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PEER REVIEW - THE EVALUATION FUNCTION OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF) - FINAL REPORT - MAY 2009

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The evaluation function of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)

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May, 2009

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List of acronyms

ACPER	Annual Country Performance Evaluation Report
AsDB	Asian Development Bank
AfDB	African Development Bank
APR	Annual Performance Report
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COP	Conference of the Parties
CPE	Country Portfolio Evaluation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
D.C.	District of Columbia
DGEF	Division of GEF Coordination (UNEP)
EA	Executing Agency
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECG	Evaluation Coordination Group (of the IFIs)
EO	Evaluation Office
EOU	Evaluation and Oversight Unit (UNEP)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (of the United Nations)
FY	Fiscal Year
FSP	Full-Size Project (US\$ 1 million and above)
GEB	Global Environment Benefit
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
IA	Implementing Agency
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank)

ICR	Implementation Completion Report (World Bank)
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IEG	Independent Evaluation Group (World Bank)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	International Financing Institution(s)
IOCE	International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
KS	Knowledge Sharing
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
MAR	Management Action Record
MSP	Medium-Sized Project (up to one million US\$)
MTR	Mid-Term Review
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NORDECO	Nordic Agency for Development and Environment
OME	Office of Monitoring and Evaluation
OPS	Overall Performance Study (every four years)
PBA	Performance-Based Allocation
PIR	Project Implementation Review (annually)
POP(s)	Persistent Organic Pollutant(s)
PPM	Peer Review Panel Meeting
PPR	Project Performance Report/Review (annually)
PSR	Pressure – State - Response
RAF	Results Allocation Framework

SGP	Small Grants Programme
SMPR	Specially Managed Project Review
STAP	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TER	Terminal Evaluation Review
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
WFP	World Food Programme

0. Executive Summary

0.1 Introduction

The years reviewed by the Peer Review represent a particularly dynamic, but also difficult phase of the GEF, characterised by the urgent demand of members for reform and change out of bureaucracy and stagnation. The new leadership in both the Secretariat and the EO had to deal with high and often conflicting expectations in the Council, the staff and among the GEF membership at large. This report pays tribute to the considerable results achieved by the GEF EO and aims at discussing issues for further improvement.

Every four years, the GEF produces an Overall Performance Study (OPS). The principal aim of this study is to inform the replenishment process, as well as the Council and General Assembly of the GEF, about the achievements of the organization during the previous period, to draw lessons and give indications on the way forward in the succeeding replenishment period.

In June 2007, the GEF EO offered the Council to take responsibility for OPS-4 as part of its regular work program. The Council approved the proposal except for the study components that would pose a conflict of interest. Accordingly, it was proposed that the role of the GEF Evaluation Office would be independently assessed by a Professional Peer Review Panel, composed of internationally recognized members.

In February 2008, the Director of the GEF EO approached the Head of Evaluation of the Finnish Cooperation and the Special Evaluator of the Belgian Cooperation, asking them to organize such peer review of the GEF EO. In early April 2008, it was decided that the Peer Review would be financed equally by the Finnish and the Belgian Governments and that the Office of the Special Evaluator of the Belgian Cooperation would chair the Peer Panel and coordinate the process.

The Panel was composed as follows:

- Dominique de Crombrughe, Special Evaluator for Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgium, Peer Panel Coordinator
- Caroline Heider, Director, Office of Evaluation, World Food Programme
- Heidi Pihlatie, Senior Evaluator, Unit for Evaluation and Internal Auditing, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland
- Oumoul Khayri Ba Tall, Senior Evaluator, President of the International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE), Mauretania
- Zhanar Sagimbayeva, Evaluator, Eurasian Development Bank, Kazakhstan
- Karel Cools, Senior Evaluator, Evaluation and Quality Control Service, MOFA, Belgium

Two Advisors assisted the members of the Panel, one from the North (Dr Horst Breier from Germany) and one from the South (Dr Dunstan Spencer from Sierra Leone). The Advisors were responsible for data collection and information gathering; preliminary

assessment of the collected information; assisting Panel members in their interviews with stakeholders, and drafting the assessment report.

The Peer Review examined the GEF evaluation function on three core criteria: Independence of the GEF-EO and of its evaluation processes, Credibility and Utility of its evaluations.

0.2 Budget and Finance

The Panel finds that GEF EO's financial independence is secured. The key stakeholders (EO and Council) are in agreement on what needs to be done in evaluation and on the corresponding level of financing. The GEF-EO evaluation budget is activity based, it reflects the Four-Year GEF Work Program for Evaluation and it represents the Four-Year Program's translation into annual programs of work and budgets.

From FY 05 to FY 09 the budget of the EO including special initiatives show an overall increase in of 52 per cent¹, amounting to USD 3,907,167 in 2009.

0.3 Evaluation Products and their Quality

The Peer Panel analysed a great number of documents (listed in annex,) and conducted interviews with the GEF Council, the GEF Secretariat, the GEF EO, the World Bank and the IEG, most GEF Agencies and a large number of stakeholders.

Further, the Peer Panel analysed a sample of six products representing recent work of the EO in the categories of Program Evaluations and Thematic Studies, Annual Performance Reports, and Country Portfolio Evaluations.² While this sample is not representative of the whole EO evaluation endeavour, it covers sufficient ground to extrapolate strengths and weaknesses of the evaluations produced by the GEF EO in recent years.

The main conclusion from this analysis is that overall, the GEF EO produces solid evaluation work, at the forefront of the state of the art with a welcome emphasis on methodological rigour and clarity.

Some points of attention are worth mentioning for further consideration with a view to consolidate and to deepen the good results achieved so far.

- The level of involvement of national and local stakeholders and beneficiaries in GEF EO evaluations processes remains a sensitive issue ; various stakeholders perceive these processes as a top down approach, which is hardly consistent with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and other current aid philosophy;

¹ This significant increase is partly due to the exclusion of the costs for OPS-3 from the regular evaluation budget.

² The sample comprised: Annual Performance Report 2007 (October 2008); Country Portfolio Evaluation Philippines (March 2008); The Role of Local Benefits in Global Environmental Programs (2006); RAF Mid-Term Review (October 2008); Joint Evaluation of the GEF Activity Cycle and Modalities (2007); and Annual Report on Impact 2007 (May 2007).

- GEF EO evaluation methodology shows a strong reliance on written material and third party assessments which is not always matched by a corresponding allocation of human and financial resources to on-site checks and verification, as well as to original evaluative research.
- The targeting of the Council as the main audience for evaluations is a safeguard for the independence of the EO. However there is room for improvement for bringing evaluation results to the attention of a wider audience than is the case at present.
- A short note about the evaluation team in a section or at the back of the reports, with regard to the qualifications and independence of consultants, to the gender balance and to the balance between international and national consultants, would be welcome.

0.4 Tools and Guidelines

The GEF Evaluation Office has produced a number of guidance documents over the last years. These are designed to help translating the *GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy* of 2006 into practice and to answer the demand contained in the Policy Recommendations of the Third GEF Replenishment for more rigorous minimum standards to be applied in GEF-related M&E work. Though these documents differ widely in character and coverage, weight and reach, they by and large represent state-of-the-art tools which are perceived by most stakeholders as helpful contributions towards harmonizing approaches, methods and modalities within the GEF partnership.

0.5 Independence

The Third Replenishment negotiations in 2002 recommended that the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Unit should be made independent, reporting directly to the Council, with its budget and work plan determined by the Council and its head proposed by the GEF CEO and appointed by the Council for a renewable term of five years. In 2003, the GEF Council decided to establish an independent Office of Monitoring and Evaluation. In February 2006, the Council approved the new and comprehensive *GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy*, a thoughtful, ambitious and action-oriented policy document.

The Panel notes the positive effects on the conduct of evaluations brought about by the achievement of structural independence of the EO. Independence is seen as important by EO staff and as conducive to freeing them from pressures to negotiate and amend approach papers, TORs and reports.

Essential for the structural independence of the EO is its reporting to the Council, the EO's primary audience. Stakeholders, including staff of the GEF Secretariat and the EO, as well as in GEF Agencies, consider that the cost for the EO's structural independence reflects in isolation from the Secretariat and the GEF Agencies. Stakeholders complain that this affects negatively the consultation and communication process during the preparation of the EO work plan as well as the organisational learning loop from evaluations. Council members, however, do not appear to share this view. They believe that the evaluations cover important issues for corporate development and discussions at the Council.

The structural independence of the GEF EO is vested in two letters of agreement exchanged between the CEO and the EO Director, authorizing the latter to speak to the Council directly on all matters pertaining to evaluation and to take decisions on human resource issues in the Evaluation Office. The Panel finds that the sustainability and validity of the letters of agreement as a binding institutional measure are questionable. Incumbents in either of the two positions could in theory change or even abrogate the agreement at any time. Therefore, the Panel holds that a more formal agreement, at least at the level of rules and regulations, is needed to put the structural independence of the GEF EO on a firmer legal basis.

0.6 Credibility

The Panel notes that the quality of the GEF EO evaluations has improved over recent years. Evaluation reports provide good technical information, with lots of facts and evidence, and in-depth analysis. This contributes to the credibility of the products. Moreover, robust methodological rigour has been introduced in the work of the EO.

The Panel was nevertheless faced with some issues that deserve consideration:

The analysis of the evaluation products has shown that particular products and specific actions are more important for establishing – or affecting – credibility than others. E.g. the Annual Performance Report (APR) provides an important and credible bridging function between the evaluation activities of the GEF Agencies and the role of oversight and aggregation that the Evaluation Office plays for the GEF as a whole. However the Panel was surprised to see an overwhelming majority of evaluations being rated moderately to very positive rather than a more even distribution across the rating scale.

The Panel was informed about persisting workload overstressing the human resources in the EO over extended periods of time. This could put the present quality of evaluations at risk.

The Panel found a restrictive practice regarding fieldwork. It has doubts that limiting fieldwork is an adequate way to cope with existing constraints. Less field exposure will mean reduced contact of the EO with the reality of GEF programmes and projects, which so far has been a strength of EO's work.

The transparency of planning and conducting evaluations through full and early consultation, ongoing dialogue and participation of stakeholders is an essential element of establishing the credibility and the appropriation of the results of an evaluation. Perhaps, this is the weakest part in the work of the EO at present. The Panel's discussions with stakeholders of the GEF partnership, including the GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies, and governments of recipient countries showed that the existing practice is not entirely satisfactory. While the Panel is aware that stakeholders do not always make use of participation opportunities offered by the EO, this criticism is real and could have implications for the credibility of the evaluation products.

A complaint voiced across the whole GEF partnership, in Washington as well as in other places visited by the Panel, relates to the very short period of time that the EO provides for the GEF Secretariat as well as for the GEF Agencies between submitting an evaluation

report and the deadline set to react to it. Stakeholders find this short time span totally insufficient to absorb the evaluation report, discuss its implications for future work, and provide a meaningful and thought through management response. The Panel finds the present practice of two-week deadlines arbitrary and counterproductive.

Eventually, the Panel noted the absence of an assessment of the performance of GEF Agencies in Country Programme evaluations, due to the corresponding clause in the *Standard Terms of Reference for Country Portfolio Evaluations*. The Panel therefore will recommend dropping this clause so as to increase the credibility of the CPE process.

0.7 Utility

The primary audience for the work of the independent Evaluation Office is the GEF Council. The evidence collected during the Peer Review allows the Panel to confirm that the Council and its members are generally satisfied with the work of the Evaluation Office, with the coverage of its work plan and the topics selected for and addressed in evaluations. On the whole, the Council members find that the evaluations are useful in clarifying issues of general concern for the GEF, in informing Council discussions and in helping members to take the necessary decisions in the ongoing reform process. Evaluations also appear to find their way into GEF Constituencies. The Panel noted for example that the Caribbean Constituency had discussed evaluation reports ahead of a Council meeting, a good practice that could easily be replicated.

Notwithstanding the criticism of the consultative process, GEF Agencies confirm that the work of the EO has been of great utility in a number of areas and has significantly contributed towards improving the performance of the GEF. Examples mentioned include guidance produced by the EO which has helped to coordinate and unify yardsticks and evaluation criteria for GEF financed activities across the partnership, and a significant improvement of mid-term reviews and terminal evaluations since the EO has begun to rate these reports.

In the field, the Panel faced situations where the EO evaluation work is seen as quite removed from the national level, with the exception of the CPEs. The planning and preparation of EO evaluation activities in the country is largely conducted in Washington, with no or only little advance communication with and consultation of the government, and consequently with a low degree of transparency for national stakeholders. As a result, the EO evaluations are predominantly perceived as top-down approaches, at a distance from the operational level.

Finally, the Panel has observed on several occasions, that there is a kind of “competitive relationship” between the EO and the Secretariat affecting the smooth running of business between the two. The Panel thinks that this relationship needs to be kept under review to avoid disruptions and adverse impacts on the utility of evaluations.

0.8 Conclusions

The GEF EO has been successful in establishing itself as a new and independent core player within the overall GEF structures and in finding acceptance in this role. This is

primarily due to the fact that the Office under its new Director has made commendable efforts to improve and facilitate professional evaluation work in the GEF and to provide leadership in this area, both within the GEF partnership and internationally, especially in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

On Independence

1. On structural independence

The Panel **concludes** that structural independence of GEF EO has largely been achieved and is beneficial to the GEF. It has enhanced the credibility of evaluations and therefore of the whole institution. However, it **finds** that the legal basis for the actual arrangements of EO independence is precarious. The Panel **recommends** that the Council take steps to put the arrangements for structural independence on a better and more sustainable legal footing than is the case at present.

2. On institutional independence

The Panel **concludes** that the GEF EO work plan preparation is independent and that the evaluative criteria used in developing the work plan are justified. However, it finds that there is insufficient consultation with stakeholders during the development of the work plan. Therefore, the Panel **recommends** that EO enhance the consultation efforts.

3. On the budget

The Panel **finds** that the programme and activity based budgeting and the concomitant level of financial independence of the GEF EO is very commendable.

4. On evaluation processes

The Panel **concludes** that the independence of the evaluation processes for both thematic and strategic evaluations and the review process for terminal evaluations conducted by the GEF Agencies are adequately safeguarded.

5. On conflicts of interest

The Panel **concludes** that sufficient steps have been taken to avoid conflicts of interest by EO staff. Risks of staff being partial are low and therefore negligible. However, the Panel notes that, notably in country, expertise in the thematic fields of the GEF can be scarce and therefore **recommends** the EO to pay attention to the selection and recruitment of consultants to ensure also they do not have any conflict of interest.

6. On quality assurance

The Panel **concludes** that the process for quality assurance of reports set in place by GEF EO is light, given the technical content of the evaluations and **recommends** strengthening it through the use of technical expert panels or similar mechanisms.

On Credibility

1. On the overall level of satisfaction

The Panel **finds** a high degree of satisfaction of many stakeholders with the credibility of EO products.

2. On fieldwork

The Panel **finds** that limitation of fieldwork is not an adequate way to cope with individual evaluation budget constraints, as it would reduce contact of the EO with the reality of GEF programmes and projects. Therefore the panel **recommends** that annual budgets should secure adequate allocation of funds for relevant fieldwork.

3. On deadlines for management responses

The Panel **finds** the present practice of two-week deadlines for management responses is arbitrary and counterproductive. The Panel therefore **recommends** allowing a minimum of four weeks after submitting an evaluation report to stakeholders for the preparation of an inclusive management response.

On Utility

1. The Panel **finds** that the Council and its members are generally satisfied with the work of the Evaluation Office, with the coverage of its work plan and the topics selected for and addressed in evaluations. Council members find that the evaluations submitted to them are useful in clarifying issues of general concern for the GEF, in informing Council discussions and in helping members to take the necessary decisions in the ongoing reform process.

2. On the interaction between the GEF Secretariat and the GEF EO

The Panel **concludes** that the present relationship between the GEF EO and Secretariat is not always apt to support the utility of the evaluation function. It therefore **recommends** enhancing and intensifying the interaction and cooperation between both for the common benefit of all parties.

3. On the Programme of Work for Evaluations

The Panel **finds** that the limited consultations between the EO and the GEF Secretariat in the process of drawing up a program of work for evaluation could impair the utility of planned evaluations. Therefore, the Panel **recommends** to the Council, the CEO and the Director of Evaluation to keep the situation under review and, if necessary, provide additional guidance to clarify consultation requirements to both the EO and the Secretariat.

4. On upstream contacts with stakeholders in countries

The Panel **concludes** that not enough is done to establish early and upstream contacts with stakeholders in countries where an EO evaluation is being planned in order to discuss knowledge needs and to allow a country input into the TOR. It **recommends** establishing such contacts well ahead of the scheduled beginning of the work and/or the arrival of the evaluation team. Similar arrangements should be

established with the GEF Agencies, both at headquarter and at in-country operational level.

5. On the learning loop

The Panel **finds** that there is room for improved feedback of evaluation results into the GEF Secretariat and with the other stakeholders.

The Panel therefore **recommends** incorporating dissemination aspects in the planning of evaluations right from the beginning, including budgetary provisions if needed.

1. Introduction, Background and Approach

1.1 Background

Every four years, the GEF produces an Overall Performance Study (OPS). The principal aim of the studies is to inform the replenishment process for GEF, as well as the GEF Council and GEF General Assembly, about the achievements of the GEF during the previous period, draw lessons and give indications of the way forward in the succeeding replenishment period.

