader for the Sumbar Working Group – at a time when he had no contract. The Sumbar Working Group was formed in July 2012 comprising experts in biodiversity, institutional arrangements, land and agricultural resources, and social economy, supported by the same financial and legal experts that support the PASP Working Group. The Sumbar Working Group has a Team Leader that the ITA reports as

“an excellent choice with a good understanding of the area, of the challenges involved and of the national park concept.”

an assessment with which the Evaluator concurs. The Team Leader noted that the study had begun much later than he would have liked but that the Group had *“done more in the last three months than we could in five.”* Workshops have been held in Ashgabat with UNDP in August and at the Sunt-Hasardag Reserve with the local government and Reserve staff in October. Another meeting was due in mid-November. Draft reports were submitted to the UNDP-CO on 6th November. The Team Leader assesses them all to be *“between three to five where one is poor and five is excellent”*.

45. In addition, it was decided that a Public Relations Working Group should be formed to raise the awareness of key decision-makers and the general public about the value and importance of the concept of national parks in general and of Sumbar National Park specifically. Despite a clear recommendation from the ITA in his second Mission Report that states:

“The PR team need clear guidance of the form the National Park will take before they can promote it in any detail. They must ensure that their work on community consultations is in close collaboration with the Sumbar Planning team, or the result is likely to be confusion through mixed messages. In particular the team should be very careful not to make any specific promises or commitments to stakeholder about the National Park or to predict the final arrangements for the boundaries or administration of the National Park.” [ITA's own emphasis]

The PR Group was contracted in a staggered fashion before the Sumbar Working Group was recruited. The ITA in his third Mission Report again states that:

“Without a team to prepare the feasibility study the usefulness of the PR team is somewhat doubtful, and (as mentioned in my last report) it is essential that their activities are properly coordinated with those of the feasibility study team. If not there is a danger of confusion and of mixed messages being transmitted to stakeholders.”

but once more his advice appears to have been ignored since the PR team have been forced to work ahead of getting firm information from the Sumbar Working Group which by their own admission has given them problems, especially when it comes to the proposed boundaries for the National Park. Related to awareness-raising, a Project website is under construction (www.pas.in.tm) which is currently available just in English although translations into Russian and Turkmen are underway. The existing site, although incomplete, is attractively designed, easy to navigate, and very informative. As well as providing news and information on the Project, it provides an excellent section on Laws and Documents, provides a downloadable version of the new third edition of the Red Book of Turkmenistan (see paragraph 49), and a repository for publications and photographs relating to each of the zapovedniks. A range of small publications have been produced including a single brochure (written in three languages in column form) on all of the eight current zapovedniks; a brochure on all UNDP-GEF projects in the country; a photographic booklet on wild flora and fauna for schools; and three leaflets (one language each) on medicinal plants.

46. Some work has also been undertaken in relation to the Visitor Centre for the National Park. A captive breeding centre is planned as part of this and the Government has built new enclosures. GEF is expected to pay for an array of equipment (not identified to the MTE) that apparently is under tender. The Evaluator is concerned since the case for breeding goitered gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*) in captivity in Sumbar/Sunt-Hasardag does not appear to have been made. Captive

breeding of game birds (sandgrouse, francolins, chukars etc.) which occurs now from rescued and rehabilitated individuals may have a small value and may provide an educational value to future visitors, but what appears to be in mind for the future is more a small zoo for visitors to see animals at close quarters than to have any real conservation value^{12,13}. The MTE recommends that this activity be reviewed by the ITA and that his recommendation be followed; final endorsement to come from the RTA in Bratislava based on this recommendation. No further money should be spent on such equipment, and all current supplies/tenders/procurements put on hold until a decision is reached. Equipment for the Visitor Centre to be housed in the Headquarters building of Sunt-Hasardag should continue, but again the old-fashioned approach of building a museum with lots of stuffed animals¹⁴ (the probable idea behind the “need” for a taxidermist – see paragraph 15) should be changed to more modern approaches with high quality photographs, films and interactive educational displays. If necessary, an international advisor on educational development could be contracted.

| The MTE recommends that funding of a captive breeding centre/rehabilitation facilitation at Sunt-Hasardag be reviewed. | | | |
|---|---|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Responsibility</i> | <i>Task</i> | <i>Time frame</i> | <i>Deliverable</i> |
| MNP | If a captive breeding centre/rehabilitation facilitation is required by MNP a written justification making a detailed case in conservation and financial terms needs to be submitted to GEF | End of March 2013 | Written justification |
| ITA/RTA | Review MNP’s justification and decide on course of action. | Before end May 2013 | Written decision |
| PO | Implement decision | Before end Dec. 2014 | Appropriate action |

¹² **UNDP-CO comment:** *The captive breeding centre at Sunt-Hasardag is funded by the Reserve’s and MNP budget. So far, PAS project provided only few equipment (egg incubator, corn crusher, infrared lamps, brooder, ovoscope egg candler for amount \$7,924) for breeding wild rare birds upon written request from the MNP and approval of the PB Meeting in 2012. As agreed with ITA, no further investment will take place until the management plan of PAs is completed and such purchase is agreed by RTA. The procurement cannot be stopped as CO already into contracts with suppliers. However, CO has decided to cover the cost with additional core resource to be inserted to the project. **MTE response:** If the Project had been closed, all procurements would have been cancelled, so it is technically incorrect to suggest that procurements cannot be stopped even though some form of compensation may be payable. However, the MTE is encouraged that additional core resources have been added to cover these costs.*

¹³ **ITA comment:** *Elements of the project budget under Atlas Codes 72300 and 72400 are governed by budget notes 4 and 5 respectively. I consider that these items relate to essential expenditure for setting up and launching the National Park. Expenditure in advance of declaration of the national park should be limited to investments related to essential prerequisites for the Park to exist. In some other projects this has been used to justify purchase of field equipment (uniforms, boots, binoculars, GPS, etc.) to allow park staff to conduct the required surveys for the creation of a protected area or to ensure adequate patrolling and protection of the area during the vulnerable period before it is formally declared. Captive breeding of birds and gazelles are on-going long-term programmes of Sunt Hasardag Reserve. They may (or may not) be justifiable for purely conservation reasons, but are not essential prerequisites for the national park to exist. If there had been a need for specific GEF investment in these, it would have been mentioned in the ProDoc. Once the Park is declared, the management may wish to make a case for project investment in captive breeding as an essential activity for its functioning. However, given the limited funds available, there are likely to be many more pressing requirements for GEF investment. Therefore my recommendation is for no investment in captive breeding at present. **MTE response:** The evaluator is much encouraged by the pragmatism and logic displayed here.*

¹⁴ **UNDP-CO comment:** *No project fund was spent for displays of stuffed animals. The List of equipment for the Visitor centre was developed by PR-group with justification of their needs. Displays of stuffed animals are not in the list. Procurement for equipment for visitor centre is in the process and cannot be stopped. The procurement cannot be stopped as CO already into contracts with suppliers. However, CO has decided to cover the cost with additional core resource to be inserted to the project (see Action 4.4.2). The equipment will be stored under UNDP custody until the NP is established and NP Plan is developed. No expenditure of any kind will take place on the Visitor Centre until a full plan has been prepared and the National Park approved. **MTE response:** see response to comment under footnote #12. The MTE has not suggested that any money has been spent on displays of stuffed animals – rather that none should be in the future. The MTE is encouraged that any further expenditure will await the preparation of a full management plan.*

The MTE recommends that no Project money (GEF or UNDP) should be spent on displays of stuffed animals for the visitor centre.

| <i>Responsibility</i> | <i>Task</i> | <i>Time frame</i> | <i>Deliverable</i> |
|-----------------------|---|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| PO | No project funds for displays of stuffed animals. | Here on | No authorisations |
| PO | Funds to be re-directed to more modern interactive educational displays/films | Before end Dec. 2014 | Modern educational displays |

Outcome 2: Adequate institutional and individual capacity is in place for the management of the PAS

Output 2.1: Skills and capacity development

47. A protected area training strategy and plan was produced in 2009 by the ITA and a national training questionnaire was undertaken in 2011 and a set of training priorities prepared. In addition, a training needs analysis was undertaken for Khazar and other areas in 2009 as part of the Khazar project (see footnote #8). A limited number of training events have already taken place – in November 2010 a two-day event on monitoring wildlife; and in 2011 two training events totalling five days were carried out by national experts hired from the Ministries for protected area staff on management and finance, tourism, and knowledge management. Between November 2011 and May 2012 an expert was hired to provide guidance on the captive breeding of goitered gazelles and exchange in the gene pool. However, the MTE could find no evidence of the provision of a targeted and structured training programme leading to a concerted and sustainable increase in skills and capacity development. Should the Project be kept open (see paragraph 51 *et seq.*), it is important that the three training needs analyses should be used to establish a structured training programme for the staff of the zapovedniks, something the MTE received assurances on in the comments to the draft of this report.

Output 2.2: Protected Areas Academy

48. Since the new logframe has not been used by the PO, and this Output was not present in its current form in the original logframe, nothing should have been done towards it. Curiously, some basic equipment such as air conditioners has been purchased for a Training Centre, space for which has been given in the Institute for Desert Flora and Fauna. Furniture such as desks and chairs has been ordered after tender. It would appear that activities relating to short-course training in the original logframe implied a need for somewhere to hold them – hence this seeming progress towards this Output. However, the MTE is concerned that the easy but expensive part of this output is being undertaken before any thought at all has been given to the harder part – that of developing a curriculum and, more importantly in a country where lack of capacity appears to be the central issue, identifying providers for it. While undoubtedly such an “Academy” is needed, if it is reliant on foreign expertise, without long-term financial commitment to it from the Government, it is hard to see how this could be financed, although the Michael Succow Foundation may be one source. If national expertise is to be used for training, this a) has to be identified, and b) funding sources identified post-Project. Unless some degree of sustainability can be demonstrated, this output, which was never part of the original design, should be abandoned immediately before any further costs are incurred. Outstanding tenders for equipment should be cancelled using the same legal mechanisms that would be required should the Project be closed.

Additional activities

49. The MTE understands that a number of other activities have taken place that are difficult to place in the context of the Project since they are not identified as being required in either the Project Document (and the logframe therein) or in the revised logframe from the Inception Report. These include:

- Development and publication of a digital copy of the third edition of the Red Book of Turkmenistan distributed on CDs and as a download from the website. Hard copies are

apparently being printed for the MNP in November 2012 (number of copies and cost unknown), but this was not an activity identified within the Project Document;

- Various awareness-related events on Environment Day and Biodiversity Day

KEY ISSUES

50. As can be seen from the foregoing part of the evaluation, this Project has serious problems in the form of exceedingly slow delivery arising from poor management, weak support and supervision from the UNDP-CO, and inflexible application of bureaucracy. Decisions need to be taken urgently over its future. This section attempts to answer key questions and chart options for a route forwards.

THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Keep running or close?