The Third Assembly of the GEF held in Cape Town, South Africa, in August 2006 requested the Council to undertake the preparation of a fourth OPS (OPS4) for submission to the next Assembly meeting. In June 2007, the GEF EO proposed to the Council that it should undertake OPS4 as part of its regular work program. The Council approved the proposal except for the study components that would pose a conflict of interest, notably the assessment of the GEF M&E system. Accordingly, it was proposed that the evaluation part of the M&E system, especially the role of the GEF Evaluation Office, would be independently assessed by a Professional Peer Review panel, composed of internationally recognized panel members.

Peer reviews have several purposes: building greater knowledge and confidence and use of evaluation systems by management, governing bodies and others; providing a suitable way of “evaluating the evaluators”; sharing good practice, experience and mutual learning. The primary intended audience for the results of these professional peer reviews is one of decision-makers and other users of evaluation – including where appropriate the intended beneficiaries in member countries.³

During the meeting of the Evaluation Network in Paris in February 2008, the Director of the GEF EO approached both the Head of Evaluation of the Finnish Cooperation and the Special Evaluator of the Belgian Cooperation, asking them to organize a professional peer review of the GEF EO, using the DAC-UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews. At the UNEG meeting in Geneva in early April 2008, the issue was further discussed and it was decided that the Peer Review would be financed equally by the Finnish and the Belgian Cooperation and that the Office of the Special Evaluator of the Belgian Cooperation would chair the Peer Panel and coordinate the process.

1.2 Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the Professional Peer Review is to provide the GEF Council, the Assembly, the GEF Secretariat and the Evaluation Office with an independent assessment of the functioning of the GEF EO and the quality of its work. The findings are to be presented to the GEF replenishment meeting, integrated into OPS4, and inform further discussions and decisions about the functional and administrative independence of the GEF EO. The Peer

³ DAC-UNEG (2007) Joint Task Force on Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Functions in Multilateral Organisations, Framework for Professional Peer Reviews

Review report will also be presented to the DAC and UNEG members as feedback on the quality of evaluation of one of the UNEG members. In addition to presenting its report, the Panel will also provide feedback on the peer review process to the joint DAC-UNEG Task Force on Peer Reviews as a contribution to the further development of this instrument.

The Review covered:

1. The evaluation policy of the GEF and other policies and procedures having a bearing on the GEF EO and its work, with particular emphasis on the extent to which the evaluation policy conforms to international standards, and whether other policies are relevant to the functioning of the GEF EO (e.g. those concerning results-based management, harmonization and alignment, strategic planning, budgeting, evaluation coverage, etc.).
2. Structural aspects of how the evaluation function operates in the GEF, including whether the current functional arrangements are effective in ensuring that the GEF EO can contribute to learning and accountability within the GEF.
3. The internal organisation of the GEF EO, including budgetary matters.
4. Because Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is a shared responsibility within the GEF, the partnership relations of the EO with:
 - The GEF-Secretariat,
 - A selected number of GEF coordination units of the Implementing Agencies (UNDP, UNEP, and the World Bank) and the Executing Agencies (AfDB, AsDB, EBRD, IDB, UNIDO, FAO, and IFAD), with attention to the sharing and learning process and to their handling of the GEF EO's instructions
 - The evaluation offices of those GEF Agencies, with attention to their handling of the GEF EO guidelines,
 - Other knowledge sources also part of the knowledge management systems (e. g. the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel-STAP), etc..
5. The quality of the evaluations undertaken and/or (partly) commissioned by the EO. This includes the planning process, the conduct of the evaluations, the quality of the evaluation reports, the independence of evaluation teams and team leaders, the ways in which the EO enables them to produce credible reports, including the ways stakeholders are facilitated to comment on draft reports (e.g. when do comments become an infringement on independence and when are they warranted to ensure standards of evaluation reports? Are country portfolio evaluations considering member countries perspective?).
6. The use of evaluation results and follow-up. Important aspects are: the ways in which evaluation results are disseminated and lessons used both within the GEF and by others (donors, GEF Agencies, cooperating partners etc); the responsibility for the follow-up of recommendations; and how follow-up is undertaken and

monitored. How well does the management implement Council decisions based on evaluation recommendations?

7. Other actions undertaken by the GEF EO such as networking, conferences, website, etc.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Core Assessment Criteria

In line with the *Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Functions in Multilateral Organizations*, the Peer Review of the evaluation function of GEF examined three core criteria that need to be satisfied for evaluation functions and products to be considered of high quality:

- A. **Independence** of evaluations and the evaluation system(s). The evaluation process should be impartial and independent in its function from the process concerned with the policy making, the delivery, and the management of assistance. A requisite measure of independence of the evaluation function is a recognised pre-condition for credibility, validity and usefulness. The Peer Review kept in mind that the appropriate guarantees of the necessary independence of the GEF EO are defined by the nature of its work, its governance and decision-making arrangements, and other factors. And also that, like most evaluation functions, the EO's aim is to encourage the active application and use of evaluations at all levels of management, meaning that systemic measures for ensuring the necessary objectivity and impartiality of its work should receive due attention.
- B. **Credibility** of evaluations. The credibility of evaluations depends on the expertise and impartiality of the evaluators and the degree of transparency of the evaluation process. Credibility requires that evaluations should report successes as well as failures. Recipient countries should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluations in order to promote credibility and commitment. Whether and how the organization's approach to evaluation fosters partnership and helps build ownership and capacity in developing countries merits attention as a major theme.
- C. **Utility** of evaluations. To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in development co-operation. Importantly, each review should bear in mind that ensuring the utility of evaluations is only partly under the control of evaluators. It is also critically a function of the interest of managers and member countries through their participation on governing bodies, in commissioning, receiving and using evaluations.

The Peer Review Panel used the Normative Framework presented in Annex V, which is a modification of the normative frameworks of previous peer reviews (UNDP, UNICEF, and WFP). It deviates from the earlier Frameworks in that it introduces a three-tier approach to independence: structural in terms of reporting lines, institutional in terms of systems that

increase independence and impartiality, and behavioural or personal independence. One issue that became apparent when preparing the Framework was that the UNEG Norms and Standards leave a lot of room to interpretation of the norms and does not explain how the evaluation principles are inter-related and reinforce each other.

The Normative Framework provided a structure for data collection from documentary sources, for self-assessment and for interviews to ensure the same framework is applied in the review of all different data sources.

1.3.2 The Review Panel

A number of considerations were taken into account when composing the membership of the Panel: (i) relevant professional experience; (ii) independence – to avoid any potential or alleged conflict of interest or partiality, the panel members do not have any working relationship to GEF that might influence the Panel’s position and deliberations; and (iii) multilateral and bilateral members as well as experiences from the South and transition countries.

The combination of these criteria together with the voluntary nature of service on the Panel resulted in the following composition (see Annex VII for background data on Panel members and Advisors):

- Dominique de Crombrugghe, Special Evaluator for Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgium, Peer Panel Coordinator
- Caroline Heider, Director, Office of Evaluation, World Food Programme
- Heidi Pihlatie, Senior Evaluator, Unit for Evaluation and Internal Auditing, MOFA, Finland
- Oumoul Khayri Ba Tall, Senior Evaluator, President of the International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE), Mauretania
- Zhanar Sagimbayeva, Evaluator, Eurasian Development Bank, Kazakhstan
- Karel Cools, Senior Evaluator, Evaluation and Quality Control Service, MOFA, Belgium

The Panel was assisted by two advisors, both experts in evaluation and familiar with multilateral organizations, one from the North (Dr Horst Breier from Germany) and one from the South (Dr Dunstan Spencer from Sierra Leone). The Advisors were responsible for preparatory work (data collection and information gathering); preliminary assessment of the collected information; participation in the interviews of Panel members with stakeholders; and drafting of the assessment report.

1.3.3 Data collection and analysis

The Review Panel used a number of methods in collecting and analysing information for the review as follows:

- Preparation of an Approach Paper which set out the key elements of the Peer Review of the evaluation function of the GEF. It described the background of the Peer Review, its purpose, the scope, general approach and methods, the composition of the Peer Panel and the time schedule. The Approach Paper was shared with GEF Council members, GEF Secretariat and GEF EO for comments, and served as the basic reference guide for the review
- A Normative Framework for the Peer Review was based on the work done by the Joint DAC-UNEG task force. It diverged from previous examples insofar as it proposes a three tier approach of the Independence of the evaluation Function based on respectively structural, institutional and behavioural independence.
- Stakeholder interviews of GEF Council members, staff of the GEF Secretariat, EO staff, GEF Agencies, country officials and GEF focal points. Interviews were conducted by individual or pairs of Panel members using a list of questions developed by the Panel based on the normative framework (Annex V). At the end of each day of interviews Panel members and advisors assembled in a joint session to share findings, identify gaps or doubts and suggest interpretations. Conclusions from the joint sessions were recorded. The daily wrap-up meetings facilitated the communication and understanding within the Panel and helped form a common position early on in the process and made reporting more efficient.
- Stakeholder consultations took place during visits and field trips to Washington at the headquarters of the GEF, World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, in New York at the headquarters of UNDP, in Manila, Philippines at the Headquarters of the Asian Development Bank and with the Philippine Government, in Nairobi, Kenya at the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme and in Rome at the headquarters of the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. Interviews with representatives of UNIDO took place during the GEF Council meeting in Washington in October 2008. Altogether around 100 people were interviewed by the Panel (see Annex III).
- Analysis of documents and reports. In preparation for the September, 2008 meeting of the Panel, the advisors had access to an extensive documentation from the GEF and the GEF EO and prepared a draft Factual Report ahead of the meeting. The report presented an analysis of issues for the review raising questions that required follow up during the review. The Factual Report reviewed the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policies and EO tools and guidelines, such as the Minimum Requirements for Project Monitoring and Evaluation, Standard Terms of Reference for Country Portfolio Evaluations and the Note on the Selection Criteria for the GEF Country Portfolio Evaluations. In addition, the Advisors conducted a detailed assessment of seven EO evaluation reports, including the Philippines Country Portfolio Evaluation, Kenya country reports, the Annual Report on Impact 2007, the RAF Mid-Term Review, the Joint Evaluation of the GEF Activity Cycle and Modalities, the Role of Local Benefits in Global Environmental Programs, and the 2007 Annual Performance Report. In assessing the quality of the evaluation reports,

the Advisors used a Quality Assessment Sheet based on that used in the recently completed independent external evaluation of FAO (see Annex VI).

- Peer Review Panel Meetings (PPM). A number of meetings were held by the Panel and Advisors in order to agree on the approach, exchange information and review progress. To kick off the review a provisional Panel consisting of 4 members was established to draft an approach paper and work plan. It met in Brussels on May 19, 2008 (PPM 1). At the meeting it was decided that the Panel would be extended by two more members and that two advisors would be contracted. At its second meeting in Rome (PPM 2) in early July 2008, the Panel finalized its approach paper and work plan and its normative framework, and a self assessment form for the GEF EO based on the normative framework. A third panel meeting was held in Brussels in early September 2008 to discuss the factual report and prepare the visits and interviews in Washington and New York (PPM 3). The fourth panel meeting (PPM 4) was held in Rome on 4 December 2009 to share experiences after the field missions and agree on the outline of the draft report.

2. *The Global Environment Facility (GEF)*

In 1991, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was founded to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition in meeting their obligations under multilateral environmental agreements, linking local, national and global environmental challenges. Today, 178 States are members of the GEF which has become the designated financial mechanism for implementing 4 international conventions⁴, namely

- the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD)
- the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC)
- the *Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants* (POPs) and
- the *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification* (UNCCD)

GEF provides grants for projects related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants, the so-called focal areas for its work. GEF is purely a funding institution. Funding is provided in four-year cycles by 32 donors (GEF-4). The major donors under GEF-4 are the United States (20.86%), Japan (17.63%), Germany (11.00%), the United Kingdom (6.92%) and France (6.81%). Donors also include developing countries, such as China, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Republic of South Africa and Turkey. Up to March 2009, GEF has allocated a total of US\$ 8.4 billion to projects eligible under its mandate, supplemented by more than US\$ 35 billion in co-financing⁵. These resources went to the support of close to 2,300 projects in more than 160 developing countries and countries with economies in transition. In addition, GEF has also provided more than 7,000 grants to projects of non-governmental and community organizations through its *Small Grants Programme* (SGP).

The GEF Secretariat does not implement any projects. It works through a partnership which consists of 3 Implementing Agencies (IA) and 7 Executing Agencies (EA). The IA are the *United Nations Development Programme* (UNDP), the *United Nations Environment Programme* (UNEP), and the *World Bank* (IBRD). The seven international organisations that have been designated GEF Executing Agencies are the *U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization* (FAO), the *U.N. Industrial Development Organization* (UNIDO), the *African Development Bank* (AfDB), the *Asian Development Bank* (AsDB), the *European Bank for Reconstruction and Development* (EBRD), the *Inter-American Development Bank* (IDB), and the *International Fund for Agricultural Development* (IFAD). The differentiation between these two groups was removed; now all ten are referred to as GEF Agencies.⁶

⁴ GEF is not a financial mechanism for implementing the Montreal Protocol on Ozone-Depleting Substances, although its activities complement and enhance the work of the Montreal Protocol.

⁵ Compiled by the GEF Evaluation Office for the Fourth Overall Performance Study of the GEF as per 31 March 2009.

⁶ Unless a differentiation between Implementing and Executing Agencies is necessary, the Report uses the term GEF Agencies to denote all of them.

The GEF partnership is cutting across institutional and bureaucratic boundaries. This makes it quite unique, but also complex and complicated to manage. It entails challenges at the strategic and policy level, requires continuous efforts to balance the different and often conflicting interests of partner institutions, and has therefore significant implications for the management of the GEF as a whole as well as for the evaluation function in GEF and for the role of the Evaluation Office. Decisions on policy and strategic orientations are not the prerogative of governance in the GEF, but many of them are actually taken in the Conference of the Parties (CoP) of the Conventions⁷. This complexity gives rise to critical assessments of the adequacy and efficiency of the GEF as a funding mechanism for global environmental objectives, compared, for instance, to a system providing developing countries with direct access to finance for this purpose.⁸

The supreme governing body of the GEF is the *Assembly* in which the representatives of all 178 member countries participate. The Assembly is required by the Instrument⁹ to meet every three years. It is responsible for reviewing and evaluating the GEF's general policies, the operations of the Facility and its membership. The Assembly is also responsible for considering and approving proposed amendments to the Instrument. The last GEF Assembly met in Cape Town, South Africa, in August 2006.

Between the Assemblies, a non-resident GEF *Council* is responsible for the work of the organisation. The Council consists of 32 Members representing 16 developing countries, 14 developed countries and two countries from eastern and central Europe and the former Soviet Union. Members are appointed for three years. Re-appointment is possible. The Council meets twice a year at the seat of the GEF Secretariat (Washington, D.C.), preferably in April and October. Council meetings are chaired jointly by the GEF CEO and a Co-Chairperson elected from among the Council members and alternating between developed and developing countries. The representatives of the GEF Agencies, the Trustee¹⁰, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP)¹¹, and the Evaluation Office are invited to attend the meetings.

The GEF Council appoints the *Chief Executive Officer* and Chairperson of the GEF at the joint recommendation of the three Implementing Agencies for a three year term. The present CEO is Ms. *Monique Barbut* from France who was appointed in June 2006 and

⁷ Article 26 of the GEF Instrument stipulates that “the use of the GEF resources for purposes of such conventions shall be in conformity with the policies, program priorities and eligibility criteria decided by the Conference of the Parties of each of those conventions”.

⁸ Two studies published by the Stockholm Environmental Institute (A. Möhner and R.J.T.Klein, *The Global Environment Facility: Funding for Adaptation or Adapting to Funds*, Climate & Energy Program Working Paper, Stockholm 2007) and by the Fridtjof Nansen Institute (Gørild Heggelund, *Performance of the Global Environment Facility in China: Achievements and Challenges as seen by the Chinese*, *International Environmental Agreements*, No. 5, 2005, p. 323 – 348) are examples of such critical assessments. Although these issues are not a priority in the work of the EO, efforts to contribute to shortening the project cycle and the RAF Mid-term Review are examples of the EO engaging in this debate. as well as the ongoing work on OPS4.

⁹ The Instrument is the set of rules by which the GEF is established and operates.

¹⁰ The Trustee is the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development – IBRD.

¹¹ The STAP is established by UNEP, in consultation with UNDP and the World Bank and on the basis of guidelines and criteria established by the GEF Council. UNEP also provides the STAP's Secretariat and operates as a liaison between the Facility and the STAP

began her tenure on 1 August 2006. Ms. Barbut has proclaimed the need for a revitalization of the GEF organization to make it a more effective, responsive and results-based institution. In a key note speech *The New GEF: a Proving Ground for Our Sustainable Future*, delivered to the GEF Council meeting on 6 December 2006, the new CEO outlined her reform programme which consists of a *Sustainability Compact* needed to “break apart the complex web of bureaucracy which today defines the GEF.”

The GEF *Secretariat* reports to the Council and the Assembly and ensures that their decisions are translated into actions. It coordinates the formulation of projects included in the annual work programme, oversees its implementation and makes certain that operational strategies and policies are followed. This requires close coordination with the GEF Agencies providing the expertise and technical skills to implement the GEF projects. Although an independent entity, the GEF Secretariat in Washington, D.C., is administratively part of the World Bank. According to the GEF website, there are 43 staff members working in the Secretariat. This excludes the Evaluation Office.

3. The Evaluation Function of the GEF

3.1 The Independence of the Evaluation Office

Annex C of the Summary of Negotiations on the Third Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund of 5 May 2002 contains the Policy Recommendations which were agreed among the negotiating parties. In paragraphs 36 and 37, Participants “recommend that a high priority be placed on strengthening monitoring and evaluation of GEF projects.” To this end, the roles and responsibilities for M & E among the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, the Secretariat and the GEF Agencies should be reviewed by the Council with a view to developing a partnership approach to M & E in order to increase complementarity.

More specifically, Participants in the Third Replenishment negotiations in 2002 recommended the following key actions to be undertaken:

- the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, for the purposes of evaluation, should be made independent, reporting directly to the Council, with its budget and work plan determined by the Council and its head proposed by the GEF CEO and appointed by the Council for a renewable term of five years;
- a process for Council oversight of monitoring and evaluation should be established;
- the GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies should establish a procedure to disseminate lessons learned and best practices emanating from M & E activities
- a formal “feedback loop” should be established between evaluation findings and management activities to ensure a more systematic use of the results and outputs of GEF projects for the improvement of planning and subsequent activities;
- the M & E unit should establish more rigorous minimum standards for GEF-specific aspects of projects expected of monitoring and evaluation units of GEF Agencies;
- the GEF M & E unit should facilitate more intensive interagency sharing of experiences relevant to the GEF;
- all projects should include provisions for monitoring their impacts and outcomes, and projects without such provisions and more than two years left in their implementation should be retrofitted accordingly; and
- the M & E unit should report annually to the Council on its work.

These policy recommendations marked the beginning of a relatively lengthy and complicated process of reforming the M & E function of the GEF. After several iterations and protracted discussions, the GEF Council decided in 2003 to establish an independent Office of Monitoring and Evaluation. The Director of Monitoring and Evaluation would report on all evaluation matters to the GEF Council directly, not any longer through the CEO, as before. In addition, the Monitoring and Evaluation Office would have a separate budget and its own programme of work, both to be approved by the Council. Box 1 contains a summary of the developments of the M&E function in the GEF.

Box 1: The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Function – Overview of Key Developments

1996	Establishment of the M&E Unit in the GEF Secretariat
May 1997	Approval by the 8th GEF Council of the <i>Framework and Work Program for GEF's Monitoring, Evaluation and Dissemination Activities</i> (GEF/C.8/4)
January 2002	Basic document: <i>Monitoring and Evaluation Policies and Procedures</i>
Summer 2002	Policy Recommendations of 3rd Replenishment Negotiations
October 2002	Submission of <i>Draft Terms of Reference for an Independent Monitoring and Evaluation Unit</i> to the 20th GEF Council
May 2003	Submission of Revised <i>Terms of Reference for an Independent Monitoring and Evaluation Unit</i> to the 21st GEF Council
July 2003	Approval by Council in written procedure of <i>Terms of Reference for an Independent Monitoring and Evaluation Unit</i>
May 2004	Appointment of Rob D. van den Berg as Director of Monitoring and Evaluation (assuming office in September 2004)
November 2004	Submission of <i>Draft Elements for a new GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy</i> to the 24th GEF Council; change of name from M&E Unit to Office of Monitoring and Evaluation
January 2005	Brainstorming workshop on new evaluation policy attended by evaluation experts, monitoring practitioners, and managers from GEF Agencies, GEF Secretariat and GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Office
September 2005	Workshop to review draft policy with a selection of GEF partners
November 2005	Submission of the Working Document <i>The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy</i> , summarising progress on the new policy, and of draft <i>Options for Interaction between the GEF Office of Monitoring and Evaluation and GEF Council</i> to the 27th GEF Council; change of name from Office of Monitoring and Evaluation to Evaluation Office

February 2006	Approval of the new policy by the GEF Council through written procedure
Spring 2006	Publication of <i>The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy</i> as No. 1 in the new series of <i>Evaluation Documents</i>
June 2006	Submission of <i>Proposals to Fully Reflect the Independence of the Evaluation Office in the Main Documents of the GEF</i> to the 28th GEF Council
October 2006	Approval of <i>Standard Terms of Reference for Country Portfolio Evaluations</i> by the Director of Evaluation (revised 17 July 2008)
2007	Approval of <i>Minimum Requirements for Project M&E</i> by the GEF Council
May 2007	Approval of <i>Revised Guidelines for Implementing and Executing Agencies to Conduct Terminal Evaluations</i> by the Director of Evaluation
2007	Publication of <i>GEF Evaluation Office Ethical Guidelines</i> as No. 2 in the series of <i>Evaluation Documents</i>

Since 2004, the independent GEF *Evaluation Office* (EO) is headed by Mr. Rob D. van den Berg, a Dutch national, who was appointed by the Council in the May session of that year¹². The Evaluation Office lists 12 staff members at present, excluding short-term consultants and junior professional officers (JPO).

As one of his first major activities, the new Director prepared and presented to his first Council meeting in November 2004 an evaluation reform document entitled *Elements for a new GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy*. This document fully reflected the concerns previously expressed by the Council, and made a number of suggestions for shaping the Mission and Principles of the independent EO, its interaction with the Council and with other GEF entities and partners, for a new division of work on M&E in the GEF and for international collaboration. The Council expressed its appreciation for the document, as the Joint Summary of the Chairs demonstrates:¹³ “The Council emphasized the importance that they assign to monitoring and evaluation, and they welcomed the strong start of the

¹² Mr. van den Berg assumed office in September 2004.

¹³ Joint Summary of the Chairs, GEF Council 17 – 19 November 2004, paragraphs 46 following.

newly organized Office of Monitoring and Evaluation that is evident from the work prepared for the Council.”

In follow up to the November 2004 Council meeting, the Evaluation Office developed and further refined the proposals for its evaluation policy, and in February 2006, this process culminated in the approval by the Council, of the new and comprehensive M&E policy: *The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy*. This policy document was subsequently published as No. 1 in a new series of EO basic papers, called *Evaluation Documents*, and widely distributed. The document replaced the preceding GEF document *Monitoring and Evaluation Policies and Procedures* of January 2002 which, at the time of its approval, very much reflected the state of the art in evaluation and demonstrated already a relatively progressive approach to monitoring and evaluation compared with that of other international organizations.

The *GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy* of 2006 is a thoughtful and ambitious policy document. It clarifies many of the elements and components that constitute the basis for M&E in the GEF family today, and it is action-oriented. Comparing the 2006 policy document with previous policy documents, it becomes evident on the one hand that there is a relatively high degree of continuity existing in the approaches, principles and modalities of M&E in the GEF.

On the other hand, the comparison also shows some interesting shifts in the thrust and pattern of the recent policy papers. From 2004 onwards, the focus moved away from a relatively technocratic emphasis on monitoring and evaluation, including technical matters like methodological considerations, to prioritising institutional issues, hierarchy setting and procedural matters. This is a different approach, and it is the result of a changing perception by the Council and the EO of the role of evaluation in the GEF. The definition of this new role is largely based on stressing the EO’s advisory function for the Council and, consequently, its increased leverage in the GEF structure. As a result, oversight and the search for greater impact on the policies and strategies of the GEF play a dominant role in the EO, at the expense of its potential utility for other actors in the GEF partnership whose stakes in evaluation rate second only to those of the Council.

Of fundamental importance in this context was the effective delinking of the EO from the Secretariat structure, putting it on equal footing with the Secretariat on monitoring and evaluation issues, as far as reporting lines and requirements are concerned. The flowchart¹⁴ of M&E Reporting in the GEF below shows that there is no longer any direct link existing between the EO and the Secretariat. According to this flowchart and notwithstanding the existence of day-to-day working contacts among colleagues in a fairly small organisation like the GEF and more formal requirements of interaction such as the management response process, the official communication channels between the two sides are through the Council only.

¹⁴ This flowchart is taken from page 4 of the document *The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy*, Evaluation Document No. 1, 2006.

3.2 Tools and Guidelines

The GEF Evaluation Office has produced a number of guidance documents over the last three years that are designed to help translating the *GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy* of 2006 into practice and to answer the demand contained in the Policy Recommendations of the Third GEF Replenishment for more rigorous minimum standards to be applied in GEF-related M&E work of the Facility itself and the GEF Agencies. These documents differ widely in character and coverage, weight and reach. They include *Measuring Results the SMART Way* and *Minimum Requirements for Project M&E* which are meant to be applied across the whole GEF partnership, as well as more specific guidelines on *Conducting Terminal Evaluations* addressed to the GEF Agencies and the *Standard Terms of Reference for Country Portfolio Evaluations* for use by the GEF EO. A fifth document is the *GEF Evaluation Office Ethical Guidelines*.

3.2.1 Measuring Results the S.M.A.R.T. Way

The S.M.A.R.T. tool is well known for planning purposes, including in development cooperation. The EO introduced the S.M.A.R.T. tool in the 2006 *GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy* in the chapter on Evaluation Criteria and Minimum Requirements¹⁶. The acronym S.M.A.R.T. is transcribed into **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable/**A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**imely/**T**ime-Bound. In the 2006 document, the GEF EO has extended the tool to include additional dimensions: *Attributable* for A, *Relevant* for R, and *Trackable* and *Targeted* for T.

3.2.2 Minimum Requirements for Project M&E

Like in the case of S.M.A.R.T., Minimum Requirements for Project Monitoring and Evaluation were included in the 2006 *GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy*. The key guiding principles enumerated in the 2006 policy document include Independence, Impartiality, Transparency, Disclosure, Ethics, Partnership, Competencies and Capacities, Credibility and Utility. This list is quite comprehensive and reflects the general agreement among universities and research, evaluation societies, practitioners, and bilateral as well as multilateral agencies of what constitutes the cornerstones of modern evaluation and the requirements that must be met by evaluators and evaluations alike if the work is to be considered as state of the art. These key principles were not included in the general guidance on minimum requirements for project M&E, issued in 2006. Instead, the key principles have been incorporated into the *GEF Evaluation Office Ethical Guidelines* published as *Evaluation Document No. 2* in 2007.¹⁷

¹⁶ Page 17 following.

¹⁷ Today, the situation is different from 2006 and more amenable to agreement on basic principles, including ethical requirements. This is mainly due to the fact that the members of the United Nations Evaluation Group have gained in experience with such principles. On 19 July 2007, they formally approved a *Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System*, followed on 21 July 2007 by *Ethical Guidelines or Evaluation*.

The *Minimum Requirements for Project M&E* are predominantly technical and procedural in nature, dealing – rightly - first with the project design, followed by project monitoring and finally project evaluation. It is worth noting that the minimum requirements stipulate the existence of a concrete and fully budgeted monitoring and evaluation plan as part of the project design, as well as the establishment of baseline data for the major indicators before project implementation starts or within the first year of implementation at the latest. Each full-sized project¹⁸ must be evaluated at the end of its implementation. Preferably, the evaluation should be undertaken independent of project management. However, if it is undertaken by project management, it will be reviewed by the Evaluation Office of the respective GEF Agency or by using independent quality assurance mechanisms of the Agencies.

The rest of the minimum requirements are pretty much standard and common practice in most evaluation services around the globe. They include asking for assessments of outputs and outcomes, ratings for targeted objectives and outcomes, the likelihood of sustainability, and so on. Finally, the paper on minimum requirements lists the five key evaluation criteria, that need to be addressed, namely Relevance, Effectiveness Efficiency, Results¹⁹, and Sustainability. The definitions offered are largely those contained in the *DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management*, except for Efficiency, which is more narrowly defined as cost-saving rather than the economic conversion of resources to results.²⁰

3.2.3 Guidelines for GEF Agencies to Conduct Terminal Evaluations

These Guidelines were the first to be approved and issued under the sole responsibility of the GEF Evaluation Director, on 9 May 2007. They are 15 pages long, covering the purpose of terminal evaluations, roles and responsibilities, the scope of terminal evaluations, independent reviews and validation of terminal evaluations, interim evaluations, and communication with the GEF Evaluation Office.

3.2.4 Standard Terms of Reference for Country Portfolio Evaluations

The *Standard Terms of Reference for Country Portfolio Evaluations* (CPE) were approved by the Director of Evaluation on 27 October 2006 and revised on 17 July 2008. 2006 was also the year when the EO conducted its first country portfolio evaluation on a pilot basis in Costa Rica with the objective of assessing the feasibility and cost effectiveness of this type of evaluation and to develop methodologies to implement more of them in subsequent years.

¹⁸ US \$1 million or more in GEF funding.

¹⁹ DAC and UNEG prefer the word Impact to Results. The difference between the notions expressed by the two words is small. Results seem to be the more neutral term, while Impact has a stronger connotation of long-term effects and change.

²⁰ The definition of efficiency as cost savings here is in contrast with the definition of efficiency in the Guideline for the Conduct of Terminal Evaluations which is much closer to the definition used in the DAC Glossary, namely. the economic conversion of resources to results.

The need for the development of Standard Terms of Reference resulted from the intention of the EO to carry out a series of country portfolio evaluations over a period of five years. The Director of Evaluation wanted to see them conducted in a consistent manner so that at the end of GEF-4 there would be an opportunity to compare evaluation results across countries and regions. Planning of this new activity foresaw the scheduling of two CPEs per year focused on a particular region in each year, according to the following sequence: Asia in FY 2007, Africa in FY 2008, Eastern Europe and Central Asia in FY 2009, Middle East and North Africa in FY 2010, and Latin America and the Caribbean in FY 2011. So far, country portfolio evaluations have been accomplished for: Costa Rica, Philippines, Samoa, Benin, Madagascar, and South Africa. The country portfolio evaluation of Cameroon has not yet been made available on the GEF EO website, although the draft of the final report was supposed to be ready in February 2008. CPEs in Egypt and Syria are presently being conducted.

The selection of countries for CPEs is based on stratified random selection. First, a list of 8 countries per geographic region is put together at random. The countries listed will then be submitted to a set of criteria used in the EO to determine programming priorities (policy relevance; financial weight; stakeholder opinion and demand; public or media debate; international collaboration) and ranked accordingly. These criteria are both quantitative and qualitative. The final step will be to fine-tune the selection of countries by applying criteria such as evaluability, measured by the quality of baseline information available, and synergy with other ongoing or planned evaluations as well as with GEF corporate activities. The process is described in some detail in a Note on the *Selection Criteria for the GEF Country Portfolio Evaluations* which was issued by the EO on 13 November 2006.²¹

3.2.5 GEF Evaluation Office Ethical Guidelines

The *GEF Evaluation Office Ethical Guidelines* were published in 2007 as No. 2 in the *Evaluation Documents* series of the GEF Evaluation Office. The coverage of the Ethical Guidelines is described in paragraph 3: “These guidelines apply to the conduct of evaluations in the GEF Evaluation Office and for those who work directly for this Office.” They do not substitute, but complement other ethical guidelines applicable, like the World Bank’s Code of Professional Ethics, to which all GEF staff are required to subscribe.²²

The purpose of the Ethical Guidelines is threefold: to promote (i) responsible behaviour toward all stakeholders; (ii) credibility of evaluation results through establishing impartiality, inclusiveness and comprehensive nature of the work undertaken; and (iii) responsible use of resources. These objectives are developed in greater detail, with a strong emphasis on freedom from bias, i. e. impartiality based on independence. This includes the

²¹ The random part of the selection process consists of the selection of 8 countries per region – and may present some methodological problems. The basic reference unit is the number of countries per region. This number, however, varies greatly. Consequently, regions consisting of many countries are less represented in the sample and in any aggregation and comparative analysis of country portfolio evaluations later on than regions with smaller numbers of countries. This imbalance, of course, gets even more problematic when other indicators are taken (e. g. population, economic weight or environmental challenges).

²² GEF staff members are World Bank employees.

decision to accept supplementary external funding for evaluation work only if it does not lead to any undue influence on the independent and impartial conduct of the evaluation.

In this context, a key issue which is addressed in the Ethical Guidelines is conflicts of interest of Evaluation Office staff or of consultants. As to the consultants, a form is annexed to the Guidelines for them to declare their interests relevant to undertaking work for the GEF Evaluation Office.²³ Potential consultants are required to indicate any direct interests derived from the GEF or GEF Agencies in the past three years, such as financial benefits arising from employment, contracted work, fees etc., indirect interests (e. g. grants, sponsorships, publications), and affiliations or memberships with an interest in the work of the GEF, for example environmental or developmental NGOs and advocacy groups. This requirement plus the disclosure of any past exposure that may give rise to a potential conflict of interest, is also applicable to members of the immediate families of potential consultants.

3.3 Budget and Finance

The Director of Evaluation has the authority to present to and negotiate with the GEF Council the annual work programme and budget of the Evaluation Office, independently of the GEF Secretariat or any other outside interference. However, in 2007 the Council put a cap on overall administrative expenses. This could eventually lead to a negotiating process between the GEF Secretariat, the Evaluation Office, STAP and the Trustee on the distribution of the overall amount available.

The programme of work and budgetary process has become the focal point for regular annual debates on EO strategies, policy and further development in the Council. Consequently, the Director of Evaluation and his staff have to prepare these discussions carefully which usually take place in the first Council session of the year. The Director of Evaluation has indicated that perhaps more time should be spent on the preparatory process, especially in 2010 when the evaluation plans for GEF-5 will need to be developed.

The general framework for the planning of annual work programmes and budgets is the Four-Year Rolling Work Programme. It was introduced in 2004 and in principle covers a full replenishment period, including the Overall Performance Study (OPS) at the end of it. The annual plans and budgets contain the disaggregated activities which are due for implementation in a particular fiscal year plus additional evaluations which the GEF Council may request.

In 2004, the EO presented to the Council a set of basic elements for the development of work plans as well as criteria for prioritising evaluation proposals. The following basic elements were suggested for planning the work of the EO:

- Independently monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the GEF programmes and resource allocations on project, country, portfolio and institutional bases;

²³ This declaration of interests is identical with the one annexed to the *UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System* of 19 July 2007.