51. The main decision that UNDP-GEF has to take is whether to keep the Project open or to close it. In some respects such a decision looks obvious since in almost its full planned lifetime it has produced just one meaningful achievement and has been badly mismanaged. However, while the Evaluator is aware that this is viewed as a possible course of action, or even the preferred action, by certain people closely involved with the Project, he believes that closing it is the easy option, not necessarily the best since there is little to be gained by such a course of action beyond perhaps saving around US\$ 589,000 (a small amount in GEF terms) and removing a troublesome project from the portfolio. Also, such a move does not recognise the costs of failing to meet the important need for expanding the PAS of Turkmenistan and the benefits introduction of the first National Park will bring to the country, i.e. the very same benefits originally identified in the Project Document. The key question that requires answering, therefore, is “*if changes are made to the Project and it continues, will it be able to reach at least a Marginally Satisfactory rating in the end*”? The Evaluator believes that it should be able to achieve this if it delivers on the recommendations below. The Evaluator has seen a number of projects with significant problems like this one at the Mid-term which have gone on to successful conclusions after significant remedial actions have been taken. For example, he recently undertook the final evaluation of the *Community-based Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mountain Landscapes of Mongolia’s Altai Sayan Eco-region* Project (PIMS 1929) which the MTE had assessed as being Unsatisfactory. He was able to evaluate its final overall performance as Satisfactory, and write that:

“The adaptive management displayed by the Project has been outstanding, and the Project stands as a truly excellent example of the value of a perceptive MTE. It is very clear to all that without the recommendations made by the MTE, and their full implementation by the UNDP-CO and the Project, the Project would have failed. That it has not, and that it has gone on to produce very successful achievements, is nothing short of remarkable and a testament to the hard work and skill that the Project staff have displayed.”

This is also true in reverse – the Evaluator carrying out a mid-term evaluation of the *Demonstrating New Approaches to Protected Areas and Biodiversity Management in the Gissar Mountains as a Model for Strengthening the National Tajikistan Protected Areas System* Project (PIMS 1786) which he evaluated as Marginally Unsatisfactory, but that required much more radical measures than will be proposed below, and of which the Final Evaluator noted:

“Implementation approach is rated as Satisfactory, with respect to Project implementation, on the basis that the strategic decisions and decisive actions taken in response to the MTE secured a reprieve for a Project that had meandered off-course and was unlikely to meet many of its targets. The previous Marginally Unsatisfactory MTE rating, based on strategically poor and technically unsound implementation, has been overcome by the huge improvement in relevant technical competence of the CTA and PMU, strategic focus on the Project objective, and delivery of most outputs. ... This

highlights the timeliness and value of the MTE and subsequent interventions, which 'saved' a project that was clearly heading for disaster."

52. Although the option of keeping the Project open definitely involves a degree of risk, there are significant signs that many of the problems are either in the past or can be addressed. Significant progress has started to be achieved since July 2012 when properly constituted Working Groups were contracted with meaningful ToRs and capable experts. A new Resident Representative has commenced radical reform of the management systems within the UNDP-CO aimed at efficient delivery of projects and transferring knowledge and building the capacity of project partners, primarily the government ministries. The reorganisation of the UNDP-CO's Environment and Energy Programme has been completed and its teething problems appear to be over. The Project is now fully-staffed with seemingly capable personnel. Government have also clarified its own strategy with regard to the protected areas and have committed to Sumbar becoming a national park. The current signs are positive, and although the inflexibility of the UNDP-CO's bureaucracy still lurks in the background, the Evaluator believes that the Project should be given the chance and the means to continue, albeit with some strict provisos. As such, most of the rest of this report sets out a strategy and a series of milestones for continuation – a sort of probationary period where the UNDP-CO, the Project's reconstituted management team, and the Government need to prove that they have the means and the will to deliver a successful end result. Key requirements include the following, with cross-references to paragraphs where more details and recommendations can be found:

- Commitment by the Government to the establishment of Sumbar National Park (see paragraph 53) (completed – see Annex VI);
- Place the project under remedial measures by removing it from the Environment and Energy Programme for 12 months and placing responsibility for its delivery directly under the Deputy Resident Representative (see paragraph 61);
- Suspension of all technical tasks after 31st December 2012 while detailed Project planning is undertaken and remedial management actions are completed (see paragraph 62);
- UNDP-CO to provide UNDP-GEF with a list of measures as to how the CO's recruitment processes will be streamlined and made fit for purpose (see paragraph 63 *et seq.*);
- UNDP-GEF to agree to a no-cost extension of between 18 and 24 months to allow enough time for the re-constituted Project to succeed; (see paragraph 54); and
- Constitute the Project Board with a wider membership and commit to two meetings per year to provide proper strategic oversight (see paragraph 55).

These issues need to be resolved within a reasonably tight time frame that balances sufficient time for them to be achieved against wasted time and money should they not. The MTE believes that three months would achieve this balance. Allowing for the time necessary to consider this report, for the planned meeting on the Project's future on 27th November 2012, and for the annual holiday period in December, **the end of March 2013 should be set as the deadline for completion of all of these tasks.** Since the MTE deems each task to be critical to enabling the Project to succeed, **failure to achieve any one should then result in the Project's immediate closure.**

Government commitment to Sumbar National Park

53. The position of the Government has given some cause for concern during this Project (see paragraph 23) mainly through a request to the UNDP-CO to redirect the Project funds to help with the nomination of a World Heritage Site at Kugitang, and some confusion over the status of the study for a national park at Archabil. Furthermore, some bureaucratic problems with obtaining the correct permits for the ITA to enter the border zone (in which Sumbar lies) and difficulties in obtaining official information has also raised questions over commitment. The MTE has sought to clarify this position and understands that the MNP intends to pursue work independently on four fronts:

- i) Establishment of Sumbar National Park with the assistance of this UNDP-GEF Project;
- ii) Establishment of Archabil National Park with the assistance of the Michael Succow Foundation;

- iii) Nomination of Kugitang Zapovednik as a World Heritage Site according to the President's instruction, possibly with help from the RSPB/BirdLife International; and
- iv) Nomination of Badhyz Zapovednik as a World Heritage Site with the assistance of the RSPB/BirdLife International.

While some see this as a formidable work load for the Ministry, there is no indication that these other tasks will take resources away from this Project. The Minister sent an official letter to the Deputy Resident Representative of the UNDP-CO on 23rd July 2012 confirming that he viewed "*Creation of the national nature parks in Turkmenistan was defined as important task in preservation the biological diversity ...*" and the MNP considers implementation of the current work plan of the Project "*appropriate*". Notwithstanding this, the MTE has sought further assurances from the Minister and requested direct involvement of two people from the MNP to be involved in the Project to provide a focus for knowledge transfer to the Ministry and to provide the Ministry's viewpoint in technical and other discussions held by the Project's consultants. Such assurance and commitment have now been obtained from the Minister (see [Annex VI](#)) hence the first of the key requirements has already been achieved and no further recommendation is required. In addition, the MTE experienced no problems in obtaining the necessary visa and permits for travel and the MNP extended full cooperation. Finally, the issue regarding difficulties in obtaining information appears a little over-emphasised. The MTE understands that obtaining any official information is quite difficult and time-consuming and was remarked upon by several consultants, but all appear content that they now have the information that they require. The one exception is a consultant who is wanting to follow the same methods that were used in an EU/TACIS project in 2009. The current Technical Adviser appears to be advising otherwise. However, the issue of information being unforthcoming from the local authorities appears to have been blown out of proportion to its importance.

No-cost extension

54. The MTE has indicated that the three-year period allowed for this Project is a major design flaw and should have been rectified during the review process. The ambitious nature of the Project, combined with the likely low baseline capacity of those involved, always meant that the Project would struggle to achieve its aims within the period set – and this is indeed the case. However, it is also clear from the foregoing that it is the lack of effective management of this project and not the short time scale that is responsible for its current troubles. The MTE is also aware that GEF has changed its policy towards allowing extensions for projects and no longer looks favourably upon this practice, particularly in cases where poor management is the core problem. However, without such an extension being granted, the Project will close in December 2012 and will not have achieved any of its aims. The Project requires an extension of 18 months, preferably two years, without which the restructuring of the Project recommended herein cannot succeed. The Evaluator draws the attention of GEF to the following points in favour of granting an extension:

- a) the Project has spent only 38% of its budget to date (see Table 2), so a no-cost extension of two years is certainly feasible financially;
- b) the Government has recommitted itself to the Project's aims – see [Annex VI](#);
- c) there is a new Resident Representative in charge of the UNDP-CO who is committed to delivering this Project if she is allowed to.

| The MTE recommends that, in order to provide sufficient time for the restructured Project to achieve its core aims, it be granted a no-cost extension of two years. | | | |
|--|---|---------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Responsibility</i> | <i>Task</i> | <i>Time frame</i> | <i>Deliverable</i> |
| PO/UNDP-CO | Check Project finances and provide outline model to determine period that can be covered by remaining finances | As soon as possible | Outline model of finances |
| UNDP-CO/ UNDP-GEF RTA | Agree period of proposed extension and apply to UNDP-GEF RTA for permission to extend – 18 months minimum (to 30/6/14); 24 months preferable (31/12/14) | By end March 2013 | Formal request for extension |
| UNDP-GEF RTA | Approve an extension for the Project provided other critical recommendations are met | By end March 2013 | Approval |

THE PLANNING CONTEXT

Project Oversight

55. Oversight of the Project by the Project Board has been viewed internally as adequate. Interviewees expressed the view that it was useful and effective. However, the MTET cannot concur, if for no other reason than the Project Board is ultimately responsible for the delivery of the Project and in this case that delivery has failed. The PB ought to have been able to recognise this and to have responded accordingly. One issue is that the PB has met only once per year despite the Project Document stating that “*The project will be subject to PSC¹⁵ review at least twice a year*”. The subject was also raised in the PB meeting of 28th March 2012 where the minutes state:

“The Project Board members agreed on the necessity of holding the Project Board meetings twice a year with the participation of the representatives of Magtymguly etrap Hyakimlik, Director of the National Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna and Director of the Sunt-Hasardag State Reserve”

yet there was no meeting in or around September, it seemingly being delayed until late November, probably to coincide with the report from this evaluation. The minutes show little or no discussion of the causes of the Project’s problems. If the UNDP-CO is not willing to share with its partners its management problems pertaining to the Project, it is clear that the PB cannot function in any meaningful way as “*the highest policy-level meeting of the parties directly involved in the implementation of a project*” (Project Document). Furthermore, the minutes appear belatedly to recognise, the composition of the PB needs widening to become truly a PB. The MTE urges the inclusion of the Ministry of Sport and Tourism and the Ministry of Agriculture as mentioned in the Project Document, as well as those noted in the quote above. The MTE also suggests that the MNP moves to take greater ownership of the Project not only through providing expertise to work with the project teams (see paragraph 53) but by exerting a stronger leadership role through the PB. The minutes appear to show that generally the PB has provided insufficient advice on key strategic, policy and programme issues, and rather has spent too much time dealing with day-to-day administration, staffing, and work plan and budget approvals. Therefore, the MTE recommends that the PB increases the frequency of its meetings to at least two a year, one of which should prioritise a strategic discussion of the Project. The timings should be that the first one of each year is scheduled to approve the annual work plan which has a history of being late in this project – thus one in March 2013 to agree a decision on the project’s future (keep open or close) and to approve the annual work plan; and one in January 2014 to approve that year’s work plan.

¹⁵ Project Steering Committee – term replaced under UNDP’s Results based terminology with Project Board.

| The MTE recommends that the Project Board meets at least twice a year, and one such meeting should prioritise discussion of the strategic direction of the Project. | | | |
|--|---|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Responsibility</i> | <i>Task</i> | <i>Time frame</i> | <i>Deliverable</i> |
| UNDP-CO/NPC | Invite a wider range of organisations' representatives to PB meetings | From March 2013 | Wider composition of the PB |
| UNDP-CO | Request and implement at least two PB meetings per year. | From March 2013 | Minutes of PB meetings |
| UNDP-CO | Arrange meetings in March 2013 and January 2014 to approve annual work plan and open budget | From March 2013 | Minutes of PB meetings |

Sustainability

56. In view of the extremely limited progress that has been achieved so far on this Project, a discussion on the sustainability of its outcomes would be academic. Clearly any establishment of the Sumbar National Park is binary – it either will happen or it will not. If it does, the establishment of the designation will be sustainable, i.e. it is not suddenly going to be reversed, but the degree to which it will function is dependent upon the financial mechanisms and institutional structures that will support it. Some progress on the former has been made and there are some indications that if the Government is supportive, funds will be forthcoming, but the level of those and the degree to which the National Park will be allowed to control its own finances and thereby operate a string of financial mechanisms identified as possibilities by the International Protected Areas Financing Consultant remains unknown. Since the Sumbar Working Group has yet to report, the institutional arrangements also remain unknown. Therefore, the sustainability of the Project can not be evaluated.