- Provide a basis for decision making on amendments and improvements of policies, strategies, program management, procedures and projects;
- Promote accountability through the assessment of processes, results, impacts and the performance of the parties involved in GEF activities; and
- Provide feedback to subsequent activities, and promote knowledge management on results, performance and lessons learned.²⁴

In order to work towards these goals, it was further suggested to apply the following criteria for prioritising evaluation activities to be undertaken:

- Policy relevance in existing GEF policies;
- Financial weight;
- Stakeholder opinion and demand;
- Public and/or media debate, i.e. whether or not a subject is “controversial”;
- Evaluation coverage, i.e. the main potential subjects should be evaluated once every replenishment period;
- Evaluability; i.e. can an evaluation be carried out in a cost-efficient way;
- International collaboration, e.g. to use cost reduction opportunities.²⁵

In the following years, the annual Council discussions on the EO work program and budget were used by the Director of Evaluation to propose further refinements of the strategies, approaches and criteria, to discuss the role and format of specific products such as the Annual Performance Reviews, to introduce new evaluation subjects (Country Portfolio Evaluations), to move away step by step from the EO role in monitoring²⁶, to reflect on the achievements of the EO²⁷ and the challenges faced by the Office²⁸, and to advocate budgetary increases.

²⁴ Four Year Work Plan and Budget of the Office of Monitoring and Evaluation, GEF/ME/C.24/5 of 22 October 2004.

²⁵ Ibidem.

²⁶ This gradual farewell to monitoring is clearly expressed in the Four-Year Work Program and Budget of the Office of Monitoring and Evaluation – FY 06-09 in paragraph 26: “*OME will increasingly play an oversight and validation role for the incorporation of GEF concerns in M&E systems put in place by the GEF Secretariat and Implementing and Executing Agencies. Therefore, its role will shift from one of monitoring projects and portfolio to oversight of monitoring system.*” See: GEF/ME/C.25/3 of 6 May 2005. Consequently, the name of the Monitoring and Evaluation Office was changed to Evaluation Office in November 2005.

The program of work and budget documents submitted to the Council tend to be quite outspoken in pointing to the importance and leading role of the GEF EO and its activities in many areas of evaluation, within the GEF family and beyond. Thus, the workshop bringing together evaluators previously hired by the EO and evaluation managers in the Hague became an “Evaluators’ Summit” in GEF terms, although not implying to have a global ring to it, or the International Conference on Evaluation, Environment and Sustainable Development in Alexandria, Egypt, was seen as an opportunity to establish the GEF EO as “a leading convener of expertise in monitoring and evaluation of environmental and sustainable development interventions”. Evaluations carried out by the EO are described as “very cutting-edge in the evaluation profession”, and the Office is seen as excelling in several areas of its knowledge management program.

Next to the substantive issues raised in the Council documents , budgetary matters play an important role. In his efforts to increase the budget of the Evaluation Office and to make the financing of the work of the Office commensurate with its role and function, the Director of Evaluation has been quite successful. A comparison of the budgets for the EO from FY 05 to FY 09 in the Table 1 below shows that the overall increase in the regular budget plus special initiatives was 52 per cent over the five-year period. This significant increase is partly due to the inclusion of the cost for OPS-4 in the regular evaluation budget, as requested by the Director of Evaluation. OPS-3 had its own special budget outside the EO’s regular budget. If OPS-3 is included in the budgetary figures, the growth rates for of the evaluation budget look less impressive: 2005/2006: 1.6 %; 2006/2007: - 10.4 %; 2007/2008: 8.5%; and 2008/2009: 1.7 %. However, they still testify to the willingness of the GEF Council to provide the Evaluation Office with the financial means to perform its work adequately.

Table 1: Development of EO Budget from FY 05 to FY 09 (in US Dollars)

	FY 05	FY 06	FY 07	FY 08	FY 09
Regular Budget	2,321,000	2,821,975	2,906,634	3,793,365	3,907,167
Special Initiatives	250,000	500,000	518,149		
Total	2,571,000	3,321,975	3,424,783	3,793,365	3,907,167
Percentage Increase over previous FY		29.2 %	3.1 %	10.8 %	3.0 %

Source : Compiled by the evaluators from GEF EO budget documents

The lion’s share of the non-operational budget for the GEF in FY 2009 is US\$ 22,099,000. It consists of the cost for the Secretariat of US\$ 13,726,000 (62.1%), the EO (US\$ 3,907,167 = 17.7%), the STAP with US\$ 2,047,000 (9.3%) and the Trustee with US\$ 2,419,000 (10.9%). Leaving the costs of the Trustee and the STAP aside, the Evaluation Office absorbs more than one fifth (22.2%) of the classical secretariat costs of US\$

²⁸ The Four-Year Work Program and FY 08 Budget of the GEF Evaluation Office emphasized that the EO, after having reached the highest international standards in its policies and guidelines on paper, as for instance in the World Accountability Report issued by One World Org, must now turn to the actual practice and bring this also to the highest international standards. The document continued to describe the challenges in detail, stressing the need of reaching an acceptable level of coverage of evaluation subjects in the GEF, of providing sufficient depth of scope to ensure that evaluations findings are credible and valid, of ensuring sufficient field level involvement of evaluation teams so that they can move beyond the paper trail and of bringing the collection and analysis of data up to international standards. See: GEF/ME/C.31/7 of 15 May 2007.

17,633,000²⁹. Including STAP and the Trustee, the share of the EO in the non-operational budget as indicated above is still 17.7 per cent. The EO's most recent Council documents on the work plan and budget do no longer contain pressure for increased funding. In the Four-Year Work Program and FY 08 Budget of the GEF Evaluation Office³⁰, the following principles are proposed to base future budgets:

- Activity based, determined by the work program;
- Discussed and approved by the Council;
- Assumes at least a 3% inflation rate annual increase;
- Minimizes the use of special initiatives;
- Based on international standards and following World Bank procedures;
- Incorporates additional staff;
- Provides room to accommodate additional requests by Council for special evaluations and assessments; and
- Integrating the cost of OPS4 within the Office's regular budget.

While the above principles seem to be sound under the circumstances given, maintaining the present ratio of the EO budget to overall annual GEF disbursements (0.6%) and to annual GEF work program allocations (0.3%)³¹, as repeatedly suggested in the documents regarding the program of work and budget, may be difficult to implement if disbursements and allocations change significantly, either downwards or upwards. In addition, such a ratio would need to take into account the cost of evaluation of GEF Agencies for GEF co-financed projects.

As a matter of fact, there are no universally accepted yardsticks such as thresholds, coverage of portfolio, or percentages of human and financial resources which would help to measure the adequacy of evaluation budgets, whether in the case of the GEF or elsewhere. The fact however, that the GEF evaluation budget is activity based, that it reflects the Four-Year GEF Work Program for Evaluation as agreed by the Council, and that it presents the Four-Year Program's translation into annual programs of work and budgets, seems to imply that the key stakeholders (EO, Council) are in agreement on what needs to be done in evaluation and should therefore be financed.

The Panel noted that in the perception of some EO staff, certain evaluations (especially Country Portfolio Evaluations and impact evaluations) are done on a shoestring. This perception seems to be primarily linked to the question of the allocation of time to field work. In practice field work for these evaluations is de facto limited to about 14 days only. Even this little time allocation has to be justified again in each single case.

²⁹ This sum represents the cost of the Secretariat and of the EO together.

³⁰ See: GEF/ME/C.31/7 of 15 May 2007, page 6.

³¹ The EO has indicated that this percentage figure goes more in the direction of 0.5 per cent today.

For FY 09, staff costs of the EO have been calculated at US\$ 2,166,517. This is about 55% of the total EO budget.³² Another US\$ 1,655,000 are calculated for short-term and long-term consultants and contractual services by firms. The inclusion of breakdowns of staff resources in the annual work plans and budgets has been discontinued for FY 08 and FY 09. Therefore, the most recent breakdown of regular staff published in a budget document is that for FY 07 (updated figures for 2009 in brackets):

- 1 Director
- 1 Chief Evaluation Officer
- 3 Senior Evaluation Officers
- 2 Evaluation Officers (4)
- 1 Operations Evaluation Officer
- 2 Junior Professionals (1) and
- 1 Staff Assistant.³³ (2)

According to the work program and budget for FY 09 submitted to the GEF Council in April 2008, the EO will hire three new professionals in the areas of knowledge management, oversight and evaluations and will diminish the use of consultants accordingly in order to cope with the steady growth of its activities and the need to maintain high standards and quality of evaluation work.³⁴

3.4 Evaluation Products and their Quality

The GEF EO website provides a useful overview of the different evaluation products that are available to the general public. These products are quite varied. Several of them are relatively old and reflect the work of the Office before it became independent. Others are of more recent origin representing the work of the independent EO. They are grouped under the following categories of publications:

- Tools and Guidelines
- Overall Performance Studies
- Program Evaluations and Thematic Studies
- Annual Performance Reports
- Project Evaluations and Reviews
- Signposts

³² The EO submits two budgetary calculations to the GEF Council, one according to activities and one by type of expenses. The first one excludes staff travel from staff costs and is therefore slightly lower than the second one, which includes staff travel.

³³ One officer will work on knowledge management. His cost is covered under the Knowledge Management Activity Budget. One of the JPO is partly financed by a trust fund provided by the Swedish Government in support of a junior professional with expertise in evaluation from a developing country.

³⁴ See: GEF/ME/C.33/1 of 25 March 2008, page 11.

- Lessons Learned
- Lesson Notes
- Country Portfolio Evaluation Reports
- Annual Reports on Impact.

Project Evaluations and Reviews were discontinued in 2004 due to the high costs which were not necessarily matched by the benefits generated by them.³⁵ Similarly, the two categories of Lessons Learned and Lesson Notes have not been continued beyond 2003. They have been replaced by the new publication “Signposts” which are two-page summaries highlighting findings and recommendations of recent evaluations and studies as well as of some key policy documents.

The Overall Performance Studies (OPS) are a special case insofar as they are due only every four years as part of the preparatory process for the replenishment negotiations and the GEF Assembly. OPS-1 to OPS-3 was conducted under arrangements specially introduced for them. They included the establishment of an independent task force to assess the performance of the GEF partnership over the funding period under review and to provide recommendations for the next replenishment. OPS-4, however, which is now under way was integrated in the work program of the independent GEF EO and has thus become part of the regular activities of the Office.³⁶

Given the above explanations, the Peer Review Panel was left with three categories of products representing the bulk of the work of the EO over the last few years: Program Evaluations and Thematic Studies; Annual Performance Reports; and Country Portfolio Evaluations. Resource and time constraints did not allow reviewing all products included in these three categories. It was therefore decided to take a sample of different products and analyse them. The sample comprises:

- Annual Performance Report 2007 (October 2008)
- Country Portfolio Evaluation Philippines (March 2008)
- The Role of Local Benefits in Global Environmental Programs (2006)
- RAF Mid-Term Review (October 2008)
- Joint Evaluation of the GEF Activity Cycle and Modalities (2007)
- Annual Report on Impact 2007 (May 2007).

³⁵ In principle, project evaluations are the responsibility of the GEF Agencies. Therefore, only four specially managed project reviews were conducted by the EO under this category, namely: Northern Savannah Biodiversity Conservation in Ghana; Renewable Energy for Agriculture in Mexico; Integrated Approach to Wood Waste Combustion for Heat Production in Poland; and Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and the Gulf of Thailand.

³⁶ The GEF Council has entrusted the EO with the full range of review activities for OPS 4, with the exception of the assessment of the work of the Evaluation Office itself. This assessment will be carried out through this Peer Review. The review will then feed into the consolidated OPS-4 report.

This sample is not representative for all GEF EO evaluations. However, it covers sufficient ground to extrapolate strengths and weaknesses of the evaluations produced by the GEF EO in recent years.

The obvious conclusion overall is that the GEF EO produces solid evaluation work with a welcome emphasis on methodological rigour and clarity.

- Some points of attention are worth mentioning for further consideration;;
- The level of involvement of national and local stakeholders and beneficiaries in GEF EO evaluations processes remains a sensitive issue ; various stakeholders perceive these processes as a top down approach, which is hardly consistent with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and other current aid philosophy;
- GEF EO evaluation methodology shows a strong reliance on written material and third party assessments which is not always matched by a corresponding allocation of human and financial resources to on-site checks and verification, as well as to original evaluative research.
- The targeting of the Council as the main audience for evaluations is a safeguard for the independence of the EO. However there is room for improvement for bringing evaluation results to the attention of a wider audience than is the case at present.
- A short note about the evaluation team in a section or at the back of the reports, with regard to the qualifications and independence of consultants, to the gender balance and to the balance between international and national consultants, would be welcome.

Key findings from the analysis of the above evaluation products have been incorporated in the appropriate Chapters on Independence, Credibility and Utility.

3.4.1 Limitations resulting from Tools and Guidelines

Part of the analysis of the above sample was a critical review of how some of the GEF EO Tools and Guidelines could affect evaluations and what limitations they might imply for producing cutting-edge evaluation products.

The *Guidelines to Conduct Terminal Evaluations* are relatively broad. In addition, they are considerably more prescriptive than most other EO documents analysed. They do not seem to leave much room for encouraging the full development of the capacities which the evaluators may have to offer and would like to use. There also is next to nothing on methodology in these Guidelines except for a few general remarks. This is a shortcoming, especially in view of the requirement for the evaluators to work with ratings. By and large, the interpretation of the ratings is left to the imagination of the individual evaluators. Rating systems, however, that do not assist the user in how to apply them in a transparent

manner, based, to the extent possible, on unambiguous definitions, can become a risky business. They are prone to let users fall in some of the methodological traps they entail.³⁷

In contrast, the section of the *Guidelines* dealing with the assessment of processes that affect the attainment of project results is very good³⁸. It lists the issues which are crucial for the success or failure of a project, such as preparation and readiness, country ownership/drivenness, stakeholder involvement, financial planning, and GEF Agencies' supervision and backstopping.

The *Standard Terms of Reference for Country Portfolio Evaluations* contains all the elements that one would expect: Objectives; Key Evaluation Questions; Focus and Limitations; Methodology; Steps; and Outline of Report. Major challenges addressed in the TOR include:

- The basic unit of reference for GEF projects and programs is not the country, but the focal area. This poses a serious systematic problem. In order to overcome this problem, the TOR define a country portfolio as: "... all types of GEF supported activities in the country at all different stages of the project cycle (pipeline, ongoing and completed) and implemented by all IA and EA in all focal areas, including applicable GEF corporate activities such as the Small Grants Programme. The aggregate of all these activities constitutes the GEF portfolio";
- The GEF principle of not working in isolation, but through co-financing schemes with many partners makes attribution of results that can be shown very difficult;
- The GEF does not have country programs or strategies, and so there is no framework against which results or effectiveness can be assessed; the TOR seem to suggest that the context in which the projects were developed, approved and implemented could substitute for the lack of a country program or strategy. The context is defined as including a historical assessment of the national sustainable development and environmental policies, strategies and priorities, of the legal environment in which these policies are implemented and enforced, of GEF Agencies' country strategies and programs, and of the GEF policies, principles, programs and strategies.
- And finally, it seems that sensitivities exist among the GEF Agencies that country portfolio evaluations could imply assessing their own performance in a particular country³⁹.

³⁷ The EO states that the criteria on which evaluators are required to rate (as per the terminal evaluation guidelines) are very generic and applicable to almost all the projects. However, the methodology that may be appropriate for a project depends on its nature, the arrangements made in the project design and the resources available to the IA/Evaluators. The UNEP Evaluation Unit has reported that the guidance on terminal evaluations has been useful to them in conducting such terminal evaluations (see also 4.2.4)

³⁸ Cf. page 10 and 11 of the Guidelines.

³⁹ Paragraph 7 of the *Standard Terms of Reference for Country Portfolio Evaluation* states: "Country Portfolio Evaluations do not have the objective of evaluating the performance of Implementing Agencies, Executing Agencies or national governments or individual projects." This is contradicting the preceding paragraph on objectives: "The purpose of GEF Portfolio Evaluations is to provide GEF Council with an assessment of how GEF is implemented at the country level, a report on results from projects and assess how

The protection of stakeholder rights and interests required by the *GEF Evaluation Office Ethical Guidelines* stress the intercultural dimension of evaluation work and the potential for conflict that this may entail. Therefore, cultural intrusion should be minimized by respecting local customs regarding dress, personal interaction, gender roles and religious beliefs and practices. Evaluators must also respect people's right to provide information in confidence. Problematic could be the obligation of evaluators to report to the evaluation task manager in the EO any omissions and wrongdoings for which they can present credible evidence, even though these actions may not be directly related to the TOR. The task manager will then discuss the matter with the Director of Evaluation to agree on the most appropriate course of action.

these projects are linked to national environmental and sustainable development agendas as well as to the GEF mandate of generating global environmental benefits within its focal areas.”

4. The Independence of the GEF Evaluation Function

4.1 Structural Independence of the GEF Evaluation Office

The independence of the evaluation function of the GEF is discussed under three categories – structural, institutional and behavioural independence. Structural independence refers to the organisational setting of the evaluation function within the organisation, i.e. the effective linkage or in this case the delinking of the EO from the Secretariat structure and its reporting lines to the Council. Institutional independence refers to the degree of independence and impartiality that is observed in the planning and conduct of evaluations. Behavioural independence relates to the individual evaluators and their impartiality in conducting evaluation work.

4.1.1 Positive Effects of Structural Independence

To quote one of the stakeholders interviewed by the Peer Panel “until there is independence the credibility of the evaluation function will always be an issue”.