Replicability

57. The Project has been designed to act as a catalyst for the entire protected area system and in particular to initiate the establishment of national parks. This is something of a binary process – nothing can be replicated until the first national park has been established – and with the Project so far behind schedule, clearly little thought has been given towards replication. Nonetheless, if the Project is allowed to continue the MTE is optimistic that further national parks will be created – the Project itself is required to identify two further sites as potential national parks (indicator #6: Annex IV) – which it has done. Furthermore, the MNP has indicated that it is pursuing work through the Michael Succow Foundation to have Archabil National Park established and while that project is running concurrently with this UNDP-GEF Project, work on Sumbar is actually far advanced over that on Archabil and it is likely that the methodology and procedures and models (e.g. for management planning) pioneered by this Project will be used subsequently for Archabil.

THE MANAGEMENT CONTEXT

Country Driven-ness and Coordination

58. It is strange given the following quote from the Project Document:

“The selection of the South-west Kopetdagh as the preferred site for testing the efficacy of national park establishment processes corresponds closely with the priorities identified in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2002), the National Environmental Action Plan (2002), the ECONET project (2005) and, more recently, the Main Trends of Development of the Protected Area System up to 2030 (2008). Further, the Order of the Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan (No 36 of April 29, 2003), on implementation of the Decree of the President “On National Environmental Action Plan of President of Turkmenistan Saparmurat Turkmenbashi” (No. 6007 of December 2, 2002), requires that a National Park in the Makhtumkuli etrap must be established within the period 2003-2010.”

that there has been so much vacillation by the Government over the location for the proposed National Park for this Project. While this has undoubtedly caused grave concern in the past, and contributed to the delays, the issue should be consigned to history. An interview with the Minister for Nature Protection, and another with his senior staff, indicated categorically that the Government wanted Sumbar to be established as a national park and this has been backed up by a letter to the UNDP-CO Resident Representative (see [Annex VI](#)). That the MNP is pursuing other goals independently (including designation of Archabil National Park – see paragraph 53) with other parties should in no way serve to undermine its commitment to Sumbar. Whether Sumbar becomes the first national park in Turkmenistan is in many ways down to the Project. The MNP indicated clearly that it will take the appropriate steps for designation with whichever project delivers the requisite paperwork and concepts first.

59. Political buy-in to the Project actually appears to be quite strong as evidenced by the fact that the new Law on Protected Areas 2012 was passed relatively quickly and with minimal difficulties. In the Evaluator's experience, such rapid passage of legislation is unusual – witness the failure of Uzbekistan to pass the necessary legislation to establish the Nuratau-Kyzylkum Biosphere Reserve; and the lengthy and involved process for it to establish the Tugai Biosphere Reserve in the Amu Darya Delta and even then only with a severely curtailed area. This event in this Project is one of the few bright spots to date and bodes well for the future. While country driven-ness may be generally good, the MTE has been concerned about the lack of coordination from the Government with the Project. It appears very much as a UNDP project which will be handed over to the Government at the appropriate time rather than being a partnership. This is something that the new Resident Representative has also identified and has begun taking steps to rectify. The move to having greater involvement of MNP personnel in technical discussions and the decision-making processes of the Project is in part down to her, and the Ministry also appears to have bought fully into this – see [Annex VI](#).

UNDP role

60. The MTE finds that the UNDP-CO's performance with regard to the Project has been well below standard. Insufficient technical understanding has been displayed and while this in itself can be forgiven, the long-term absence of a solution in the form of an ITA cannot be, although again the inability of the Project Document to recognise the need for one is a significant oversight. Too little forward planning has been supervised, little in the way of anticipation of problems demonstrated, and too little attention paid to detail and to follow-up actions – most notably to the logframe and to the accounts. The following changes are recommended as prerequisites for continuing to keep the Project open.

Place under remedial measures

61. The MTE recommends that the Project should be removed from the Energy and Environment Programme and be placed directly under the remit of the Deputy Resident Representative who shall have responsibility for its delivery until at least December 2013. This will achieve several important objectives:

- i) It will reflect the importance that the UNDP-CO attaches to the successful delivery of the Project;
- ii) Senior management will be able to deal with any bureaucratic issues more directly and in a more timely fashion;
- iii) Senior a management will act as a new role model for the Component Manager which will be valuable experience in developing his management capacity; and
- iv) It frees up the Programme Specialist to concentrate on the other management changes underway within the CO and to spend more time on the numerous other projects within his area of responsibility.

The MTE recommends that the Project should be removed from the Energy and Environment Programme and be placed directly under the remit of the Deputy Resident Representative.

| <i>Responsibility</i> | <i>Task</i> | <i>Time frame</i> | <i>Deliverable</i> |
|-----------------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| UNDP-CO | DRR to take overall management responsibility for project | Immediately until Dec 2013 | Written note from Res. Rep. |

Suspend technical tasks to plan project

62. There is a natural break in the current technical tasks being undertaken by the three working groups in that all of them are due to provide final reports by 31st December 2012 when their contracts expire. The MTE recommends that advantage be taken of this break to suspend technical work to concentrate on remedial actions and undertake planning work to streamline the future work and the support from the CO that will be necessary. There is one exception to the technical work and that is in relation to the Team Leader of the Sumbar Working Group whose contract runs until the end of March 2013. His work will be to draw together the reports from the members of his team and produce a final feasibility study for Sumbar. This will therefore become a Project output even if the Project is closed at the end of March 2013. If it remains open, it will provide the foundation upon which the Project moves forward. The remedial and planning work that the MTE recommends is as follows:

- i) Adopt the correct logframe and review it in the light of comments below (see paragraph 66);
- ii) Work through the Project's accounts and re-allocate disbursements to the correct Outcomes and Project Management (i.e. ensure that contracts and expenses connected with one or more outcomes are allocated to those Outcomes and not to Project Management where many currently reside) to provide a real basis for useful management accounting and planning purposes;
- iii) Develop a detailed work plan for 2013 and an outline one for 2014 to demonstrate to UNDP-GEF the ability to deliver the intended Outcomes (not just Outputs);
- iv) Develop a recruitment plan for the entire Project which shows dates consultants and other staff will be required to undertake tasks. This plan should demonstrate clearly the interactions and links between tasks (i.e. what needs to be complete before another task can start; which consultants need to work with each other in teams and need to be contracted at exactly the same time); allow for the steps necessary for the recruitment, and specify dates that key milestones are required, (e.g. dates ToRs must be complete, dates posts must be announced by, etc.); and provide some allowance for unforeseen delays; and
- v) Develop a procurement plan for 2013 with a similar level of detail (links, dates, etc.) as the recruitment plan, and an outline for 2014.

The MTE recommends that technical work on the Project in 2013 be suspended¹⁶ while detailed planning is undertaken.

| <i>Responsibility</i> | <i>Task</i> | <i>Time frame</i> | <i>Deliverable</i> |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------|---|
| UNDP-CO | Suspend all technical work after 31 st Dec 2012. | To March 2013 | No new contracts until formal extension to Project granted by GEF |
| PO | Adopt and absorb revised logframe (from Inception Report) | Immediately | - |
| PO/PIU | Revise and correct accounts | Immediately | New accounts in ATLAS |
| PO | Develop a detailed work plan for 2013 and an outline work plan for 2014 (assuming extension to Dec 2014) | By end January 2013 | Work plans |
| PO | Use new work plans to develop a detailed recruitment plan for rest of entire project (assuming extension to Dec 2014) | By end March 2013 | Recruitment plan |

¹⁶ Except for the contract let to the Team Leader of the Sumbar Working Group which should continue uninterrupted for delivery at end of March 2013 as stipulated.

| | | | |
|----|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| PO | Use new work plans to develop a detailed procurement plan for 2013 and an outline plan for 2014 (assuming extension to Dec 2014) | By end March 2013 | Procurement plans |
|----|--|-------------------|-------------------|

Streamline recruitment by the UNDP-CO

63. As has been indicated (see paragraph 21), the recruitment process operated in this UNDP-CO is not currently working to the benefit of the projects which it is supposed to be supporting. The issue given most weight by those involved is that there is a very small pool of experts working in Turkmenistan and that frequently positions have to be re-advertised before attracting sufficient candidates to fill tendering procedures (or even just to get one suitably qualified candidate). While the MTE is prepared to make a great deal of allowance for this problem, two things need to be pointed out:

- a) Turkmenistan is not the only country where limited capacity is an issue – the Evaluator has come across it in places like Tajikistan where the reasons for it are similar to those in Turkmenistan, and in Cambodia where two generations of intelligentsia were exterminated in that country’s genocide – yet surprisingly the recruitment process operated by those countries’ COs does not take the same inordinate lengths of time that the Turkmenistan CO takes; and
- b) the same length of time was taken to recruit the ITA (seven months!) and there is certainly not a limited pool of expertise in the international market.

Furthermore, a small pool of expertise cannot be held responsible for such things as start dates and signing dates of contracts being frequently many weeks apart, nor for people supposed to be working in teams being contracted over extended periods. The issues appear to be much more tied up with how and to what extent the bureaucratic requirements of UNDP as an organisation are applied and the degree of communication employed by those involved in various steps. There are standard operating procedures in the Turkmenistan CO but they have not always been applied, processes falling between people leading to delays and inadequate follow-up from supervisors and managers. The re-organisation of the Environment and Energy Programme with the introduction of a centralised PIU has inevitably resulted in some delays, but these have been few. It is said that sometimes people try and cut corners within the system but that often back-fires and results in further delays, although to the MTE it seems that such corner-cutting is born out of the frustration with the system not working in the first place. Much of the problem appears to lie with the Programme Operations. Most of those interviewed identified this as the logjam and certainly the Project PIU appeared to the MTE to be more dynamic and flexible – perhaps a result of its management’s exposure to different cultural norms. The MTE is aware that Programme Operations cannot shoulder the blame for everything here. UNDP HQ introduce new requirements seemingly at will, but often with no understanding of the impact that such requirements will have. For example, the recent introduction of the need for applicants for Individual Contracts to provide detailed technical methodologies and lump sum financial proposals adds yet another hurdle for applicants who have no experience as to how to go about this. At best it results in an applicant copying back the ToR; at worst it means they don’t bother to apply. Furthermore, as the ITA notes in his third Mission Report:

“The ToR were prepared for individuals focusing on specific technical aspects of the system plan, but also working collaboratively with the team leader, conducting many of the activities jointly in order to ensure preparation of a coherent coordinated output. However, the contracting process being used and the requirement for lump sum offers from all individuals interpret the ToR as a set of stand-alone discrete tasks. It will be very difficult for the consultants to prepare offers that take into consideration the team work required. Furthermore it is inefficient and ineffective for all the consultants to prepare separate budgets and plans and obtain separate permissions for travel, field work and consultations. This approach also has the risk of confusing local officials and stakeholders with repeated visits and possibly mixed messages from different consultants. It would be much more efficient and effective for the consultants to be contracted for a number of days and then for field trips, consultation meetings and workshops to be organised through the team leader and project manager with a budget from the project.”