The Panel notes the positive effects on the conduct of evaluations at GEF which have been brought about by the achievement of structural independence of the GEF EO. This structural independence is seen as important and positive by EO staff in freeing them from previous pressures to negotiate and amend approach papers, TORs and reports in line with the wishes and demands of vested interests. Most GEF Secretariat staff also consider it important to maintain this independence as it enhances the credibility of evaluations and therefore of the whole institution. As an example, the UNEP Evaluation and Oversight Unit (UNEP EOU) and its stakeholders feel that the structural independence of GEF EO is very good and better than theirs because the UNEP EOU reports to the UNEP Executive Director, as do a number of evaluation offices in other UN organizations.

GEF Council members perceive that independence has been achieved with the structural change for the EO and that it is now quite capable of withstanding pressure from outside.

The Panel is of the view that the GEF EO has successfully resisted pressures from various sides and has transparently maintained its independence.

4.1.2 Compromise of Structural Independence

The Panel notes that structural independence of GEF EO is possibly compromised by a number of factors. First the CEO of the GEF is also the Chair of the Council, i.e. by reporting to the Council, the Director of Evaluation actually also reports to the CEO. However, during discussions of evaluation issues sessions are not chaired by the CEO, thus reducing possibilities of conflict of interests.

Probably of more significance is the fact that structural independence has no legal status in the Instrument of the GEF. The “Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured

Global Environment Facility” (March 2008) does not recognize the EO as a separate independent body.⁴⁰ However, the Rules and Procedures of the GEF Council do recognize the Evaluation Office and its independent position. Also, the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, which also describes the independence of the Office and its Director, has been approved by Council and is a standing policy document of the GEF.

EO had prepared changes to the Instruments and Rules and Procedures of the Council in 2006. The changes had been negotiated and agreed to by the WB Legal Office. However, the GEF Instrument was not changed as proposed, though the proposed changes to the Rules and Procedures of the Council were. The Panel understands that Council did not want to propose to the Assembly to change the Instrument, but instead limited revisions to the Rules of Procedure for the GEF Council⁴¹, later complemented with “Letters of Agreement” between the CEO and Director GEF EO, by which the CEO delegates authority to the Director to speak to the Council directly, and make decisions on staffing matters.

The Panel is of the view that the sustainability and validity of the letter of agreement as a binding institutional measure is questionable, as incumbents in either of the two positions could in theory change something or even abrogate the whole agreement at any time. Even without changing the agreement the actual implementation depends on the individuals occupying the two posts. The independence and integrity of GEF EO depends on the appointment of a professional director with high degree of integrity and independence.

As suggested by the CEO and some members of the Council, the Panel believes that a more formal agreement is needed to put the structural independence of GEF EO on a better legal basis. One way to achieve this would be to present the “Letter of Agreement” to the Council and formally adopt it there to ensure greater legality and sustainability. Such step should also include clarifications of the administrative terms, the authority, responsibility and accountability of the Director of Evaluation.

4.1.3 Negative Effects of Structural Independence

The Panel observed that many important stakeholders, including staff of the GEF Secretariat and the GEF EO, as well as GEF Agencies consider that the EO’s structural independence has been achieved at some cost: namely increased isolation from the Secretariat and GEF Agencies. Relative to the previous situation, there appears to be reduced consultation and communication during the planning of the overall work plan, less communication of findings, and reduced sharing of lessons, which according to stakeholders, are reducing the pertinence and utility of GEF EO.

Some Agencies consider that GEF EO is “independent but not neutral.”⁴² It has concentrated its fire on the IA and has not gone into critical issues such as the operation of the GEF Secretariat or the value added of the new GEF Agency Partnership. Many

⁴⁰ See section III - Governance and Structure.

⁴¹ See 2.r and 19.

⁴² The term “neutrality” is probably misleading in this context. The GEF activities deal with subject matters that are bound to be controversial and therefore require evaluators to take positions in the course of their work. The more adequate term would probably be “impartiality”.

evaluation findings have implications for the GEF Secretariat but have not been put forward as recommendations directed at the Secretariat.

GEF Secretariat stakeholders in management positions consider GEF EO less relevant to the discussion of key issues of corporate change and transformation, because of its focus on the Council. Council members, however, do not appear to share this view, but believe that the evaluations are covering important issues for corporate development and discussions at the Council. Council members do not feel that any important subject for evaluation has been left out and that they have adequate influence over the work programme to ensure GEF EO is relevant to their discussions.

The view of increased isolation of and reduced consultations by the GEF EO is therefore not universally shared and contrasted by stakeholders inside and outside the GEF who hold that the EO is engaging on diverse views with a lot of consultations, taking them into account in the evaluation processes.

Structural independence is also held to have reduced the organisational learning loop and therefore the utility of GEF evaluations for the Secretariat. The Panel is aware that GEF EO has systematised its knowledge sharing strategy and enhanced the staffing levels to promote its effectiveness. Knowledge sharing (KS) is periodically reviewed in the overall performance studies, and a number of knowledge sharing activities are currently under development, including the "knowledge tree" series in support of the Country Support Programme, the establishment of an electronic repository, the establishment of a community of practice, and the development of a KS strategy for the office. GEF EO is also working with the GEF Secretariat in the restructuring of the web site, which entails a number of knowledge products as well as the development of a tool to capture lessons learned for GEF projects. However, an assessment of the effectiveness of the dissemination strategy has not been done and the Panel is of the view that GEF EO does not pay enough attention to the feed-back loop and that there is some disconnect from legitimate demands from senior management. And the GEF Secretariat apparently does not feel strong enough ownership of evaluation results.

4.2 Institutional Independence

4.2.1 Independence in Work Plan Preparation

The Panel observed that the GEF EO work plan preparation is independent. More recently the GEF EO work plan has been developed into a general work plan for a replenishment period. The process involves preparation of a list of possible evaluation topics. Through internal discussion and the application of the evaluative criteria a short list is established and then the GEF EO consults with the GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies to prepare a four-year work programme. The work programme is then disaggregated into its annual components and submitted annually to Council for approval. The Council can request evaluations on specific topics as well, and has done so.

The Panel believes that the evaluative criteria used by GEF EO are adequate and justified. Council Members generally feel that they can exercise appropriate influence over work plan preparations to ensure that issues important to them were addressed. In the past Council has not approved all of GEF EO's suggestions. The only exception brought to the

attention of the Panel was by the NGO representative who felt that in spite of several attempts the issue of partnerships – important to the NGO community – had not made it into GEF EO’s work programme.

The CEO was very careful to point out to the Panel that GEF Secretariat does not interfere in the preparation of the work plan. And there was a general complaint among GEF Agencies of insufficient consultations during the development of the work plan. This, however, is mostly seen as the expression of the strong commitment by the Director of Evaluation and his staff to the independence of evaluation.

The Panel observed that work plan preparation is so independent that some perceive that there is insufficient participation or consultation on what the topics of evaluation should be. The Panel feels that the choices in putting the work plan together are possibly too focused on a singular audience of evaluation (Council) and not sufficiently appreciative of other audiences of evaluation that should equally matter to ensure the fullest possible effectiveness of the GEF evaluation function. Generally, appreciation was expressed for the GEF EO courage to tackle difficult issues and to defend this against criticism from within and outside the GEF partnership.

4.2.2 Financial independence

The Panel observed that GEF EO’s financial independence is secured. The GEF EO budget is completely independent of the GEF Secretariat’s budget and is very considerable in size.. The Director of Evaluation annually proposes a budget to pay for his proposed work programme, i.e. a programme or activity based budget. About 55 per cent of the EO budget is allocated to regular staff, the rest to evaluation work (consultants, travel, etc.) and to other cost items.

The Director of GEF EO is satisfied that resources provided are adequate and it is clear to the Panel that the Council ensures that adequate resources are allocated to enable the evaluation function to operate effectively and with due independence. Furthermore, the general frame of a four year work plan to cover a replenishment period and lead up to an Overall Performance Study has been accepted by the Council as an adequate evaluative cover of the GEF’s policies, strategies and performance and the overall budgetary needs for such a programme of evaluations have also been accepted by Council.

The Panel believes that the level of financial independence of GEF EO is commendable and should be maintained. It gives the GEF EO an advantage over other evaluation offices such as the UNEP EOU where the lack of opportunity to negotiate the evaluation budget directly with its Governing body puts the UNEP EOU at a disadvantage compared to the GEF EO as it is not able to match the resources for evaluation with the demand for its services.

4.2.3 Independence in Conduct of Evaluations

The Panel notes that that a number of GEF EO Guidelines exist on the conduct of evaluations and that further guidance on the methodology for impact evaluations is available on the web. Task Managers have a lot of freedom to run the process, and are

required to produce Approach papers at the start of the evaluation process which are open to suggestions and comments from stakeholders. Evaluations generally follow similar standards and GEF EO staff work together to exchange views and experiences on how to conduct the evaluations.

In the view of the Panel the independence of the evaluation is adequately safeguarded in that the Task Manager has the final say in what goes into the TOR, how the evaluation is conducted and how the findings are presented. Although there are instances of attempted political pressures on evaluation teams when findings are not popular, the Panel is convinced that by and large these have been successfully resisted.

In the case of the evaluation of The Role of Local Benefits in Global Environmental Programs, for which voluntary funding was secured from bilateral agencies, an Advisory Panel was set up which, according to the final report, “was instrumental in guiding the study team’s work”. The Panel comprised 13 members, seven - or more than half of them - representing the co-financing governments of Sweden, Norway and Canada. Two members of the Panel represented the NGOs and the Indigenous Peoples. The unusually large number of representatives of three governments on the Advisory Panel could easily be perceived by outsiders as a borderline case for the independence of the EO in the conduct of its work.

Clear guidance on the process for terminal evaluations are contained in the Guidelines. The Panels’ findings on the utility of the GEF EO Guidelines have been discussed in the preceding chapters. With regard to the independence of the process, consultations with the Evaluation Offices of the Agencies who have primary responsibility for the conduct of terminal evaluations and stakeholders in beneficiary countries, clearly revealed to the Panel that the process is sufficiently independent and participatory.

The Task Managers in the Division of GEF Coordination (DGEF) in Kenya reported that they have ample opportunities to review and comment on the TOR issued by UNEP EOU for MTR as well as TER of the projects they supervise, and even get inputs from the EA in the process. This was confirmed by representatives of EA interviewed.⁴³

However, the Panel encourages GEF EO to keep a watchful eye on the process to ensure transparency at all levels as there were indications from the Philippines, for instance, that there was a relatively low degree of transparency of the process in several evaluations, due to an insufficient reflection in Washington of the practical and knowledge needs of actors at the country level, oversight of the necessity for disseminating existing information upstream to create ownership and participation, or overstretching the staff resources of the GEF EO.

One issue linked to the provision of transparency is the information provided in evaluation reports on the composition of evaluation teams. In most of the cases of evaluation reports analysed as part of the Peer Review process there was insufficient information that would

⁴³ Even in the case of the review of the TER on “Removal of Barriers to Energy Conservation and Energy Efficiency in Small and Medium Scale Enterprises”, where the grading of the GEF Agencies was changed by the EO after a field mission during which the issues were discussed with the Agencies, the process adopted was perceived in a positive light by all stakeholders who did not see it as compromising the independence of the process in any way.

not allow a proper assessment of the independence of the evaluation team. There was no information on the composition of the evaluation teams, the qualifications of consultants, the gender balance, the participation of stakeholders, the balance between national and international consultants, etc. This is contrary to recommended best practice for basic transparency of evaluation reports.

4.2.4 Independence in Reporting

For Strategic/Thematic Evaluations, draft reports and key findings of evaluations are shared with stakeholders electronically and some are discussed in workshops. GEF EO asks for feedback on and responds to factual errors and errors of analysis. GEF EO reports that comments are taken into consideration, but not routinely incorporated. The EO may refer to diverging views in the text of final reports or as in the case of the Local Benefits Study, dissenting views of a team member may be presented in an annex of the final report. GEF EO also reports that it is moving toward an audit system where comments and suggestions are summarized in a table with a column indicating reactions. This was done for the OPS4 approach paper and TOR.

Evaluation products confirm that recommendations and conclusions are generally in line with the evidence in the reports. The issue of the time allowed for the preparation of management responses by the GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies is discussed in the next Chapter.

Given the network nature of the GEF system, the terminal evaluation process varies according to the systems established in each agency. As all agencies have agreed either to the ECG best practices or UNEG evaluation norms and standards there is already broad agreement on the overall evaluation framework in the GEF network. In this context the GEF EO has focused on defining the oversight and quality control function across the GEF System for project level evaluations. GEF EO is pursuing this by ensuring independent reviews of terminal evaluations and of project completion reports. In the case of the World Bank and UNDP, terminal evaluation reports are managed by operational divisions and are then submitted for an independent review by the evaluation office. In the case of UNEP, the EOU commissions evaluations and reviews evaluation reports. Terminal reports together with independent reviews are then sent to the GEF EO. These evaluations form an input into GEF Annual Performance Report.

The Panel examined the effect on the independence of reporting by the imposition of the GEF EO guidelines for terminal evaluations on GEF Agencies. The World Bank submits its own reports (following their standard procedures, with the terminal evaluation being the Implementation Completion Report prepared by the project Task Manager and reviewed by IEG) and expects GEF EO to extract whatever information it needs from that report.⁴⁴ This position has been accepted by the GEF EO, since reviews it has conducted have confirmed the acceptability of World Bank reporting and grading systems. The Inter-American Development Bank has not yet produced a terminal evaluation (the first project was

⁴⁴ However, discussions with the WB GEF Unit also indicated that if the GEF component was a small portion of the WB project, not much space would be given to it in the ICR. Even in other cases, the project was considered a WB project, wherever the funding comes from.

approved in 2004) but reflected the same view i.e. the need to follow corporate guidelines rather than those of GEF EO. The UNDP GEF Unit found the different reporting requirements from “each donor or trust fund” too demanding (too many different reporting formats for the country offices to comply with), but acknowledged that the guidelines for terminal evaluations and the APR provided a good incentive to look at UNDP GEF projects from a less introspective perspective and to improve its quality standards. UNIDO has not yet faced this situation, because none of the projects have been completed. They have not yet looked at the reporting requirements for the GEF terminal evaluations.

By contrast, there is unanimity on the great utility of the Guidelines issued by GEF EO in the UNEP EOU and DGEF. In the review of Terminal Evaluations it appeared that there were discrepancies at the start because the criteria for ratings used by the GEF EO and those used by UNEP EOU and UNDP DGEF were different and not communicated. However, with passage of time the criteria have been harmonized and the ratings are now very congruent. The EOU uses the ratings jointly agreed with GEF EO in the evaluation of all UNEP/GEF projects. They also have adopted the GEF evaluation parameters and ratings scales in all their other evaluations.

4.3 Behavioural (Individual) Independence

The GEF Ethical Guidelines point out the principle of independence has two dimensions: (a) the avoidance of conflicts of interest and (b) the ability to retain independence of judgment and not be susceptible to pressure from any party to modify evaluation findings. Conflicts of interest may arise at the level of the GEF EO or at that of individual staff members or consultants.

A potential area for compromise of behavioural independence is the titular responsibility of GEF Secretariat for the appointment of human resources in the GEF EO. In the view of the Panel it is handled by the delegation of the authority of the CEO to hire GEF staff to the EO Director in a way to ensure that the Office maintains its independence in hiring competent staff. GEF EO uses the World Bank recruitment system to hire staff and consultants. Vacancies are announced through evaluation networks and are posted on the web site.

Council members are also confident that at the time of reappointment or new selection of the Director of EO, they would exercise sufficient influence to ensure there would again be a strong head of evaluation.

The Ethical Guidelines recognise that GEF operates in a specialised field in which relatively few institutions are prominent so that staff members are likely to have had some level of previous exposure to some of the Agencies that they are required to evaluate. They stipulate that staff members of EO teams shall not have been responsible for the design, implementation, or supervision of any of the projects, programs, or policies that they are evaluating. Where it is unavoidable for a staff member to participate in an evaluation for which the potential of a conflict of interest is present, the Director shall ensure that the affected staff member is not the task manager. The Panel found no evidence of staff acting as task managers or being assigned to evaluate projects and programmes in which they have been previously involved.

Furthermore, the Panel believes that evaluators take minimum professional or career risks by acting impartially and with integrity since the GEF does not have a system where evaluation staff automatically shifts to work in other functions of the GEF. However, there are professional risks for GEF EO staff if they would want to move to GEF Agencies, because potentially they could antagonize colleagues in the environment field. The Panel notes that in so far as it is within its power, the Council and the Director of Evaluation ensure that evaluators have the freedom to conduct their work without repercussions for career development, as stated in the GEF M&E policy.

Regarding the avoidance of conflicts of interest by consultants, the EO Ethical Guidelines recognises that the range of high-quality consultants with expertise in the fields covered by the GEF is relatively limited; and, over time, most of them will have had some contact with GEF activities and/or GEF Agencies. It states that GEF EO will protect the independence and impartiality of its studies without excluding the potentially most qualified consultants on the grounds of previous experience. The Office shall not engage consultants who have worked previously on the design or implementation of a project, programme, or policy to conduct evaluation analysis or prepare evaluation reports on those activities. Where it is unavoidable to hire such a consultant *on a higher order evaluation, such as a programme or thematic study*, the consultant shall not engage in any part of the evaluation that deals directly with activities with which he or she was associated. The task manager shall also pay particular attention to ensure that any appearance or incidence of conflict of interest is avoided through the appropriate distribution of work and through quality control of findings.

The Panel understands that moving towards using more local consultants, which the EO has begun, might entail a growing risk of reduced independence, impartiality and frankness if consultants work in a professional or political environment where their independent and open opinion when critical, would be harmful to their careers at home. On the other hand, the Panel agrees that support to local evaluation capacity development and ensuring sufficient knowledge of local circumstances requires a greater involvement of local consultants.