Yet this is not just about procedures and requirements, it is about how these are applied by the CO and this lies at the crux of the differences between this CO and others with similar market problems. This same Evaluator wrote in the Final Evaluation of the Khazar Project:

“All Project staff interviewed complained that the procedures followed were too cumbersome and time-consuming, and were the cause of major delays and associated problems, e.g. the time-consuming nature of these procedures resulted in there being only three rounds of small grants distributed rather than five. The FE is aware of the need to follow correct procedures to guard against favouritism and fraud, yet he also notes that these same procedures are common to all offices and yet not all offices suffer the same degree of problems associated with them – Latvia being a notable exception that he has observed. The FE is also much encouraged that in interviews with the Resident Representative and the newly-appointed Operations Manager, the need for streamlining procedures and improving efficiency is recognised and being worked on. It is hoped that this will benefit other GEF projects current in the country.”

This was clearly a forlorn hope. Perhaps the problem is cultural – the social context generated by a command-and-control State system is inevitably going to lead to a particular mindset, but UNDP is an international organisation and international norms should apply. A recent e-mail exchange between the Regional Technical Advisor in Bratislava and the Evaluator confirms that it is not just the Evaluator who perceives this as a problem. With the RTA’s permission, the following quote is pertinent:

“The Regional Technical Advisor was copied extensively on the communication between project experts and the country office on critical/problematic issues (such as mission logistics, expert recruitment, preparation of reports, etc.), wherefrom he judged that the country office did not have the same feeling of commitment and urgency about the project’s objectives, that procedures were more important than people and that the country office did not show due respect to experts. While the country office staff state that there is lack of national capacity to manage conservation projects, itself – in the case of this particular project – the country office seems to have done little to retain and motivate those few good experts who were available. In personal conversations the key national expert said to the RTA that she has been extremely de-motivated by the attitude of the UNDP country office to her and other experts.” [MTE’s emphasis]

The Evaluator could not agree more. There is a triumph of bureaucracy over common sense here and a seeming lack of understanding that the bureaucracy is there to support the Project, not the other way around. Perfect procedures and a failed project do not lead to the fulfilment of UNDP’s corporate aims. Furthermore, the CO has a financial liability to GEF to support the project, because it is paid a fee of 3% on top of the Project by the GEF. An official letter, the Delegation of Responsibility, from UNDP headquarters to the UNDP-CO delegates all implementation responsibility to the head of the country office, and describes the necessary oversight and support that must be provided to the project (Government and expert) by the CO staff from this fee. Prioritising bureaucratic procedures over the well-being of the Project runs counter to that liability.

64. Solving the problems in this arena is probably the biggest challenge for the UNDP-CO in keeping this Project open and significant changes will be necessary not only to practices but in mindsets. Altering management procedures on this scale goes well beyond the ToR and timescale of a 22-day MTE, yet the Evaluator feels compelled to provide some suggestions – all of which may be wide of the mark but are offered to help initiate a process of change. Suggestions (note not recommendations) in no particular order include:

- Formation of a technical roster. This could be done in the same way that a number of rosters are organised by UNDP-GEF Regional Centres worldwide with technical prequalification; or perhaps once an expert has delivered successfully on an appropriate contract he/she could

automatically qualify for a position on a roster that would enable direct appointment to another similar contract on the same or a different project;

- Reducing the time allotted to various steps, particularly internal ones;
- Making a case to the UNDP Regional Directorate or Headquarters for dispensation to forego certain procedures that cause particular difficulties in Turkmenistan;
- As per the quote from the ITA above, contract consultants for a number of days and organise
- field trips, consultation meetings and workshops through the project;
- Extend contracts for those proven in the past without further recourse to selection panels and similar procedures;
- Increased levels and frequency of internal training for PIU staff by Operations’ staff to ensure consistency of procedures and understanding, particularly when changes to procedures are introduced by HQ;
- Study tours to other UNDP-COs for Operations’ staff so they can see how other offices with similar low capacity markets cope and make procedures work;
- Where key vacancies need to be filled in a hurry, promote from within a project through the use of the term “Acting” as in “Acting Project Manager” or similar (as should have been done in the Project), the term being open to reversal if and when the post is advertised and a better candidate found; and
- Requesting help from the UNDP Regional Directorate or Headquarters with means to streamline the way recruitment and procurement procedures are applied within the CO;

In addition, it seems strange to the Evaluator that the new Project PIU is organised in a different way to the Programme Operations office. In the former, all human resources issues (Individual Contracts, Service Contracts, etc.) all fall under the jurisdiction of one person and procurement under another; while in the Programme Operations office Individual Contracts are treated as just a form of procurement (procuring people for a fixed term like buying a vehicle) and Service Contracts and all other Human Resource issues are dealt with by another specialist. The Evaluator makes no judgement about which is more effective, but notes that it seems odd to have two different systems running within the same office – something unlikely to be the case in say the private sector where efficiency is driven by profit. Perhaps this should be re-examined and the two brought into line.

| The MTE recommends that the UNDP-CO in consultation with the UNDP-GEF RTA draws up proposals to streamline the recruitment procedures in operation in such a way as to restore confidence that they are fit to fully support the Project’s needs. | | | |
|--|---|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Responsibility</i> | <i>Task</i> | <i>Time frame</i> | <i>Deliverable</i> |
| UNDP-CO | Take measures necessary to streamline procedures surrounding recruitment of project personnel | By end March 2013 | Written proposals from Res. Rep. |
| UNDP-CO/UNDP-GEF RTA | Agreement that proposals satisfy RTA to an extent that confidence over delivery is restored | By end March 2013 | Approval from GEF to extend project |

International Technical Advisor

65. The Evaluator finds it strange that the Project has hired one of the best protected area experts in the world as its International Technical Advisor yet repeatedly ignores his advice. The ITA has repeatedly recommended rapid recruitment of staff which the UNDP-CO operational bureaucracy has thwarted. Notwithstanding this, when the opposite happens and the ITA recommends the postponement of work, the opposite happens, i.e. Recommendation 2 of the third Mission Report states:

“The feasibility studies should be postponed until after the completion of the draft system plan. If required and based on the system plan a set of rapid feasibility studies should be considered for the Spring of 2013.”

yet the MTE was informed that the feasibility studies are currently underway having started in July 2012. The question has to be asked, if the Project is going to ignore the ITA, why hire him in the first place? While the MTE concedes that the ITA is not actually in charge of managing the Project, his views should be accorded some primacy; and if this is yet another example of bureaucratic procedures producing results inconsistent with the needs of the Project then the question has to be asked, who is running the Project, the people hired for their technical expertise or the people running operational support?

Technical Management

Logframe

66. As has been indicated, the logframe was revised and agreed during the Inception Workshop but was never then adopted by the incoming NPM or by the UNDP-CO. In the event that the Project is extended, this needs to be corrected. However, some points in the logframe require clarification since the international consultant hired for the Inception Workshop indicated to the MTE in an e-mail that, with the concurrence of the PB, he deliberately allowed some flexibility in what was being suggested since it was important for ownership reasons that the NPM had some input at a later time. Indeed, Section 4.2 of the Inception Report states categorically that:

“Arising from the above analysis, a number of refinements are proposed in the Discussion columns. These will be attended to by the PM, in consultation with the PSC. Illustrated below is the slight restructuring proposed at the Outputs and Activities level.”
[MTE emphasis]

This input was never made, hence certain issues raised below were never clarified, yet they should have been. Four items in the logframe need to be clarified prior to 31st March 2013:

- Indicator # 10: *“Pilots carried out, evaluated, refined and adopted; Guidelines/Manual produced and being used for training”*. The term “pilots” is not defined. It could be related to piloting of new approach to governance and management (from 2.2) or to piloting sustainable financing mechanisms (from 2.3); or it could be related to training of some kind of training – yet if that was so the indicator should be under Outcome 2, not Outcome 1. The MTE believes that it most likely refers to pilots of financial mechanisms and should be clarified to read so thus: *“Financial mechanism pilots carried out, evaluated, refined and adopted; Guidelines/Manual produced and being used for training”*
- Indicator # 13: *“Operational capability in terms of funding, mobility, engagement with communities, resolving identified problems”* could be clarified. It is understood that mobility refers to the concept of regular rotation of government staff which lessens the operational capability of individuals and should be resisted in posts where capability is being built. Therefore, *“Operational capability in terms of funding, reduced mobility, increased engagement with communities, and resolving identified problems”*.
- The baselines for indicator numbers 5 and 13 need to be defined.

| The MTE recommends that the logframe is reviewed and clarified. | | | |
|--|--|-------------------|--------------------|
| Responsibility | Task | Time frame | Deliverable |
| PO/UNDP-GEF RTA | Agree changes to clarify indicators | By end March 2013 | Revised logframe |
| PO | Define baselines for indicator #s 5 and 13 | By end March 2013 | New baselines set |
| UNDP-GEF RTA | Agree new baselines | By end March 2013 | Written approval |

Managing expectations

67. There are some expectations at both national and local levels that ecotourism will play an important role in the Park especially through the money it will impart to both to the Park and to the

local communities involved. The MTE urges caution on three counts, particularly with regard to international tourism – i) will the Park have enough pulling power to compete in the global market place?; ii) is such tourism sustainable?; and iii) is such tourism practical?

- i) Competitiveness: If the target market is national, then the proposed Park has numerous attractions and its new status will in itself provide added drawing power. However, international nature-based tourists are faced pretty much with a global choice – lions on the Serengeti, pandas in Wolong, tigers in Rathanbor, penguins in the Antarctic, and a host of other specialist choices from the vast array of biodiversity in the Amazon to New Guinea’s birds-of-paradise, from the elephants of the Namib Desert to the teeming marine life on the Great Barrier Reef, to polar bears in the Hudson Bay, and gorillas in Uganda and Rwanda. Sumbar, although blessed with an interesting and important range of plants and animals is unlikely to be able to compete on this aspect. Similarly, while it boasts some unique landscapes, e.g. its blue mountains, the Sumbar canyon, and the higher parts of the Kopetdag, it will be competing for tourist dollars with the Grand Canyon in the USA, Fish River Gorge in South Africa, the Annapurna circuit in Nepal, and the fjords of South Island, New Zealand. Additionally, there is no cultural circuit in Turkmenistan that can provide a source of foreign tourists in the same way as the Silk Road can for Uzbekistan. Tourists examine carefully attractions and costs and weigh the two cautiously before coming to a conclusion to travel. In the MTE’s view the economics for the international tourist (“bangs per buck”) are unlikely to stack up in Sumbar’s favour.
- ii) sustainability: Even assuming that the Evaluator is wrong and Sumbar will draw international tourists, is it sustainable? Again, in all honesty, it is probably not. High oil prices, which can only increase further as peak oil draws near, and the increasing consciousness of carbon footprints (note the current proposals for a Regional Climate Change Centre to be located in Turkmenistan), suggests that global tourism as we know it today is about to change and retract markedly. In 20 years time, it is unlikely that cheap mass tourism to global destinations will still be the panacea for local revenues that it is viewed as in some corners today, and expectations should be managed with caution.
- iii) practicality: the idea that international eco-tourism can be developed in Sumbar, or any other protected area, without the Government making changes to the bigger picture is pure fantasy. It ignores the difficulties that foreigners face in getting into the country because of the requirement of obtaining letters of invitation, obtaining visas, having passports registered once they have arrived, and in Sumbar’s case by further restrictions on visiting the border area. The MTE notes that the Sumbar Working Group is addressing the last issue to a degree through consultations over moving the current the restricted zone checkpoints closer to the border, but travel to and within the country will still have to be made substantially easier. Limited foreign air routes leads to corresponding high prices. These levels of bureaucracy and expense put off the majority of tourists, and significant economic benefits from international tourism will not accrue until a mass flow of foreigners arrive. Furthermore, the attractions of Turkmenistan are still largely unknown to the tourist market outside and, again, in order to reap the rewards that such tourists can bring, it will require concerted central government interventions to market them.