The Panel found a mixed situation in the field. In Kenya evaluators engaged by the GEF EO indicated that they had enough independence and were not inappropriately influenced by GEF EO or other stakeholders. In the Philippines the Panel found that the selection of consultants leaves room for improvement with a view to (i) achieving a better balance between national and international consultants; (ii) improving the gender balance; (iii) a more rigorous assessment of hidden environmental agendas that consultants may have; and (iv) a more careful scrutiny of their economic dependence on work for GEF Agencies as well as on general environmental issues.

The EO Ethical Guidelines state that internal and external reviews are a key mechanism for ensuring impartiality. It states that within the Office, all major studies (determined as such in terms of cost and/or sensitivity) shall be peer reviewed by at least one senior staff member. The peer review process will ensure the impartiality of evaluation outputs through careful assessment of the quality of work.

The Panel finds that this peer review process employed by GEF EO is very light compared to that used by some UN agencies, and may need to be strengthened. One interesting

proposal that was made during the discussions in the Philippines concerns the potential of participatory evaluations by the target group and main stakeholders themselves that could then be contrasted with the results of EO evaluation results and thus help to identify gaps in addressing the most pressing issues as seen by the beneficiaries. GEF EO may want to experiment with such a mechanism as part of its peer review process.

Box 2: Conclusions regarding Norms on Independence

Assessment Criteria	Met?	Comments
1. Structural Independence	Y	Structural independence has been fully achieved. The evaluation function is distinct from the management function. The EO Director reports directly to the Council and is responsible for ensuring the independence of the evaluation function. The independence of the GEF EO is not affected by the status of the evaluation functions of the GEF Agencies. To ensure greater legality and sustainability the “Letter of Agreement” between the CEO and the Director of EO should be presented to the Council and formally adopted.
2. Institutional Independence		
2.a. Independence in Work Plan Preparation	Y	GEF EO work plan preparation is independent with subjects for evaluation chosen independently of management influence. However, there is room for improved consultation with stakeholders in the work plan preparation process.
2.b. Funding of Evaluations	Y	The GEF EO’s financial independence is secured with a budget that is completely independent of that of GEF Secretariat. Financial resources for evaluations appear to be adequate.
2.c. Conduct of Evaluations	Y	The independence of evaluations is adequately safeguarded in that Task Managers have the final say in what goes into the TOR, how the evaluation is conducted and how the findings are presented.

Assessment Criteria	Met?	Comments
2.d. Evaluation Reporting	Y	Reporting of evaluations is fully independent. Recommendations and conclusions are generally in line with the evidence in the reports. The imposition of GEF EO guidelines for terminal evaluations on GEF Agencies has not compromised the independence of the reporting process.
3. Behavioural Independence and Integrity of EO staff	A	The Ethical Guidelines provide a framework for enduring behavioural independence, and professional or career risks to acting independently and impartially are minimal. However, limited expertise available in the issues addressed by the GEF, and increased calling on local consultants could threaten behavioural independence.

Y = yes; P = partial; N= no A=attention

5. The Credibility of the GEF Evaluation Function

5.1 Key Elements of Credibility

The credibility of evaluations depends on several factors: depth and quality of the analysis, including technical competence; methodological rigour, including a balanced approach to and the full use of different sources of information; stakeholder involvement and transparency of the process; impartiality and independence; and professional competence and integrity of the evaluators.

The Panel notes that the GEF Evaluation Office is fully aware of the weight and the crucial importance of these factors in order to guarantee top level performance and in delivering internationally competitive and accepted quality of its evaluation products. The GEF EO addresses them all, through general policy guidance and in its day-to-day activities. As a result, the Panel found a good degree of satisfaction of stakeholders with the work of the EO and especially with the credibility of its products.

Analysing the various factors that determine the credibility of evaluations, the Panel found that stakeholders see the independence of the Office as an indispensable precondition for credible evaluation work. The Panel was also informed that the quality of the GEF EO evaluations has gone up over recent years. As a rule, evaluation reports now provide good technical information, with lots of facts and evidence, and in-depth analysis. This contributes to the credibility of the products. Moreover, more methodological rigour has been introduced in the work of the EO. This leads to well substantiated analysis and pointed, but balanced assessments. However, the Panel was also informed by stakeholders of a number of issues that could result in putting the present credibility of EO evaluation products at risk if no remedial action would be taken soon.

The analysis of the evaluation products has shown that particular products and specific actions are more important for establishing – or losing – credibility than others. One of these examples is the Annual Performance Report (APR). Since 2005, the Annual Performance Report (APR) is the major vehicle to inform the GEF Council once a year on the aggregated results of GEF projects, on the processes that affect the attainment of results, and on the Evaluation Office's assessment of the quality of project monitoring and evaluation activities across the portfolio and the GEF Agencies. Thus, the APR perform an important and credible bridging function between the evaluation activities of the Agencies, particularly in the field of mid-term reviews and terminal evaluations, and the role of oversight and aggregation that the Evaluation Office has been mandated by the Council to play for GEF as a whole. The Council is reassured that the evaluations of projects by the GEF Agencies are meeting the requirements of the Guidelines for Terminal Evaluations, and similarly, the aggregations provided in the APR assist the Council in performing its oversight function at the Meso⁴⁵ level in an efficient manner.

At the same time, the GEF EO has to be aware that the APR can also impair the credibility that has been established before. One such risk is the rankings that the EO applies in rating the quality and other aspects of the evaluation reports submitted by the GEF Agencies. There are six rankings for assessing the quality of an evaluation report. Three of these

⁴⁵ Aggregation of knowledge gathered at the project level.

rankings are positive (Highly Satisfactory - Satisfactory – Moderately Satisfactory), and three are negative (Moderately Unsatisfactory – Unsatisfactory – Highly Unsatisfactory). The overwhelming majority of rankings fall into the positive category.⁴⁶ As any dividing line between the definitions of “Moderately Satisfactory” and “Moderately Unsatisfactory” would seem to be very thin, indeed, the temptation to opt for the somewhat more positive ranking is probably quite strong in borderline cases.⁴⁷ This could be perceived outside the GEF as an opportunity to gloss over the true situation, if useful.

A second, quite similar observation relates to the impression that occasionally chapters of the APR are not really providing the full picture. The chapter on the results of co-financing in the 2007 APR, for instance, presents some interesting statistical material, but does not provide answers to the obvious question why discrepancies between promised and materialized co-financing per dollar of GEF funding occur, why this happens to a greater or lesser extent in different projects and places, and what this implies for the GEF performance.⁴⁸ The APR might benefit from an attempt to interpret the facts and of correlating those with qualitative aspects.

On the other hand, the adoption of the GEF EO Ethical Guidelines has clearly made a significant contribution to enhancing the credibility of the GEF EO. There are a number of issues raised in the Ethical Guidelines which are closely linked to credibility. Most of them are also addressed in the *UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System* as well as in the *UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation*⁴⁹. The GEF EO deserves praise for being among the first multilateral institutions to have introduced Ethical Guidelines for its own staff and EO consultants, thus taking the lead for others to follow.

5.2 Risks to Credibility

Several of the risk-related observations have to do with the workload that the EO and its staff have to cope with at present. Although it is obvious that this workload is partly imposed by the Council, it also reflects an ambitious work program initiated and pushed with a view to translating the new, independent and focal role of the Evaluation Office into reality as quickly as possible. The resulting workload with many different activities seems increasingly overstressing the available human resources of the Office. The move of the Office towards more in-depth analysis and assessment, which has been unanimously welcomed by stakeholders, may become compromised by the lack of time of EO staff to analyse carefully. The result would be more superficial analysis in future, less firm

⁴⁶ In the APR 2007, the three positive ranking categories are aggregated as “moderately satisfactory and above”.

⁴⁷ Of 42 evaluation reports submitted by the IA and EA for the APR 2007, only 2 were rated “Moderately Unsatisfactory” and “Highly Unsatisfactory” respectively. In contrast, 14 reports were rated “Moderately Satisfactory”.

⁴⁸ The kind of deeper analysis referred to here is now foreseen to be included in the APR 2008.

⁴⁹ The UNEG Ethical Guidelines has as Annex 1 a list of "Source Material". Source No. 1 on the list is the GEF Ethical Guidelines.

evidence based on time-consuming methods such as triangulation, and more of the “we are told” approach.⁵⁰

One example for this development is the approach to field work of the GEF EO. So far, stakeholders have seen the element of fieldwork as one of the strengths of GEF evaluations. The Panel was informed that at present and especially in the case of Country Portfolio Evaluations⁵¹, EO staff has to justify the need for fieldwork in every single case. Pressure is exerted to restrict the time allocated to this phase of the evaluations. The Panel is of the view that limiting field exposure will reduce the contact of the EO with the reality of GEF programmes and projects. Such development would reflect adversely on the credibility of future EO evaluations.

The absence of GEF country strategies and/or programs poses a challenge for the GEF EO in developing country programme evaluations. There is no framework against which the results or the effectiveness of a country portfolio can be assessed. This creates methodological challenges that should not be underestimated. One of them is to look for ways which would allow the inclusion of global and regional projects in a country portfolio evaluation. The solution which was found in the Philippine case was to include global or regional activities only if the project implementation unit was located in the Philippines and if they featured a clearly defined Philippine project component. As a result, 12 global and regional projects of relevance to the Philippines were not included in the CPE, compared to 2 projects which were actually included. Methodologically, this is an unsatisfactory result affecting the credibility of the Philippine CPE.

The transparency of planning and conducting evaluations through full and early consultation, ongoing dialogue and participation of stakeholders is also an essential element of achieving the credibility and appropriation of the results of an evaluation. Perhaps, this is the weakest part in the work of the EO at present. The Panel’s discussions with stakeholders of the GEF partnership, including the GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies, and governments of recipient countries showed dissatisfaction with the existing practice. At the centre of this criticism are the lack of transparency, insufficient consultation and minimal dialogue, in particular during the planning of the annual program of work, in the conduct of evaluations in partner countries, and regarding the involvement of stakeholders in follow-up processes. Although to some extent, this situation may be due to insufficient use made by stakeholders of feedback opportunities offered by the EO, this criticism is real and deserves attention. The Panel has been informed that consultations between the EO and the GEF Secretariat in the process of drawing up a program of work for evaluation are unsatisfactory. In part, this can be related to the fact that the EO has attained full independence from the GEF Secretariat and now reports directly to the GEF Council as the main stakeholder for GEF evaluation work. Insofar, the Director of Evaluation and the EO on the one hand and the GEF Secretariat on the other are now on equal footing in their

⁵⁰ The Panel was informed of criticism that in two cases (Small Grant Programme and RAF) the analysis, conclusions and recommendations appear to have not been fully backed up by sufficient evidence.

⁵¹ During the Panel’s visit to the Philippines, interlocutors were critical of the very short period of time which was allocated by the EO to field work both in the case of the Country Portfolio Evaluation of the Philippines and the Philippine country case studies for the Small Grants Program Evaluation and the Local Benefits Study. It was pointed out that two weeks of time in a large and dispersed country like the Philippines was not even sufficient for superficial project hopping.

relationship to the Council. Some Secretariat staff expresses discomfort with the situation and feels sidelined by the EO in matters of evaluation. The Council, the CEO and the Director of Evaluation may wish to provide the necessary guidance to clarify consultation needs between the EO and the Secretariat.

5.3 The Issue of Deadlines for Management Responses

A complaint voiced across the whole GEF partnership, in Washington as well as in other places visited by the Panel, relates to the very short period of time⁵² that the EO provides for the GEF Secretariat as well as for the GEF Agencies between submitting an evaluation report and the deadline set to react to it. All stakeholders hear by the Panel find this short time span totally insufficient to fully absorb the evaluation report, discuss its implications for future work of the concerned GEF Agency and for partner governments, and to provide a meaningful and thought through management response. Therefore, the present practice of two-week deadlines is seen as arbitrary and counterproductive. The Panel shares this assessment and could not be made aware of any irrefutable reasons that would require maintaining the present practice. Standard practice would allow a minimum of four weeks for the preparation of a management response that includes all inputs necessary. The Panel underlines that all stakeholders concerned should make use of the full time available for inputs into the management response and not wait until the last moment to submit their comments, as has been observed.

A particularly contentious case in this regard was the recent preparation of the Council discussion in November 2008 of the RAF Mid-Term Review. At the time the report was presented to the Council on November 11, 2008 only a draft of the Full Report was (and still is!) available. The draft reports available on the web site still carry a “not for citation” label. GEF EO distributed a Working Document on the RAF Mid-term Review to the GEF Agencies and the GEF Secretariat on 30 September 2008 requesting a Management Response by October 14. The Evaluation Office then distributed a revised version of the Review on 14 October 2008. The Secretariat prepared a draft management response and distributed it to the GEF Agencies for comments, again on 14 October 2008, asking for comments by 15 October 2008, i.e. the following day in order to meet the deadline for web-posting of documents. This tight schedule impacted negatively on the credibility of the evaluation process.⁵³

The Panel observed that in the report of the RAF Mid-term Review presented to the Council (Main Findings and Conclusions), many of the findings and conclusions were not adequately supported by the evidence presented and therefore do not inspire confidence in the reader. Part of the problem is the draft and therefore preliminary nature of the full report, with some likelihood that the shortcomings may be corrected in the final report. The Panel is of the view that GEF EO should avoid preparing Council reports before finalization of the full technical reports.

⁵² 2 weeks as a rule.

⁵³ This issue of the tight deadlines is also highlighted in Chapter 6 of this report.

5.4 The Need for Upstream Consultation

During the Panel's visit to the Philippines, a number of interlocutors raised the issue of an almost total lack of upstream consultation on matters of evaluation by the GEF EO. The general perception is that the decision on an evaluation subject in a given country is taken by the EO in Washington without consultation of the government or any other body in the country. The decision is then communicated to the authorities at very short notice and with little or no chance at all to discuss, influence or add to it, even though actors at the country level confirmed that they would be happy to contribute views and ideas and identify the knowledge gaps and needs which they try to come to grips with and would like to see addressed. Even though a kick-off workshop is usually organised at the outset of an evaluation, the involvement of stakeholders in the country and their participation is perceived as far too limited. As a consequence, the evaluation process often remains opaque. Stakeholders in the country feel excluded and lose interest in the exercise which they may not consider credible any more.

Similar criticisms are voiced among GEF Agencies. Often, the perception of a black box approach by the EO prevails, including in cases when evaluation criteria are set retroactively⁵⁴ or without prior consultation. The Panel finds that there is room for improvement here and that the EO should establish early and upstream contacts with stakeholders in countries where an EO evaluation is being planned. Such contacts should include an explicit invitation to contribute to the TOR and to identify knowledge needs at the country level that the planned evaluation may be able to contribute to. Similar arrangements should be established with the GEF Agencies, both at headquarter and at in-country operational level.

5.5 Including GEF Agencies in Performance Assessment

Another issue affecting the credibility of the GEF EO evaluations is the inclusion of an assessment of the performance of GEF Agencies in evaluations. During the discussion of the RAF mid-term evaluation in the GEF Council in November 2008, Panel members attending the meeting were approached by several Council members, mostly from developing countries who felt that the RAF evaluation had missed out on reporting and highlighting the importance of the performance of GEF Agencies. Thus, in their view, the major role that these Agencies play in the conception, design and implementation of GEF projects was not properly reflected in the evaluation.

This kind of criticism was echoed during the visit of members of the Panel to the Philippines. It was pointed out that paragraph 7 of the *Standard Terms of Reference for Country Portfolio Evaluations* states that country portfolio evaluations “do not have the objective of evaluating the performance of Implementing Agencies, Executing Agencies or national governments or individual projects”. The Panel does not consider this a practicable rule for any CPE. Moreover, in the case of the Philippines CPE the rule was not very strictly applied as there are several references in the report to examples of suboptimal

⁵⁴ Examples mentioned in this context are the Quality of Project Supervision evaluation and the ratings of benefits in the Local Benefits evaluation.

performance of IA. The Panel views this clause as counterproductive. Any circumstances in a country due for a CPE that would warrant a different treatment should be specifically dealt with in the TOR for that particular CPE.

The issues connected with the independence and impartiality of evaluators have already been discussed at some length in the preceding chapters. However, there is also a credibility dimension in the selection of consultants that must not be forgotten. Politically sensitive issues in the selection of consultants are the balance between national and international consultants as well as the gender balance in an evaluation team. On both scores, examples of EO evaluations in the Philippines show shortcomings. Moreover, the Panel was informed in Manila that the credibility of evaluation reports should also be safeguarded by assessing more rigorously the potential impact of hidden agendas that consultants may have and by scrutinizing carefully a consultant’s overall economic dependence on working for GEF Agencies on GEF themes as well as on general environmental issues.

In several discussions, the issue of technical credibility of an evaluation versus its scientific credibility was raised with the Panel, including by the STAP. Although STAP would like to see a greater infusion of scientific research methods into evaluations and play itself a greater role in that respect, the prevailing approach in EO is that the credibility of GEF evaluations should be based on rigorously evaluating processes, themes, or country portfolios, with adequate technical credibility. Technical credibility is secured, amongst other methods, by hiring consultants who are selected on the basis of their technical competence. Should there be a risk of conflict of interest, the EO has taken precautions in its guidelines on how to deal with that. Although there is some criticism emanating from IA, such as the World Bank and UNDP, about the EO’s shying away from scientific indicators and about producing recommendations of insufficient scientific credibility, the Panel concurs with the EO’s view that a clear distinction needs to be made between scientific research on the one hand and evaluation work which is addressed to a non-scientific audience such as the GEF Council on the other. If there is a need for technical or scientific validation of evaluation reports, the necessary tools and instruments are already at the disposal of the EO, including external reviews.

Box 3: Conclusions regarding Norms on Credibility

Norm	Met?	Comments
1. Impartiality	P	Impartiality is one of the core elements of the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy. In order to guarantee the highest possible degree of impartiality, GEF Evaluation Office Ethical Guidelines apply to EO staff as well as to consultants hired by the EO. Although conflicts of interest in the narrow sense of the word are thus kept to a minimum, there are occasional claims that evaluators have hidden agendas or are economically too dependent on their work for GEF Agencies. In country views sought during evaluation processes often emanate from easily

Norm	Met?	Comments
		accessible and articulate stakeholders Furthermore, individual evaluation budgets do not always allow for in depth exploring and including, particularly during country case studies and country portfolio evaluations.
○ Choosing evaluation subjects	P	The GEF EO establishes a Four-Year Work Programme covering one replenishment period. This work programme is submitted to the Council for discussion and approval. Based on the four-year work programme, annual programmes of work and budgets are established for approval by the Council. The selection of evaluation subjects is based on a number of criteria such as equal coverage of focal areas, financial weight of a project or programme, policy relevance in existing GEF policies, stakeholder opinion and demand, or evaluability. The Panel was informed that by and large the selection of evaluation subjects through this process is considered balanced and does not give any reason to complain about lack of impartiality. Although the Council as the main stakeholder in the work of the GEF EO considers the consultative process for the selection of evaluation subjects adequate and satisfactory, other stakeholders such as the GEF Agencies would like to see more consultation on the work programs. This assessment is connected with occasional remarks that the GEF EO in choosing its evaluation subjects is independent, but not neutral.
○ Identifying consultants	P	Consultants are identified and selected on the basis of their professional competence and expertise in the relevant subject matter. Recruitment of consultants follows the World Bank rules and regulation, and consultancies are advertised publicly. The GEF EO Ethical Guidelines require the assessment of potential conflicts of interest. In case of potential conflicts the task manager will decide whether or not to exclude the consultant or to adopt specified measures to safeguard the integrity of the evaluation. The selection of consultants is subject to improvement. This includes an adequate gender balance in evaluation teams and a better balance between national and international consultants as well as a better involvement of recipient country experts..
○ Evaluation design	Y	The task manager in the GEF EO is responsible for a balanced and impartial evaluation design, expressed in the TOR and/or approach papers. The TOR addresses evaluability, evaluation criteria, methodology etc. and is made available for comments on the GEF EO web site. Formal and informal consultations with the GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies and other stakeholders are used to help develop and balance the design.

Norm	Met?	Comments
○ Systematic assurance of impartiality	Y	There are a number of checks and balances in place in the work of the GEF EO that are also used to assure the impartiality of evaluations. They include quality checks of draft evaluation reports by another senior staff member of the EO, involvement of the Director of Evaluation in drafting the recommendations and conclusions, the acceptance of dissenting opinions, and others.
2. Quality and Accuracy		
○ Professionalism	Y	There is a system in place that assures a high degree of professionalism in the work of the GEF EO.
○ Systematic Quality Assurance	P	A relatively elaborate system of quality assurance is in place. In cases of doubt, additional external quality checks can be commissioned. However, the efficiency of the quality assurance systems as presently used leaves room for improvement, as there are a number of cases demonstrating suboptimal results, such as weak linkages between evidence and conclusions and recommendations, or insufficient depth of the analysis resulting in relatively many unanswered questions.
○ Dealing with Comments and Disagreements	P	Well substantiated comments and disagreements are usually taken up by the GEF EO and incorporated or attached to the evaluations. The very tight schedules for comments, however, do not allow making as full a use of the possibility to react as most stakeholders in the GEF would like to see. This affects in particular the management responses which are often superficial and not reflecting the full picture of potential reactions, due to lack of time.
○ Aggregation of Evaluation Results	A	The aggregation of evaluation results in the Annual Performance Report (APR) depicts well the overall performance of the GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies in a given year. Therefore, the APR is a credible and important piece of work and a useful bridge between the evaluation activities of the GEF Agencies and the oversight function of the Council. The value of the APR should be further increasing in the years to come as the data collected become part of a time series that allows to follow trends and changes in the GEF performance more easily. The lack in depth of the analysis in some chapters needs attention.

Norm	Met?	Comments
3. Transparency	P	The great majority of stakeholders perceive the work of the GEF EO as a top-down approach providing only little opportunity for consultations on planning, design, conduct and follow-up of evaluations. There is room for improvement in keeping stakeholders informed throughout the evaluation process, creating opportunities for learning, participation and integration of stakeholders into the evaluation process.
○ Evaluation Design	N	The system in place to ensure stakeholder participation in the design of evaluations is not sufficiently developed to satisfy even modest expectations. Kick-off workshops are basically for information and take place too late in the process to allow for major inputs into the evaluation design.
○ Evaluation Conduct	P	Efforts are being made to provide transparency on the conduct of evaluations. At the operational level however, little is known about the conduct of the evaluations. GEF EO evaluations are regularly perceived as Washington driven, top down activities of little relevance to stakeholders.
○ Evaluation Reporting	P	Evaluation Reporting is transparent, once the report has been put up on the GEF EO web site. Before this happens, however, reporting can be quite opaque. Executive summaries of evaluations were submitted to the Council for discussion while the full final reports with the backing evidence were available only months later.
○ Networking	Y	Networking is one of the strong points of the GEF EO and especially of the present Director of Evaluation who is extremely well connected with most of the international evaluation bodies, such as, UNEG, ECG, the DAC Evaluation Network and IDEAS.

Y = Yes; P = Partly; N= No A= attention

6. *The Utility of the GEF Evaluation Function*

A general statement on the utility of the GEF Evaluation Function across the wide range of stakeholders in the GEF partnership is next to impossible. There are different groups of stakeholders with an interest in, exposure to and influence over the evaluation function in GEF: the Council and - every now and then - the Assembly; the Conferences of the Parties of the international conventions; the CEO and the Secretariat; the Implementing and Executing Agencies; the governments of partner countries implementing GEF projects and programs; NGOs and other civil society organisations; and the beneficiaries and target groups of GEF projects and programs. However, the degree of interest, exposure and influence varies greatly among them.

The primary audience for the work of the independent Evaluation Office is the GEF Council. The independence of the Office was acquired at the cost of a fairly radical cut of the linkages previously existing with the GEF Secretariat and, to a certain extent, other parts of the GEF partnership. Those linkages were replaced by a different institutional relationship which puts the EO practically on the same footing with the Secretariat. Both entities are now reporting directly and independently of each other to the GEF Council, and both are submitting their own programs of work and budgets to the Council for approval. The key difference between the previous and the present arrangement is that the EO has become an arm of the Council in supporting its oversight functions. Consequently, any discussion of the utility of the GEF evaluation function will need to begin with its utility for the Council.

6.1 Utility of Evaluations for the GEF Council

The evidence collected during the review allows the Panel to confirm that the Council and its members are generally highly satisfied with the work of the Evaluation Office, with the coverage of its work plan and the topics selected for and addressed in evaluations. On the whole, Council members find that the evaluations submitted to them are useful in clarifying issues of general concern for the GEF, in informing Council discussions and in helping members to take the necessary decisions in the ongoing reform process. Obviously, not all members agree with all the findings of a particular evaluation while others have already made up their minds before an evaluation report is tabled in the Council and can therefore not easily be swayed or influenced by the evaluation. This does not impair the overall satisfaction of the Council about the utility of EO evaluations.

Furthermore, the GEF Council does not consist of a group of specialists in evaluation. It is an inter-governmental negotiating body of government representatives meeting to take decisions on GEF policies and strategies as well as on programmes and projects. Earlier efforts to establish an Evaluation Sub-Committee of the GEF Council to discuss evaluation matters more in-depth were not successful.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the Council has a solid routine

⁵⁵ Both IFAD and the World Bank have established evaluation sub-committees at the level of their governing bodies which allow for a certain degree of continuity and “professionalization” of the debates on evaluation. However, different from the GEF the World Bank has a resident executive board, and at IFAD continuity is secured by virtue of drawing on members that are in the permanent representations of executive board

of planning enough time to discuss evaluation business in both meetings of the year. The spring session is mostly focused on the program of work and budget proposals submitted by the EO while the autumn session normally entails a more general discussion on evaluation matters, on the Director's progress report and on evaluation reports. This routine is a clear indication of the active interest that the GEF Council takes in evaluation matters and of the utility it sees in the work performed by the EO.

Two evaluation products carry a particular weight with the Council: the Annual Performance Report and the Management Action Record. The APR is an ambitious and demanding effort to pull together from the individual evaluation reports relevant findings, conclusions and lessons learned during a particular year and to aggregate them in a manner that would allow the Council and other GEF stakeholders to review existing policies and practices and modify or develop them in the light of evidence-based experience. This approach has a lot of potential to help improving the performance of the GEF partnership above the level of individual projects. Over the years, the APR should be able to contribute towards building a relatively solid, common body of evidence and knowledge in the GEF partnership which would contribute to streamlining processes, harmonizing criteria and benchmarks applied in projects and programs, and enhancing the overall performance of the GEF.

The Management Action Record (MAR) was introduced as a tool to keep track of the level of adoption of Council decisions based on evaluation findings and recommendations. The way this tool is presently interpreted and used by the EO, however, is basically statistical. The MAR presents the numbers of Council decisions and the degree to which they have been adopted or not adopted in practical terms, but not much more in terms of qualifying these findings. While some statistics are undoubtedly useful in providing baseline information and allowing to track developments and to make comparisons over time, in the future the emphasis for the MAR should probably be shifted more to the substance of the matter and to the qualitative aspects of adopting and implementing findings and recommendations originating from evaluations, or of not adopting them.

The Panel could report a case where Council members and their constituencies make use of the evaluation outside of Council meetings: Barbados has taken the initiative to discuss an evaluation report in their Caribbean constituency meeting in preparation for the Council session. When asked, other Council members found this a good idea to implement in future⁵⁶.

Generally speaking, a strong demand for the conduct of a specific evaluation will have a positive bearing on the utility that stakeholders attach to the evaluation report later on. However, the Panel found conflicting views on whether there is sufficient consultation in preparing and establishing the EO's work plans. The Director of Evaluation considers that, keeping in mind the paramount need for maintaining the independence of the Office, there

members. By contrast, GEF Council members meet only twice a year for a few days in Washington and then return home again.

⁵⁶ EO staff do not participate in the constituency meetings. In some cases (e.g. the RAF mid-term review) the EO has requested the GEF SEC representative to make a presentation or gather questions to feed back to the EO.

is sufficient consultation of stakeholders taking place, especially of members of the Council as the most important target group of the EO.

Others, however, like the GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies, and the STAP find that there is room for improving the consultative process, also because in their view the EO at present is not necessarily always doing the “right” evaluations. The GEF Secretariat also points out that the strong focus on demands emanating from the Council keeps the Evaluation Office busy so that other proposals for evaluations stand little chance to be taken up in work plans.⁵⁷ The Panel was told that “any disagreement in the Council ends up in a request for an evaluation” and “the EO should learn to say no to Council.” Although probably reflecting a certain degree of “competitive relationship” between the GEF Secretariat and the EO, this assessment basically confirms the utility that the Council finds in the work of the Evaluation Office.

On several occasions, the Panel has observed that the “competitive relationship” does affect the smooth running of business between the GEF Secretariat and the EO. To a certain degree, this is normal in a situation characterised by fundamental reforms and changes in institutional relationships, strong personalities heading the entities which see themselves in competition and unresolved issues such as how to secure more permanently the independence of the EO. Moreover, the emphasis laid by the EO also on the evaluation of process and management issues, although necessary and welcomed by many stakeholders, bears additional potential for friction and conflict. As a result, the functional relations between the EO and the Secretariat are not optimised, potentially affecting adversely the overall utility of the GEF evaluation.

One example for this adverse impact on the utility of evaluations is the evaluation on the Role for Local Benefits in Global Environmental Programs. This evaluation had absorbed a very significant share of staff and financial resources of the EO, in addition to the voluntary funding provided by Canada, Norway and Sweden. The results of this evaluation when presented did not match all expectations. One reason for this was that the evaluation had been based on a sample including a good share of projects which had been designed and implemented under GEF 1 and 2, i. e. in the early phase of the GEF. This was criticised in the Management Response because at the time of the evaluation the implementation of GEF 3 was under way and work on GEF 4 had just begun. So, , the situation had clearly changed. The Management Response by the Secretariat was therefore quite laconic in its appreciation of the EO’s efforts to shed light on the challenges posed by the link between global environmental protection, sustainable development, and human welfare. It stated that the report confirmed the steps already taken by the GEF Secretariat.

The GEF Council, the CEO, the Director of Evaluation, and the GEF Agencies might wish to keep the situation under review and to work jointly towards practicable solutions for improving the relationship.

⁵⁷ It seems, however, that so far the GEF Secretariat has not attempted to submit any proposals for evaluations.

6.2 Factors Limiting the Utility of Evaluations

The present efforts of the EO to consult with key stakeholders of the GEF partnership apart from the Council on the programs of work and on the priorities which should be attached to specific evaluations, have not much changed the general feeling among stakeholders, observed by the Panel, that there is insufficient consultation by the Evaluation Office. This feeling which prevails especially in the GEF Secretariat and among GEF Agencies is further exacerbated by the very tight deadlines that the EO sets for the submission of the management response to individual evaluation reports. Both factors contribute to a sense of lack of ownership of EO evaluations among stakeholders other than the Council and to reducing the utility of evaluation work. In the preceding chapter, the Panel has suggested that the EO might consider to extend the time frame allowed for management responses.

The Panel also sees room for a formal, stakeholder consultation as part of the planning of the programmes of work. This, however, should not impair the final say of the Director of Evaluation on these programmes of work.

Notwithstanding their critique of the consultative process in its present form, GEF Agencies acknowledge that the work of the EO has been of great utility in a number of areas and has significantly contributed towards improving the performance of the GEF. Examples mentioned include guidance produced by the GEF EO which has helped to coordinate and unify yardsticks and evaluation criteria for GEF financed activities across the GEF partnership, and a significant improvement of mid-term reviews and terminal evaluations since the EO has begun to rate these reports. It is also pointed out by several GEF actors that the EO focus on corporate evaluations such as the RAF evaluation or the one on Project Cycle Management has led to providing valuable inputs into the preparation of Council sessions by the GEF Agencies.

Some actors consider that the focus on process and management issues has been too strong and should be balanced by more thematic evaluations, covering the focal areas of GEF.

6.3 Limited Utility at the Recipients' Level

The utility of EO evaluations at the country level as seen by national governments and other national stakeholders is more difficult to assess. During the mission to the Philippines, the Panel members were advised by several interlocutors that EO evaluation work is seen as quite removed from the national level, with the exception of the CPEs. The planning and preparation of EO evaluation activities in the country is largely conducted in Washington, with no or only little advance communication with and consultation of the government or others, and consequently with a low degree of transparency for national stakeholders. As a result, the EO evaluations are perceived as top-down approaches, with little relevance for the operational level, and creating only muted expectations regarding their utility. Even though briefing workshops are usually organised by the EO on the spot at the beginning of an evaluation, national and local stakeholders do not consider this a serious effort to involve them in a participatory manner. To the extent that this assessment is shared in other countries, the EO might consider moving the preparatory work for discrete evaluations in a particular country or for country case studies as part of wider evaluations, sufficiently upstream to allow for early and substantive involvement of

national and local stakeholders and thus making full use of local knowledge, views and expertise in the preparatory process. This would also contribute to increasing the perception among local stakeholders that EO evaluations are useful at their level.

The utility of two evaluations recently conducted in the Philippines, i. e. the Country Portfolio Evaluation and the country case study for the evaluation of the Small Grants Programme, is favourably assessed by stakeholders in the country. The CPE has been used by the National Operational Focal Point as the baseline for establishing a national monitoring system of GEF activities and projects. Similarly, the Small Grants Focal Point who had only been recently appointed indicated that she would use the evaluation of the Small Grants Program in the Philippines as a baseline for her own monitoring efforts. When asked about the utility of the two evaluations and their findings in providing new insights into the GEF activities in the Philippines, the reaction was more subdued. It was pointed out that there was little in the reports that had not been known before.⁵⁸

Awareness of the existence of EO evaluations among stakeholders at the country level seems to be limited to a relatively small group of government officials who are directly responsible for or involved in GEF activities. Interviews and group discussions with government officials in the Philippines demonstrated a high degree of ignorance among them about the existence of EO evaluations and of very little effort by those who do know about them to disseminate relevant evaluation reports to a wider audience. A number of interlocutors were not even aware of the possibility of accessing evaluation reports and other evaluation documents through the GEF EO website. Therefore, it is hardly possible to assess the utility of EO evaluations at the country level more generally.

6.4 Increased Utility through better Dissemination and Consultation

Although part of the problem of disseminating evaluation reports at country level often lies with the national governments, there are also issues that can only be solved in Washington and need to be addressed with some urgency by the EO. It is not quite clear whether or not there is a proactive EO dissemination policy in place and how efficiently it is being implemented. When discussing these issues in Washington, the Panel was advised that there are serious efforts undertaken to inform stakeholders and others who may be interested about new evaluation reports when they are published, using E-alerts, targeted mailings of the SignPost, and similar. But there are limits to these efforts, and their efficiency may leave room for improvement.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ This is not really a surprise because both evaluations are primarily based on documentary evidence already in existence, including reviews, assessments and evaluations. Consequently, the evidence as such has been known before and was aggregated for the purpose of the two evaluations (Meta evaluation). Time and resources did not allow much original research to be added to what was already available. Only some rather superficial spot checks were possible. However, the contextualisation and use of the existing evidence is different.