Eco-tourism definitely has an important part to play in the management plan for the Park and those living in the buffer zone can expect to derive some benefits, but since Sumbar’s tourist market is much more likely to be derived from national tourists than international ones, and to be relatively small in scale, the expectations that surround it need to be carefully managed.

Back-ups

68. The MTE finds that the Project has no written policy on computer back-up procedures. The Information and Communications Technology Project Specialist has installed anti-virus software on Project computers and does back-up files on an irregular basis to an external hard-drive, but as is common practice in so many UNDP-GEF projects, the said hard drive is stored in the same Project Office as the computers it is backing-up, hence making everything extremely vulnerable to fire. With fireproof safes difficult to obtain in Turkmenistan, and storing the back-ups off site a complicated and risky process, the ICT Specialist has looked into backing up files using a fast-internet virtual private

server. This would require purchase of space from a server-host but would enable all project files and the website to be archived safe from both viruses and fire. The MTE recommends that, should the Project remain open, this server space be purchased as a matter of priority.

| The MTE recommends that appropriate space be purchased from a server-host to enable all project files and the website to be archived securely. | | | |
|---|--|-------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Responsibility</i> | <i>Task</i> | <i>Time frame</i> | <i>Deliverable</i> |
| PO | Purchase appropriate server-host space | Immediately | server-host space |
| PO | Develop and implement policy for regular and frequent back-up of files, or set up system for automatic back-up | Immediately | Policy or automatic system |

Adaptive Management

69. The adaptive management displayed by the Project to date is notable by its general absence. The poor levels of monitoring and evaluation and the lack of appropriate levels of follow-up have meant that the basic levels of incoming information on which to base management decisions have been missing. Although it has generally been acknowledged by those involved in the Project that delivery is slow, there appears to have been an inability of those involved either to recognise the problems that exist or to acknowledge them once they have been identified. These failings, rather than the lack of an appropriate response, are significant factors in the Project's current ills. The only case of adaptive management evident is that of recruiting an ITA once it became apparent that the technical capacity of the NPM (and of the UNDP-CO) was not of the level required to implement this Project. Unfortunately this was 11 months after the Inception Workshop and the process took another seven months to complete.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of critical recommendations need to be met by 31st March 2013 in order for a decision to be made to keep this Project open. Since the MTE deems each task to be critical to enabling the Project to succeed, **failure to achieve any one should then result in the Project's immediate closure.** These are:

- The Project should be removed from the Energy and Environment Programme and be placed directly under the remit of the Deputy Resident Representative – see paragraph 61.
- In order to provide sufficient time for the restructured Project to achieve its core aims, it should be granted a no-cost extension of two years – see paragraph 54.
- All technical work on the Project in 2013 should be suspended¹⁷ while detailed planning is undertaken – see paragraph 62. Detailed planning should include:
 - Adopt and absorb logframe revised in the Inception Report;
 - Further review and clarify the logframe – see paragraph 66;
 - Revise and correct the accounts;
 - Develop a detailed work plan for 2013 and an outline work plan for 2014 (assuming extension to Dec 2014);
 - Use new work plans to develop a detailed recruitment plan for rest of entire project (assuming extension to Dec 2014);
 - Use new work plans to develop a detailed procurement plan for 2013 and an outline plan for 2014 (assuming extension to Dec 2014).

¹⁷ Except for the contract let to the Team Leader of the Sumbar Working Group which should continue uninterrupted for delivery at end of March 2013 as stipulated.

- The UNDP-CO, in consultation with the UNDP-GEF RTA, should draw up proposals to streamline the recruitment procedures in operation in such a way as to restore confidence that they are fit to fully support the Project's needs – see paragraph 64.
- The Project Board should meet at least twice a year, and one such meeting should prioritise discussion of the strategic direction of the Project – see paragraph 55.

Additional recommendations include:

- Funding of a captive breeding centre/rehabilitation facilitation at Sunt-Hasardag should be reviewed – see paragraph 46.
- No Project money (GEF or UNDP) should be spent on displays of stuffed animals for the visitor centre – see paragraph 46.
- Appropriate space be purchased from a server-host to enable all project files and the website to be archived securely – see paragraph 68.

ANNEX I : MID-TERM EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

Project background information, goal, objectives and outcomes

The Project on “Strengthening the management effectiveness of the protected area system of Turkmenistan” (PAS project) is funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by UNDP in close partnership with Ministry of Nature Protection, National Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna, Syunt-Hasardag Reserve, other reserves of Turkmenistan, research institutions, local government and communities.

The PAS Project started in 2010 and aims at creation an enabling environment for the establishment of a functional, effective and ecologically coherent system of protected areas. This project will complement the governmental efforts in expanding and strengthening the PA system with focus on two components: (i) Expanding protected area system to improve the representation and coverage; (ii) Supporting development of adequate systemic, institutional and individual capacity for management of the expanded protected area system.

For more detailed information about this project as well as other UNDP Turkmenistan environmental projects please visit: www.undptkm.org.

This project was designed to complement the government’s efforts in expanding and strengthening the Protected Areas System in Turkmenistan, and the project has the **objective** of ‘creating an enabling environment for the establishment of a functional, effective and ecologically coherent system of protected areas in Turkmenistan’. The project has two **components** – along with their associated outcomes, outputs and activities - which will contribute towards achieving the project objective. These are: **Component 1. Expanded Protected Areas System (PAS) to improve PA representation and coverage;** and **Component 2. Adequate institutional and individual capacity is in place for the management of the PAS.** The project will focus activities at two levels of intervention: (i) the national level, through working with public institutions and agencies in order to develop the capacity to consolidate, expand and effectively manage the PAS; and (ii) the local level, through working directly with the target groups and local communities in order to establish the first National Park in Turkmenistan in the Sumbar river valley in the SW Kopetdag mountains.

The Project Expected Outcomes are as follows:

Outcome 1

Expanded Protected Area System (PAS) to improve PA representation and coverage:

- Improved coverage of the PA system to include under-represented desert ecosystems and regions notably the Balkhan and Central Karakum priority conservation areas;
- Enabling environment for an increased area of individual protected areas and the whole system;
- First National Park established as a model for this protected area management category in Turkmenistan (approx. 300,000 ha)

Outcome 2

Adequate institutional and individual capacity is in place for the management of the PAS:

- Enhanced capacity of the protected area institutions to implement the protected area system plan (measured by the Institutional scorecard and METT);
- Improved inter-institutional cooperation and collaboration over natural resources conservation and management.

Project Summary Table

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Project Title: | Strengthening the management effectiveness of the protected areas system of Turkmenistan | | | |
| GEF Project ID: | PIMS 3961 | | <i>at endorsement (Million US\$)</i> | <i>at MTE (Million US\$)</i> |
| UNDP Project ID: | 00071171 | GEF financing: | 0.95 | 0.95 |
| Country: | Turkmenistan | IA/EA own: | n/a | n/a |
| Region: | Central Asia | Government: | 0.59 in-kind | 0.59 in kind |
| Focal Area: | Biodiversity | Other: | UNDP 0.06 | 0.006 |
| FA Objectives, (OP/SP): | (SP) 3 of SO 1, 'Strengthening Terrestrial Protected Area Networks'. | Total co-financing: | n/a | n/a |
| Executing Agency: | Ministry of Nature Protection | Total Project Cost in cash: | 1.01 | 1.01 |
| Other Partners involved: | Succow Fund | ProDoc Signature (date project began): | | October 2009 |
| | | (Operational) Closing Date: | Initial: Dec. 2012 | Proposed: Dec. 2013 |

1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with UNDP and GEF M&E policies and procedures, In accordance with the UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Procedures the mid-term evaluation is recommended for all the projects with a long term of implementation or those at critical stage of implementation. This Mid Term Evaluation is initiated by the UNDP Turkmenistan as the Implementation Agency for this project and it aims to provide managers (at the Project Implementation Unit, UNDP Turkmenistan Country Office and UNDP/GEF levels) with strategy and policy options for more effectively and efficiently achieving the project's expected results and for replicating the results. It also provides the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders.

These terms of reference (TOR) sets out the expectations for a Mid-term Evaluation (MTE) of the *"Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Areas System of Turkmenistan"* (PIMS 3961)

Objective and Scope

This evaluation is to be undertaken taking into consideration the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policy: http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/ME_Policy_2010.pdf and guidelines for conducting evaluations: www.thegef.org/gef/node/1905; as well as the UNDP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy: <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.htm>

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE MID-TERM EVALUATION

The objective of the MTE is to gain an independent deep view of the progress attained The MTE is intended to identify potential project design problems, assess progress towards the achievement of objective, identify and document lessons learned (including lessons that might improve design and implementation of other UNDP/GEF projects), and to make recommendations regarding specific actions that might be taken to improve the project. Such evaluation is expected to serve a tool to recognize or bridge the gaps in the primary assessment of relevance, effectiveness and cost-efficiency as gained from the monitoring exercise. The mid-term evaluation enables to assess the primary signs of the project success or failure and identify the necessary changes to be made. The mid-term

evaluation shall be performed by an independent expert unrelated to the project development or implementation.

The evaluation will play a critical role in the future implementation of the project by providing advice on: (i) how to strengthen the adaptive management and monitoring function of the project; (ii) how to ensure accountability for the achievement of the GEF objective; (iii) how to enhance organizational and development learning; and (iv) how to enable informed decision – making.

The evaluation will have to provide to the GEF Secretariat complete and convincing evidence to support its findings/ratings. The consultant should prepare specific ratings on seven aspects of the project, as described in the 'Reporting' section of this Terms of Reference. Particular emphasis should be put on the current project results and the possibility of achieving the objective and outcomes in the established timeframe, taking into consideration the speed, at which the project is proceeding.

2.1 Tasks:

- (i) To evaluate the overall project activities in relation to the objectives and expected outcomes as stated in the project document and the other related documents
- (ii) To evaluate the project effectiveness and cost-efficiency
- (iii) To critically analyze the arrangements of project management and implementation
- (iv) To evaluate the progress attained so far in relation to the project outcomes
- (v) To investigate the strategies and plans intended for the timely achievement of the overall project goal
- (vi) To list and document the first lessons learned in respect of the project design, its implementation and management
- (vii) To assess the sustainability of project interventions;
- (viii) To assess the relevance in relation to the national priorities
- (ix) To provide the recommendations for the future project activities and, where necessary, for the project implementation and management arrangements.

The project performance will be measured based on the indicators of the project's logical framework (see Annex 3). Many of these indicators relate to the impact/implementation that will be applied in the impact assessment. The success and failure will partially be determined through the monitoring of the relative changes within the baseline conditions developed within one year of the project implementation. Where possible, the indicator species, sensitive to the changes of habitat and pressure increase, will need to be identified and monitored. In case of an identified shrinkage of the population of rare and endangered species the measures will be undertaken to identify the causes of such shrinkage and the alternative strategies will be developed to ensure the long-term welfare of the populations that will further be incorporated in the overall project site management.

The mid-term evaluation report shall be a separate document which will contain the recommendations and conclusions.

The report will be intended to meet the needs of all the related parties (GEF, UNDP, the project's National Steering Committee, reserves, affected local communities and other related parties in Turkmenistan and foreign countries).

3. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation exercise will embrace the project elements as follows:

Project concept and design: The evaluator will assess the project concept and design. He/she should review the problem addressed by the project and the project strategy, encompassing an assessment of the appropriateness of the objectives, planned outputs, activities and inputs as compared to cost-effective alternatives. The executing modality and managerial arrangements should also be judged.

The evaluator will assess the achievement of indicators and review the work plan, planned duration and budget of the project.

Implementation: The evaluation will assess the implementation of the project in terms of quality and timeliness of inputs and efficiency and effectiveness of activities carried out. Also, the effectiveness of management as well as the quality and timeliness of monitoring and backstopping by all parties to the project should be evaluated. In particular, the evaluation is to assess the project team's use of adaptive management in project implementation. The evaluation exercise will measure the level of achievement of the project's objective. It will also identify which interim results have been achieved and how they have contributed to meeting the ultimate project outcomes. This section will be focused on the priority areas as follows:

Project outputs, outcomes and impact: The evaluation will assess the outputs, outcomes and impact achieved by the project as well as the likely sustainability of project results. This should encompass an assessment of the achievement of the outcomes and the contribution to attaining the overall objective of the project. The evaluation should also assess the extent to which the implementation of the project has been inclusive of relevant stakeholders and to which it has been able to create collaboration between different partners. The evaluation will also examine if the project has had significant unexpected effects, whether of beneficial or detrimental character.

Project Management and Administration: The evaluation should collect, document and assess the relevant elements and processes including: (i) Administrative procedures related to the project; (ii) Key decisions and interim results; and (iii) The main project implementation documents specifying how useful have the documents and reports been

Project Execution: The evaluation should assess the quality of services provided by MNP acting as the Implementing Agency (within the national UNDP execution) and PIU (project management cost-efficiency including the achievement of interim results in terms of quality, quantity and timeliness; and the monitoring system)

The Mid-term Evaluation will also cover the following aspects:

3.1. Progress towards Results

Changes in development conditions. Address the following questions:

- (i) Do the results achieved by the project lead to improvement of PA representation and coverage?
- (ii) Do the project achievements contribute to the adequate institutional and individual capacity for the management of the PAS?
- (iii) How the project results and current activities support the overall effort to establish Sumbar National Park?

Measurement of change: Progress towards results should be based on a comparison of indicators before and after (so far) the project intervention. Progress can also be assessed by comparing conditions in the **Syunt-Hasardag reserve** to conditions in similar reserves.

Project strategy: how and why outcomes and strategies contribute to the achievement of the expected results. Examine their relevance and whether they provide the most effective route towards results.

Sustainability: to which extent the benefits of the project will continue, within or outside the project domain, after it has come to an end. Relevant factors include for example: development of a sustainability strategy, establishment of financial and economic instruments and mechanisms, mainstreaming project objectives into the national policy, etc.

3.2. Adaptive management framework of the project

Monitoring Systems.

- a) Assess the monitoring tools currently being used:
 - Do they provide the necessary information?
 - Do they involve key partners?
 - Are they efficient?
 - Are additional tools required?
- b) Reconstruct baseline data if necessary. Reconstruction should follow participatory processes and could be achieved in conjunction with a learning exercise;
- c) Ensure that the monitoring system, including performance indicators, at least meets GEF minimum requirements. Apply SMART indicators as necessary;
- d) Apply the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool and provide a description of comparison with the baseline values.

Risk Management

- a) Validate whether the risks identified in the project document, PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Management Module are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate. If not, explain why. Describe any additional risks identified and suggest risk ratings and possible risk management strategies to be adopted;
- b) Assess the project's risk identification and management systems:
 - Is the UNDP/GEF Risk Management System appropriately applied?
 - How can the UNDP/GEF Risk Management System be used to strengthen project management?

Work Planning

- a) Assess the use of the logical framework as a management tool during implementation and any changes made to it:
 - Ensure the logical framework meets UNDP/GEF requirements in terms of format and content;
 - What impact did the retro-fitting of impact indicators have on project management?
- b) Assess the use of routinely updated work plans;
- c) Assess the use of electronic information technologies to support implementation, participation and monitoring, as well as other project activities;
- d) Is work planning processes result-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning;
- e) Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions. Any irregularities must be noted.

Reporting

- a) Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management;
- b) Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

3.3. Underlying Factors

- a) Assess the underlying factors beyond the project's immediate control that influence outcomes and results. Consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of the project's management strategies for these factors;
- b) Re-test the assumptions made by the project management and identify new assumptions that should be made;
- c) Assess the effect of any incorrect assumptions made by the project.

3.4. UNDP Contribution

- a) Assess the role of UNDP against the requirements set out in the UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results. Consider: field visits; Steering Committee/TOR follow-up and analysis; PIR preparation and follow-up; GEF guidance;
- b) Consider the new UNDP requirements outlined in the UNDP User Guide, especially the Project Assurance role, and ensure they are incorporated into the project's adaptive management framework;
- c) Assess the contribution to the project from UNDP "soft" assistance (i.e. policy advice & dialogue, advocacy, and coordination). Suggest measures to strengthen UNDP's soft assistance to the project management.

3.5. Partnership Strategy

- a) Assess how partners are involved in the project's adaptive management framework:
 - Involving partners and stakeholders in the selection of indicators and other measures of performance;
 - Using already existing data and statistics;
 - Analyzing progress towards results and determining project strategies.
- b) Identify opportunities for stronger substantive partnerships;
- c) Assess how local stakeholders participate in project management and decision-making. Include an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the approach adopted by the project and suggestions for improvement if necessary;
- d) Consider the dissemination of project information to partners and stakeholders and if necessary suggest more appropriate mechanisms;
- e) Assess collaboration between governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations;
- f) Assess collaboration between implementation units of other related projects;
- g) Assess local partnerships;
- h) Assess transfer of capacity to the national institutions.

3.6. Project Finance

- a) Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and provide an opinion on the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions, taking into account the project activity timeframe;
- b) Review the effectiveness of financial coordinating mechanisms.

4. Deliverables/Products expected from the evaluation

The key product expected from this mid-term evaluation is:

The Mid-term Evaluation Report

The mid-term evaluation report will include:

- The facts and conclusions identified in respect of the issues to be reviewed in accordance with The Scope of Evaluation section
- Evaluation of project impact on:
 - The institution assisted and its staff;
 - The final beneficiaries including specific groups;
- Project sustainability on the basis of:
 - The commitments of the governmental agencies in relation to the project objectives
 - Involvement of local organizations (participatory process)
 - Management and organizational factors
 - Financing
 - Staff development
- Recommendations for the future implementation of the project activities
- Lessons learned

5. EVALUATION APPROACH

The Mid-Term Evaluation will be done through a combination of processes including a desk study, site visits, questionnaires and interviews, with involvement of all the parties related but not limited by: MNP, UNDP, representatives of the governmental agencies of various levels, local authorities, communities etc.

The evaluation team will be governed by the materials that available at <http://web.undp.org/gef/> as follows:

- (i) UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results
- (ii) UNDP/GEF M&E Resource Kit
- (iii) Measuring Results of the GEF Land Management Program

The evaluation methodology is assumed to cover the aspects as follows:

- (i) Desk study of all project documentation (see [Annex2](#))
- (ii) Consultations with MNP, and Syunt-Hasardag state reserve
- (iii) Field visits (Ashgabat, and possible visit to project site – Syunt-Hasardag State reserve)
- (iv) Interviews with related parties
 - MNP, its territorial departments and SPA's
 - Local authorities
 - Local communities

6. EVALUATION TEAM

The Mid-term Evaluation will be carried out by one international consultant. UNDP will provide guidance, documentation, and support to international consultant.

The international consultant is responsible for the successful completion of the evaluation and finalizing the Mid-term Evaluation report. The consultant is expected to be familiar with the region and have basic knowledge of the project area (such as region's land management practices, socio-economic and legislative context,)

6.1 Evaluator's Competencies and Qualities:

- Competence in Adaptive Management, as applied to conservation or natural resource management projects;
- Well-developed organizational and inter-personal skills;
- Ability to deliver on time.

6.2 Evaluator's Required Skills and Experience:

- Recent experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies;
- Experience applying participatory monitoring approaches;
- Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- Knowledge of the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy;
- Recognized expertise in the land use planning and management;
- Demonstrable analytical skills;
- Work experience in relevant areas for at least 10 years;
- Experience with multilateral or bilateral supported land management related projects;
- Project evaluation experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset;
- Experience working in Central Asia region;
- Excellent English communication skills, Russian is advantage

6.3 Specifically, the international expert will perform the following tasks:

- Design the detailed evaluation scope and methodology (including the methods for data collection and analysis);

- Conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy (as per the scope of the evaluation described above);
- Draft related parts of the evaluation report; and
- Finalize the whole evaluation report.

6.4 The evaluation will be undertaken in-line with GEF principles:

- Independence
- Impartiality
- Transparency
- Disclosure
- Ethical
- Partnership
- Competencies and Capacities
- Credibility
- Utility

The evaluator must be independent from both the policy-making process and the delivery and management of assistance. Therefore applications will not be considered from evaluators who have had any direct involvement with the design or implementation of the project. This may apply equally to evaluators who are associated with organizations, universities or entities that are, or have been, involved in the protected areas project policy-making process and/or its implementation. Any previous association with the project, Ministry of Nature Protection and its affiliates in the project sites, UNDP Turkmenistan or other partners/stakeholders must be disclosed in the application. This applies equally to firms submitting proposals as it does to individual evaluators.

If selected, failure to make the above disclosures will be considered just grounds for immediate contract termination, without recompense. In such circumstances, all notes, reports and other documentation produced by the evaluator will be retained by UNDP.

If a proposal is accepted from a consulting firm, the firm will be held responsible for the delivery and quality of the evaluation products.

7. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation lies with UNDP Turkmenistan. It is the main operational point responsible for liaising with the project team to set up interviews with stakeholder, arrange field visits and co-ordinate with the Executing Agency and other counterparts. UNDP Turkmenistan will contract the evaluator and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the evaluation.

The report should be submitted to UNDP Country Office in Turkmenistan (to the attention of Mr. Rovshen Nurmuhamedov, mailing address: 40 Galkynysh St., Ashgabat, Turkmenistan; Tel.: +99312425250, email: Rovshen.nurmuhamedov@undp.org)

Prior to approval of the final report, a draft version shall be circulated for comments to government counterparts and the members of the project steering group: UNDP, National Project Coordinator, and representatives of the interested parties.

If any discrepancies have emerged between impressions and findings of the evaluation team and the aforementioned parties, these should be explained in an annex attached to the final report.

The key activities and timeframe are broken down as follows:

| Activity | Approx. duration | Deadlines |
|---|-------------------------|---|
| Desk review | 3 days | 17 October 2012 |
| MTE Mission to Turkmenistan: Field visits, interviews, questionnaire, briefing of evaluation consultants | 10 days | Travel dates and schedule are to be discussed |
| Validation of preliminary findings with stakeholders through circulation of initial reports for comments, meetings, and other types of feedback mechanisms and Debriefing to UNDP about key findings of evaluation | 4 days | 10 November 2012 |
| Preparation of final mid-term evaluation report (including comments) | 5 days | 20 November 2012 |
| Total: | 22 working days | |

The draft and final report will be prepared in the format as provided in *Annex 1* hereto and presented electronically in English. The draft report will be presented to UNDP/GEF for comments. The final report will be prepared on the basis of the comments to be obtained from the parties related.

The MTE process should commence no later than 10 October 2012 and be completed on 20 November 2012 the latest.

ANNEX II : ITINERARY OF ACTIVITIES OF THE MID-TERM EVALUATION MISSION

| Date | | Activities |
|------|----------------------|--|
| Tues | 30 th Oct | am: Document review. pm: 1. Meeting (Skype) with UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor (Mr. Maxim Vergeichik). |
| Wed | 31 st Oct | am: Document review. pm: 1. Meeting (Skype) with International Technical Advisor (Mr. Michael Appleton). |
| Sat | 3 rd Nov | 1. Evaluator travels to Turkmenistan. 2. Meeting with Head of Partner Development Unit, Europe Middle East and Central Asia; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK) (Mr. Mark Day). |
| Sun | 4 th Nov | Evaluator arrives in Ashgabat |
| Mon | 5 th Nov | am: 1. Administrative arrangements. 2. Meeting with UNDP Environment Programme Specialist (Mr. Rovshen Nurmuhamedov). pm: 1. Meeting with UNDP Climate Resilience Development Programme Component Manager (Mr. Djemshid Khadjiyev). 2. Meeting with UNDP Resident Representative (Ms. Jacinta Barrins). |
| Tue | 6 th Nov | am: 1. Meeting with Biodiversity and PA Expert, PASP Team (Dr. Ejebay Kokanova). 2. Meeting with Management Planning and Monitoring Expert, PASP Team (Mrs. Galina Kamahina). 3. Meeting with PA Financing Expert, PASP Team and Sumbar Working Group (Mr. Stanislav Aganov). pm: 1. Meeting with GIS Expert, PASP Team (Mr. Atamurad Veyisov). 2. Meeting with UNDP Climate Resilience Development Programme Component Manager (Mr. Djemshid Khadjiyev). |
| Wed | 7 th Nov | am: 1. Meeting with UNDP Head of PIU for Environment Portfolio (Mrs. Larissa Pavluhina). 2. Meeting with Institutional Development and Planning Expert, PASP Team (Mrs. Tatyana Rotaru). 3. Meeting with UNDP Operations Manager (Ms. Mary Risaeva). 4. Meeting with former Project Assistant (to this Project) and current Human Resources Project Assistant, PIU for Environment Portfolio (Ms. Ayna Allaberdiyeva). pm: 1. Meeting with Team Leader of Sumbar Working Group (Mr. Eldar Rustamov). 2. Meeting with Video Maker (Mr. Ovez Velmuradov). 3. Administrative arrangements. |
| Thu | 8 th Nov | am: 1. Meeting with PA Legal Expert, PASP Team and Sumbar Working Group (Mr. Elbars Kepbanov). 2. Meeting with Land Management Expert, Sumbar Working Group (Mr. Yusup Dovletov). pm: 1. Meeting with Technical Advisor (Mrs. Shirin Karryeva) and UNDP Climate Resilience Development Programme Component Manager (Mr. Djemshid Khadjiyev) to work through logframe indicators. |
| Fri | 9 th Nov | am: 1. Travel to Sunt-Hasgardag Zapovednik (proposed site for Sundar National Park) (6 hours). pm: 1. Field visit to view parts of the proposed National Park. 2. Meeting with Biodiversity Expert, Sumbar Working Group (Mr. Hodjamurad Hodjamuradov). 3. Meeting with Institutional Planning Expert, Sumbar Working Group (Mr. Nikolai Andreev). |
| Sat | 10 th Nov | am: 1. Meeting with Technical Advisor (Mrs. Shirin Karryeva). 2. Visit to view new captive-breeding centre (under development) as part of proposed visitor centre. pm: 1. Meeting with Director of Sunt-Hasgardag Zapovednik (Mr. Begmurad Mamedov). 2. Travel to Ashgabat (5½ hours). |
| Sun | 11 th Nov | All day: Report writing. |
| Mon | 12 th Nov | am: 1. Meeting with National Park Expert, Public Relations Development Concept Group (Mrs. Galina Kamahina); PR Expert, Public Relations Development |

| Date | | Activities |
|------|----------------------|---|
| | | <p>Concept Group (Ms. Gulshat Veyisova); and Design Expert, Public Relations Development Concept Group (Mr. Ata Annamamedov). 2. Data gathering.</p> <p>pm: 1. Data gathering. 2. Meeting with Head of Department for Coordinating Environmental Programmes (Dr. Muhammet Durikov) and Head of Department of Flora and Fauna Protection (Dr. Ogulsona Karyeva).</p> |
| Tue | 13 th Nov | <p>am: 1. Meeting with Minister for Nature Protection (Mr. Babageldi Annabayramov). 2. Meeting with Low-emission Development Programme Component Manager (Ms. Irina Atamuradova).</p> <p>pm: 1. Data gathering. 2. De-briefing Meeting.</p> |
| Wed | 14 th Nov | am: Evaluator departs Ashgabat. |

ANNEX III : PERSONS INTERVIEWED

(S) = Skype interview. Alphabetic order.

UNDP / GEF

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Ayna Allaberdiyeva | Former Project Assistant (to this Project) and current Human Resources Project Assistant, PIU for Environment Portfolio |
| Djemshid Khadjiyev | Climate Resilience Development Programme Component Manager |
| Irina Atamuradova | Low-emission Development Programme Component Manager |
| Jacinta Barrins | Resident Representative |
| Larissa Pavluhina | Head of PIU for Environment Portfolio |
| Mary Risaeva | Operations Manager |
| Maxim Vergeichik | UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor, Bratislava (S) |
| Rovshen Nurmuhamedov | Environment Programme Specialist |
| Shirin Karryeva | Technical Advisor |

Project Consultants

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Ata Annamamamedov | Design Expert, Public Relations Development Concept Group |
| Atamurad Veyisov | GIS Expert, PASP Team |
| Ejebay Kokanova | Biodiversity and PA Expert, PASP Team |
| Elbars Kepbanov | PA Legal Expert, PASP Team and Sumbar Working Group |
| Eldar Rustamov | Team Leader of Sumbar Working Group |
| Galina Kamahina | Management Planning and Monitoring Expert, PASP Team and National Park Expert, Public Relations Development Concept Group |
| Gulshat Veyisova | PR Expert, Public Relations Development Concept Group |
| Hodjamurad Hodjamuradov | Biodiversity Expert, Sumbar Working Group |
| Michael Appleton | International Technical Advisor (S) |
| Nikolai Andreev | Institutional Planning Expert, Sumbar Working Group |
| Ovez Velmuradov | Video Maker |
| Stanislav Aganov | PA Financing Expert, PASP Team and Sumbar Working Group |
| Tatyana Rotaru | Institutional Development and Planning Expert, PASP Team |
| Yusup Dovletov | Land Management Expert, Sumbar Working Group |

Ministry for Nature Protection

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Babageldi Annabayramov | Minister for Nature Protection |
| Begmurad Mamedov | Director of Sunt-Hasgardag Zapovednik |
| Muhammet Durikov | Head of Department for Coordinating Environmental Programmes |
| Ogulsona Karyeva | Head of Department of Flora and Fauna Protection |

Project Partners

| | |
|----------|---|
| Mark Day | Head of Partner Development Unit, Europe Middle East and Central Asia; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK) |
|----------|---|

ANNEX IV : SUMMARY EVALUATION OF PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS BY OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The logframe in the Project Document was revised during the Inception Workshop and the present evaluation matrix uses this version despite the fact that the original appears to have retained currency within the Project (see paragraph 20, second main bullet). The delivery status herein is taken largely from work with the Component Manager and Technical Advisor, and from observations during the mission. **It is important to note** that the MTE has produced two versions of this matrix, the first on the basis that the Project ends on its scheduled date of 31st December 2012, and the second on the basis that the current date (November 2012) really does represent a mid-point and that the Project is allowed to continue for another 18-24 months according to the provisos made within the text of the MTE Report (see paragraph 52). Similarly, in this second version the evaluation rating is given without recourse to the fact that everything has been inordinately delayed otherwise all would remain unchanged from the first. Instead, the Evaluator has tried to evaluate the progress made since late 2011 when Ms. Shirin Karryeva largely took over running the Project – a point that could be said to be the real start of the Project and from which one year would make an early mid-term of a three-year Project.

KEY:

- GREEN = Indicators show achievement already successful or full expectation of achievement by end of Project.
- YELLOW = Indicators show some progress – achievement expected by end of Project with increased effort.
- ORANGE = Indicators show poor progress – possibly unlikely to be achieved by end of Project
- RED = Indicators show poor or no progress – unlikely to be achieved by end of Project
- HATCHED COLOUR = estimate; situation either unclear or indicator inadequate to make a firm assessment against.

A) **ASSUMES PROJECT WILL CLOSE ON 31ST DECEMBER 2012**

Project Goal: None stated.

| # | Aim | Performance Indicator | Baseline | End of Project Target | Delivery Status at Mid-term evaluation | Comments | HS | S | MS | MU | U | HU |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1 | Objective: To create an enabling environment for the establishment of a functional, effective and ecologically coherent system of protected areas in Turkmenistan | Coverage (ha) of the PA system | 1,934,200ha | 2,050,000ha | 1,934,200 ha | No advances made at present that will increase coverage by end of Project. | | | | | | |
| 2 | | Financial sustainability scorecard for PA System | 31% | >48% by 36th mnth | 25.9% | No indications for decrease since baseline version not available to MTE | | | | | | |
| 3 | | Capacity assessment scorecard for PA System | Systemic – 50% Institutional – 42% Individual – 38% | Systemic – 76% by 36th mnth Institutional – 72% by 36th mnth Individual – 54% by 36th mnth | Systemic – 53% Institutional – 38% Individual – 33% | Arithmetic errors in baseline scores corrected here in this matrix. Scores show minimal increase for systemic, and a fall in institutional – see paragraph 34. | | | | | | |
| 4 | | Endorsement of the PASP by Government | No PASP | PASP by 18th mnth Endorsement by 24th mnth | No PASP | First draft reports for PASP submitted to UNDP for comment too late for progress. | | | | | | |
| 5 | | Extent of representativeness (types); ecological basis for boundaries; ecological corridors and other linkages | To be determined by Review and Survey | 100% of key types by 36th mnth Ecological coherence by 36th mnth | Not yet determined | Review of ecological basis being undertaken as part of PASP team, too late for progress. | | | | | | |
| 6 | Outcome 1: Expanded Protected Areas System (PAS) to improve PA representation and coverage | Number of formally proclaimed IUCN Category 2 – National Parks | No National Parks | At least one NP by 18th mnth A further two identified by 36th mnth | No National Parks | Three sites identified. Full technical proposal inc. management plan being developed for one. Feasibility study could be available for end of March 2013 if single contract left to conclude. | | | | | | |

| # | Aim | Performance Indicator | Baseline | End of Project Target | Delivery Status at Mid-term evaluation | Comments | HS | S | MS | MU | U | HU |
|----|---|---|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 7 | | Extent (ha) of additional areas of under-represented habitat types formally incorporated into the system of PAs | 22,185ha | >24,000ha by 36th mnth | 22,185 ha | No additional area will be produced by 31 st Dec 2012. | | | | | | |
| 8 | | Extent (ha) of lowland deserts, desert plateaus, mountains formally incorporated into the system of PAs | 127,815ha | >175,000ha by 36th mnth | 127,815ha | See # 7. | | | | | | |
| 9 | | Sumbar NP established and functioning according to objectives and Management Plan | Sumbar NP does not exist | Sumbar NP established by 24th mnth | Sumbar NP does not exist | Legislation amended to allow National Park category to exist is a significant achievement in its own right. | | | | | | |
| 10 | | Pilots carried out, evaluated, refined and adopted; Guidelines/Manual produced and being used for training | nil | Guidelines/Manual by 24th mnth | Not assessed. | Indicator is unclear. Term "Pilots" not understood – see paragraph 66. | | | | | | |
| 11 | Outcome 2: Adequate institutional and individual capacity is in place for the management of the PAS | METT score progress for key PAs targeted by the project | Repetek: 29%; Badkhyz: 29%; Kopetdag: 30%; Syunt Hasardag: 29%; Kaplankyr: 30%; Amadurya: 31%; Koyetendag: 30% | >40% | Repetek: 41.2%; Badkhyz: 46.1%; Kopetdag: 41.2%; Syunt Hasardag: 41.2%; Kaplankyr: 41.2%; Amadurya: 41.2%; Koyetendag: 41.2%; | Kaplankyr is missing at time of draft since visit is scheduled to occur between MTE mission and submission of final report, when it is hoped to include it. | | | | | | |
| 12 | | Number of planning, management and operational national park staff completing specialized training and/or skills development programmes | nil | >20 by 24th mnth >40 by 36th mnth | None. | No staff can be appointed until the National Park is established. | | | | | | |

| # | Aim | Performance Indicator | Baseline | End of Project Target | Delivery Status at Mid-term evaluation | Comments | HS | S | MS | MU | U | HU |
|----|-----|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 13 | | Operational capability in terms of funding, mobility, engagement with communities, resolving identified problems | To be established by Needs Assessment | Improvements over Baseline at annual intervals | No needs assessment undertaken, hence baseline has not been established. | | | | | | | |
| 14 | | PA Management Board functioning effectively; monitoring strategies being implemented | nil | Board by 18th mnth Monitoring by 24th mnth | No Boards formed. | Intention was for a functional PA Management Board for each PA, as well as a National PAS Authority or similar. | | | | | | |
| 15 | | Training Centre (PA Academy) established and first trainees graduate successfully | nil | Centre by 24th mnth Graduates by 30th mnth | No centre established. | Space allocated within Institute of Deserts Flora and Fauna; air conditioning procured; vendor for computers, telephones, furniture, materials selected. MTE remains concerned about no curriculum or trainers provided. | | | | | | |

B) ASSUMES NOVEMBER 2012 IS MID-TERM OF AN EXTENDED PROJECT

Project Goal: None stated.

| # | Aim | Performance Indicator | Baseline | End of Project Target | Delivery Status at Mid-term evaluation | Comments | HS | S | MS | MU | U | HU |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1 | Objective: To create an enabling environment for the establishment of a functional, effective and ecologically coherent system of protected areas in Turkmenistan | Coverage (ha) of the PA system | 1,934,200ha | 2,050,000ha | 1,934,200 ha No advance made at present but then gains here will not be made incrementally – they will appear as one when new designations are made through legislation. | Feasibility studies and SWOT analyses undertaken for four protected areas – two existing Central Kopetdag; Kugitang; and two new Bolshoy Balkhan; Central Karakum – to support two new National Parks (on existing reserves) and designation of two new reserves. In addition, feasibility and SWOT analysis 70% complete for proposed Sumbar National Park. | | | | | | |
| 2 | | Financial sustainability scorecard for PA System | 31% | >48% by 36th mnth | 25.9% | No indications for decrease since baseline version not available to MTE | | | | | | |
| 3 | | Capacity assessment scorecard for PA System | Systemic – 52% Institutional – 44% Individual – 33% | Systemic – 76% by 36th mnth Institutional – 72% by 36th mnth Individual – 54% by 36th mnth | Systemic – 53% Institutional – 38% Individual – 33% | Arithmetic errors in baseline scores corrected here in this matrix. Scores show minimal increase for systemic, and a fall in institutional – see paragraph 34. | | | | | | |
| 4 | | Endorsement of the PASP by Government | No PASP | PASP by 18th mnth Endorsement by 24th mnth | No PASP. | First draft reports for PASP submitted to UNDP for comment. | | | | | | |

| # | Aim | Performance Indicator | Baseline | End of Project Target | Delivery Status at Mid-term evaluation | Comments | HS | S | MS | MU | U | HU |
|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|---|--|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 5 | | Extent of representativeness (types); ecological basis for boundaries; ecological corridors and other linkages | To be determined by Review and Survey | 100% of key types by 36th mnth Ecological coherence by 36th mnth | Not yet determined. | Review of ecological basis being undertaken as part of PASP team. Once report finished, baseline extent of representativeness can be determined and plans for 100% inclusion of key types laid. | | | | | | |
| 6 | Outcome 1: Expanded Protected Areas System (PAS) to improve PA representation and coverage | Number of formally proclaimed IUCN Category 2 – National Parks | No National Parks | At least one NP by 18th mnth A further two identified by 36th mnth | No National Parks | Three sites identified. Full technical proposal inc. management plan being developed for one. | | | | | | |
| 7 | | Extent (ha) of additional areas of under-represented habitat types formally incorporated into the system of PAs | 22,185ha | >24,000ha by 36th mnth | 22,185 ha | See #5. Ecological review will identify possible areas for increasing under-represented habitat types. Slight concern over what methodology is being used – not the one from Uzbekistan? | | | | | | |
| 8 | | Extent (ha) of lowland deserts, desert plateaus, mountains formally incorporated into the system of PAs | 127,815ha | >175,000ha by 36th mnth | 127,815ha | See # 7. Ecological review will identify possible areas for increasing lowland deserts, desert plateaus, mountains into the PA system. | | | | | | |
| 9 | | Sumbar NP established and functioning according to objectives and Management Plan | Sumbar NP does not exist | Sumbar NP established by 24th mnth | Sumbar NP does not exist | Full technical proposal inc. management plan being developed for Sumbar NP. Legislation amended to allow National Park category to exist. MNP keen to establish. | | | | | | |

| # | Aim | Performance Indicator | Baseline | End of Project Target | Delivery Status at Mid-term evaluation | Comments | HS | S | MS | MU | U | HU |
|----|--|---|--|--|---|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 10 | | Pilots carried out, evaluated, refined and adopted; Guidelines/Manual produced and being used for training | nil | Guidelines/Manual by 24th mnth | Not assessed. | Indicator is unclear. Term "Pilots" not understood – see paragraph 66. | | | | | | |
| 11 | Outcome 2: Adequate institutional and individual capacity is in place for the management of the PAS | METT score progress for key PAs targeted by the project | Repetek: 29%; Badkhyz: 29%; Kopetdag: 30%; Syunt Hasardag: 29%; Kaplankyr: 30%; Amadurya: 31%; Koyetendag: 30% | >40% | Repetek: 41.2%; Badkhyz: 46.1%; Kopetdag: 41.2%; Syunt Hasardag: 41.2%; Kaplankyr: 41.2%; Amadurya: 41.2%; Koyetendag: 41.2%; | Kaplankyr is missing at time of draft since visit is scheduled to occur between MTE mission and submission of final report, when it is hoped to include it. | | | | | | |
| 12 | | Number of planning, management and operational national park staff completing specialized training and/or skills development programmes | nil | >20 by 24th mnth >40 by 36th mnth | None. | No staff can be appointed until the National Park is established, but it is assumed that requirements will be identified by feasibility study and hiring will follow shortly after establishment. | | | | | | |
| 13 | | Operational capability in terms of funding, mobility, engagement with communities, resolving identified problems | To be established by Needs Assessment | Improvements over Baseline at annual intervals | No needs assessment undertaken, hence baseline has not been established. | This needs to be rectified as a priority. | | | | | | |
| 14 | | PA Management Board functioning effectively; monitoring strategies being implemented | nil | Board by 18th mnth Monitoring by 24th mnth | No Boards formed. | Intention was for a functional PA Management Board for each PA, as well as a National PAS Authority or similar. | | | | | | |

| # | Aim | Performance Indicator | Baseline | End of Project Target | Delivery Status at Mid-term evaluation | Comments | HS | S | MS | MU | U | HU |
|----|-----|---|----------|---|--|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 15 | | Training Centre (PA Academy) established and first trainees graduate successfully | nil | Centre by 24th mnth Graduates by 30th mnth | No centre established. Funding made through four projects within Env Portfolio. | Space allocated within Institute of Deserts Flora and Fauna; air conditioning procured; vendor for computers, telephones, furniture, materials selected. MTE remains concerned about no curriculum or trainers provided. | | | | | | |

ANNEX V: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AT DE-BRIEFING MEETING


De-briefing held on 13th November 2012

Alphabetic order

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Djemshid Khadjiyev | Climate Resilience Development Programme Component Manager |
| Jacinta Barrins | Resident Representative |
| Lin Cao | Deputy Resident Representative |
| Rovshen Nurmuhamedov | Environment Programme Specialist |
| Shirin Karryeva | Technical Advisor |

ANNEX VI: LETTER OF RE-COMMITMENT TO THE PROJECT FROM THE MNP

English translation below.

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| TÜRKMENISTANYŇ TEBIGATY GORAMAK MINISTRIGI |  | MINISTRY OF NATURE PROTECTION OF TURKMENISTAN |
| ✉ 744000, Aşgabat ş., Arçabil şaýoly, 92 ☎ Tel.: 44-80-02, Faks: 44-80-09 | | ✉ 744000, 92, Archabil str. Ashgabat ☎ Phone.: 44-80-02, Fax: 44-80-09 |

« 16 » 11 2012 ý. № 2477/D1

**Постоянному представителю
ПРООН в Туркменистане
г-же Джассинта Барринс**


Уважаемая г-жа Барринс!

Прежде всего, хотел бы выразить благодарность за сотрудничество в реализации совместных проектов по проблемам сохранения и рационального использования природных ресурсов, в частности проекта «Усиление эффективности управления системой ООПТ Туркменистана». Создание национальных природных парков в Туркменистане определено в принятой Национальной стратегии по изменению климата как важная задача по сохранению биологического разнообразия.

В связи с этим, Министерство охраны природы Туркменистана подтверждает свои обязательства по созданию Национального парка «Сумбар» на базе существующего Сюнт-Хасардагского государственного заповедника и одобряет работу национальных и международных экспертов по подготовке Технико-экономического обоснования для Национального парка «Сумбар». Данный документ поможет Министерству охраны природы в подготовке платформы по организации национальных природных парков в Туркменистане.

В целях повышения эффективности совместных работ Министерство охраны природы поручает специалистам Управления охраны растительного и животного мира тесно сотрудничать с проектным персоналом и экспертами, регулярно проводить встречи с национальным техническим советником проекта для обмена опытом и знаниями в подготовке документации по созданию Национальных природных парков.

С уважением,

Министр  **Аннабайрамов Б.**

Jacinta Barrins
Resident Representative
UNDP in Turkmenistan

Dear Ms. Barrins,

First of all, I would like to thank you for your cooperation in implementation of joint projects on the protection and sustainable use of natural resources, in particular the project "Strengthening Protected Areas System in Turkmenistan". The establishment of national parks in Turkmenistan is defined in the adopted National Strategy on Climate Change as a major task for conservation of biological diversity.

In this regard, the Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan reaffirms its commitment to the establishment of the National Park "Sumbar" on the basis of the existing Syunt-Hasardag Nature Reserve. The Ministry endorses the national and international experts' work undertaken in preparation of the technical proposal for establishment of the "Sumbar" National Park. This document will help the Ministry of Nature Protection to develop a platform for the organization of the national parks in Turkmenistan.

In order to improve effectiveness of the joint work, the Ministry of Nature Protection authorizes the specialists of the Flora and Fauna Management Department to collaborate closely with the project staff and experts, to hold regular meetings with the project national technical advisors to share experience and knowledge for preparation of documentation for establishment of national parks.

Sincerely,

B. Annabayramov
Minister