⁵⁹ The Director of the Philippine Office of the World Bank in Manila was not aware of the existence of the Country Portfolio Evaluation for the Philippines and was surprised to hear that the CPE included some criticism of the competitive attitude of the Bank and UNDP in looking for projects that could attract GEF financing.

Especially the “Signposts” are well done and easy to read. They convey core messages emanating from evaluation work in a user-friendly fashion. Up to now, about two dozen “Signposts” have been published. All of them are available in three languages: English, French and Spanish. Unfortunately, “Signposts” are not yet as widely disseminated and known as one would like to see.

The EO could consider incorporating dissemination aspects in the planning of evaluations right from the beginning, including budgetary provisions if needed, e. g. for travel to feedback events or to regional and sub-regional meetings that may provide an appropriate platform for feedback and dissemination of evaluation results.

This alone, however, is not enough to increase the perception of utility of EO evaluation work at the country level. To make its evaluation activities more attractive for stakeholders at the national level, the EO might take action, especially on three counts:

- The consultative process could be advanced in order to allow stakeholders to participate more fully and in an early stage in the preparation of the evaluation.
- National leadership, especially in country-specific evaluations such as CPEs or country case studies, could be enhanced to allow more ownership of the country, better appreciation by stakeholders of the work’s utility that can be expected, and meeting international standards for national ownership and leadership as expressed, for instance, in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.
- A better balance between the EO’s global approach to evaluations, underpinned by country cases, and the requirements of operators at the national level searching for solutions to problems in their day-to-day work could be sought.

Box 4: Conclusions regarding Norms on Utility

Norm	Met?	Comments
1. Intentionality	P	The evaluation function in the GEF was created to improve the performance of the GEF partnership (GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies, Conventions, and Governments) and thus contribute to a better management for results. The main audience for GEF evaluations is now the GEF Council. The independent Evaluation Office reports to the Council and supports primarily the Council in performing its oversight role.
○ Choosing evaluation subjects	Y	The strong emphasis by the EO on evaluations of policy, process and management issues, the introduction of country portfolio evaluations and the Council discussions which follow are clearly intended to contribute to decision and policy making, accountability and learning.

○ Evaluation design	P	The GEF EO evaluation activities are clearly intended to be used, with a view to improving the performance of the GEF partnership in substance, process, modalities and management. In practice, however, a number of obstacles stand presently in the way of making the fullest possible use of evaluations. These obstacles include a lack of ownership by many stakeholders, due to insufficient consultation before, during and after the evaluation, blockades in the learning loop, unresolved issues in firming up the independence of the Evaluation Office, and the retarding impact of the “competitive relationship” between the Secretariat and the EO.
○ Evaluation conduct	Y	The conduct of evaluations is identical with the intentions expressed in the evaluation design.
○ Follow-up	P	There is a follow-up system in place which ensures that a management response is provided together with the presentation of the evaluation report in Council, and that follow-up decisions and recommendations are recorded and monitored (MAR) with regard to their implementation. The system, however, suffers from too tight deadlines for the Management Responses and a relatively narrow statistical interpretation of the MAR, which still leave room to go deeper into the substantive aspects of follow-up activities.
○ Client views	P	The utility of GEF EO evaluations is tested in the Council. The views of other stakeholders, especially the GEF Agencies, don't have a comparable weight.
2. Timeliness	Y	The GEF EO evaluation cycle is based on a four-year work programme tied to the replenishment cycle. It culminates in the Overall Performance Study which is conducted at the end of a replenishment cycle in preparation of the next negotiations and the meeting of the GEF Assembly. The Council is free, however, to ask for additional evaluations on top of the four year work programme.
○ Choosing evaluation subjects	Y	As a rule, the timing of evaluations included in the program of work is tied to decision-making processes already initiated. Alternatively, a particular evaluation, once its results are known, may lead to a decision-making process not initially envisaged.
○ Evaluation design	Y	As a rule, all approach papers and TOR for GEF EO evaluations contain references to milestones that are relevant for the conduct of a particular evaluation.

○ Evaluation conduct	Y	In principle, there is a system in place to assure that the evaluation is conducted in a timely manner. This is the responsibility of the task manager. Problems, if they occur, are usually due to delays in report writing, fine-tuning and editing.
○ Evaluation reporting	P	Evaluation reports are supposed to be shared with stakeholders in a timely manner. However, reports often come out late and do not leave the necessary time for comments, reactions and inputs.
3. Accessibility	Y	The GEF EO follows a full disclosure policy. All evaluations are put on the web site of the Office, Summaries of proceedings dealing with evaluation matters raised in the Council are also publicly available, through the GEF web site. Occasionally, the delay for access to evaluation documents could be shortened.
○ Unrestricted access	Y	See above.
○ Readability	P	GEF EO evaluation reports are well written, most of the time easy to understand and, as a rule, professionally edited before publication. Some evaluation reports are long, tend to go into much detail and become repetitive.
○ Retrievable	Y	GEF EO documents are easily retrievable on the web site of the Office.
○ Dissemination	P	The dissemination policy of the GEF EO leaves room for improvement, particularly in recipient countries where dissemination activities appear to be fairly haphazard. As far as the dissemination of evaluation findings through knowledge sharing with the GEF partnership is concerned, the GEF EO has made commendable efforts in recent times to strengthen its in-house knowledge management capacity. The “SignPost” publication seems to have even more potential for the dissemination of evaluation findings than is presently used.

Y = Yes; P = Partly; N = No

7. Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The years reviewed by the Panel represent a particularly dynamic, but also difficult phase of the GEF, characterised by the urgent demand of members for reform and change in what they considered a GEF marked by bureaucratisation and stagnation. The CEO and the Director of Evaluation, both new actors in the organisation, were faced with processes of change and reform which had already been initiated before their time and had taken on a momentum of their own and both were confronted with high and often conflicting expectations in the Council, by their staff and among the GEF membership at large.

The Peer Review Panel has had the advantage to look at developments in retrospect and in full possession of the knowledge of their outcomes and results.

In February 2006, the new *GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy* was approved by the Council. This policy document has since been the backbone of the work of the independent Evaluation Office. Other guidance documents such as guidelines, minimum requirements and methodological tools were added in the following months and years. This guidance was generally welcomed because it helped stakeholders of the GEF partnership to understand better the new, independent role of the GEF Evaluation Office and its interaction with the GEF Secretariat, the GEF Agencies, and others such as the STAP. Similarly, several of the guidance documents issued by the GEF EO contributed in a major way to a unification of assessment criteria and other yardsticks applied in measuring and evaluating the results of GEF projects and programmes.

The GEF EO has been successful in establishing itself as a new and independent core player within the overall GEF structures and in finding acceptance in this role. This is primarily due to the fact that the Office under its new Director has made commendable efforts to improve and facilitate professional evaluation work in the GEF and to provide leadership in this area, both within the GEF partnership and internationally, especially in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

7.1 Overall Lessons

In the following section, we draw a few lessons that can be of significance for the larger evaluation community.

A first lesson that can be drawn from the recent history of the GEF evaluation function is that change based on a professional approach and outlook is not per se perceived as a threat, but as an opportunity.

A second lesson is that independence of the Evaluation Office in the case of the GEF means independence from the Secretariat. This leads to a number of repercussions. The most important of them is probably that there are no longer any direct formal organisational links between the EO and the Secretariat, except, of course, for administrative and similar matters. Both the Secretariat and the EO are entities independent of each other, with their own budgets and work programs, and reporting directly to the Council. The evaluation function is clearly separated from other functions that provide monitoring, assessments and policy advice. Consequently, the power play between the protagonists has moved to a higher level. It takes place now in the Council and thus

becomes more transparent, as was probably intended when it was decided to make the EO independent.

A third lesson concerns the unresolved issues related to the safeguarding of the independence of the Evaluation Office in the legal arrangements of the GEF. Efforts of the Director of Evaluation to include safeguards against any impingement of the EO's independence were not successful. The Council did not accept the proposals made for changes in the Instrument or in the Rules of Procedure of the GEF. Therefore, the legal basis for the actual arrangements of EO independence is precarious, especially considering the fact that the right for the Director to report on all evaluation matters directly to the Council is based on an exchange of letters between the CEO and the Director of Evaluation. Legally speaking, this agreement is a private arrangement between the two which could be revoked at any time by any one of them. The Council may have had good reasons not to firm up the arrangements for an independent EO right from the beginning. However, the present solution, although it seems to be working smoothly, lacks legal soundness. Moves planned to change the situation of an evaluation office regarding enhanced independence should be designed with a view to providing the key protagonists with a minimum of legal security in their new roles, and to avoiding ambiguity in defining these roles as much as possible.

A fourth lesson relates to the need for restraint and sensitivity when reforming and reorganising systems of evaluation. Evaluations will only have an impact on future performance if their findings are successfully fed into the learning loop of an organisation and received there without reserve and hesitation. The way the reform of the GEF Evaluation Office is presently perceived in the GEF Secretariat, perhaps in combination with the strong emphasis laid by the Director of Evaluation on institutional, process and management themes for evaluation, has created fears and consequently some blockades in the GEF learning loop. This is largely due to insufficient upstream consultation of stakeholders in the planning, design and conduct of evaluations by the EO, therefore resulting in lack of transparency. It is also the result of insufficient opportunity to react to the findings, conclusions and recommendations because of the tight deadlines set by the EO after presenting the report, and of the general feeling of a top-down approach by the EO.

7.2 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations that can be drawn from this Peer Review of the GEF Evaluation Function are summarized below under each of the three key evaluation criteria, i.e. Independence, Credibility and Utility.

On Independence

1. On structural independence

The Panel **concludes** that structural independence of GEF EO has largely been achieved and is beneficial to the GEF. It has enhanced the credibility of evaluations and therefore of the whole institution. However, it **finds** that the legal basis for the actual arrangements of EO independence is precarious. The Panel **recommends** that

the Council take steps to put the arrangements for structural independence on a better and more sustainable legal footing than is the case at present.

2. On institutional independence

The Panel **concludes** that the GEF EO work plan preparation is independent and that the evaluative criteria used in developing the work plan are justified. However, it finds that there is insufficient consultation with stakeholders during the development of the work plan. Therefore, the Panel **recommends** that EO enhance the consultation efforts.

3. On the budget

The Panel **finds** that the programme and activity based budgeting and the concomitant level of financial independence of the GEF EO is very commendable.

4. On evaluation processes

The Panel **concludes** that the independence of the evaluation processes for both thematic and strategic evaluations and the review process for terminal evaluations conducted by the GEF Agencies are adequately safeguarded.

5. On conflicts of interest

The Panel **concludes** that sufficient steps have been taken to avoid conflicts of interest by EO staff. Risks of staff being partial are low and therefore negligible. However, the Panel notes that, notably in country, expertise in the thematic fields of the GEF can be scarce and therefore **recommends** the EO to pay attention to the selection and recruitment of consultants to ensure also they do not have any conflict of interest.

6. On quality insurance

The Panel **concludes** that the process for quality insurance of reports set in place by GEF EO is light, given the technical content of the evaluations and **recommends** strengthening it through the use of technical expert panels or similar mechanisms.

On Credibility

1. On the overall level of satisfaction

The Panel **finds** a high degree of satisfaction of many stakeholders with the credibility of EO products.

2. On fieldwork

The Panel **finds** that limitation of fieldwork is not an adequate way to cope with individual evaluation budget constraints, as it would reduce contact of the EO with the reality of GEF programmes and projects. Therefore the panel **recommends** that annual budgets should secure adequate allocation of funds for relevant fieldwork.

3. On deadlines for management responses

The Panel **finds** the present practice of two-week deadlines for management responses is arbitrary and counterproductive. The Panel therefore **recommends** allowing a minimum of four weeks after submitting an evaluation report to stakeholders for the preparation of an inclusive management response.

On Utility

1. The Panel **finds** that the Council and its members are generally satisfied with the work of the Evaluation Office, with the coverage of its work plan and the topics selected for and addressed in evaluations. Council members find that the evaluations submitted to them are useful in clarifying issues of general concern for the GEF, in informing Council discussions and in helping members to take the necessary decisions in the ongoing reform process.

2. On the interaction between the GEF Secretariat and the GEF EO

The Panel **concludes** that the present relationship between the GEF EO and Secretariat is not always apt to support the utility of the evaluation function. It therefore **recommends** enhancing and intensifying the interaction and cooperation between both for the common benefit of all parties.

3. On the Programme of Work for Evaluations

The Panel **finds** that the limited consultations between the EO and the GEF Secretariat in the process of drawing up a program of work for evaluation could impair the utility of planned evaluations. Therefore, the Panel **recommends** to the Council, the CEO and the Director of Evaluation to keep the situation under review and, if necessary, provide additional guidance to clarify consultation requirements to both the EO and the Secretariat.

4. On upstream contacts with stakeholders in countries

The Panel **concludes** that not enough is done to establish early and upstream contacts with stakeholders in countries where an EO evaluation is being planned in order to discuss knowledge needs and to allow a country input into the TOR. It **recommends** establishing such contacts well ahead of the scheduled beginning of the work and/or the arrival of the evaluation team. Similar arrangements should be established with the GEF Agencies, both at headquarter and at in-country operational level.

5. On the learning loop

The Panel **finds** that there is room for improved feedback of evaluation results into the GEF Secretariat and with the other stakeholders.

The Panel therefore **recommends** incorporating dissemination aspects in the planning of evaluations right from the beginning, including budgetary provisions if needed.

ANNEX I – Documents used and consulted

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GEF/ME/C.32/Inf.2 of 5 Oct. 2007:	GEF Annual Report on Impact 2007: Full Report
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GEF, The Nature and Role of Local Benefits in GEF Programme Areas, Case Study Palawan New and Renewable Energy and Livelihood Support Programme, August 2004

Speeches:

Rob D. van den Berg, Evidence on achievements and challenges of the GEF – Statement of the Director of the GEF Evaluation Office to the Assembly, 29 August 2006

Monique Barbut, The New GEF: A Proving Ground for Our Sustainable Future, 05 December 2006

Rob D. van den Berg, Summary statement and conclusions of the international Conference on Evaluating Climate Change and Development, Alexandria, Egypt, 12 May 2008

ANNEX II – List of people interviewed by the panel

WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK MISSION (20 TO 24 OCTOBER; 17 - 20 NOVEMBER, 2008)

GEF Council

Algeria	(Djamel Echirk?)
Bahamas	(Philip Weech)
Belgium	(Jozef Buys)
Canada	(Jan Sheltinga?, Helene Corneau?)
Chile	(Alvaro Sapag)
Cote d'Ivoire	(Ernest, Yaoble)
Ethiopia	(Tewolde Berhan)
France	(Marc-Antoine Martin?)
Germany	(Vera Rosendahl)
India	(Hem Pande)
Iran	(Mahmud Babei)
Japan	(Hiroshi Takami, Kikuko Kato)
Netherlands	(Gerben de Jong, Jos Lubbers)
Nigeria	(focal point and ministry of finance representative)
Panama	(Lamed Mendoza)
Switzerland	(?)

NGO

Faizal Parish	Global Environment Centre, Malaysia
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GEFSec

Monique Barbut	CEO and Chairperson
Bonizella Biagini	Senior Program Manager
Christopher Briggs	Operations Team Leader
William Ernest Ehlers	External Affairs Team Leader
Ramesh Ramankutty	Head of Operations and Business

GEF EO

Rob van den Berg	Director
Claudio Volonte	Chief Evaluation Officer
David Todd	Senior Evaluation Officer
Aaron Zazueta	Senior Evaluation Officer
Siv Tokle	Senior Evaluation Officer
Juan Protillo	Operations Evaluation Officer
Anna Vighh	Evaluation Officer
Lee Risby	Evaluation Officer
Sandra Romboli	Evaluation Officer
Neeraj Kumar Negi	Evaluation Officer

GEF STAP

Thomas Lovejoy	Chairperson
Douglas Taylor	Secretary

Inter-American Development Bank

Stephen Quick, Director	Office of Evaluation & Oversight
Ricardo Quiroga	GEF Coordinator
Rikke Grand Olivera	Young Professional

UNDP

Saraswathi Menon	Director, Evaluation Office
Nurual Alam	Deputy Director, EO
Juha Uitto	Evaluation Advisor, EO
Yannick Gelmarec	Executive Coordinator (GEF)
John Hough	Principal Technical Advisor

UNEP

Alexander Jaras	Deputy Director, Division of GEF Coordination
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UNIDO

Edward Clarence Smith	Senior GEF Coordinator
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Dmitri Piskounov	Managing Director, Programme Department and Technical Cooperation Division
Pradeep Mong	Director, Energy and Climate Change Branch
Stephen Halloway	Special Advisor

US Treasury Department

Billy Pizer	Dep. Assistant Secretary, Environment and Energy
Beth Urbanas	Director, Office of Environment and Energy
Andrew W. Velthaus	GEF and IFAD Desk Officer

World Bank

Vinod Thomas	Director General, IEG
Shahrokh Fardoust	Senior Advisor, IEG
Ken Chomitz	Senior Advisor, IEG
Steve Gorman	GEF Coordinator
Sam Wedderburn	(formerly in GEF Coordination Unit)
Richard Hosier	GEF Coordination Unit
Nagaraju Maddirala	Advisor to the Executive Director

KENYA MISSION (16 - 21 NOVEMBER, 2008)

UNEP Executive Office

Ms Sheila Aggarwal-Khan	Senior Advisor
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UNEP Evaluation And Oversight Unit (EOU)

Dr. Segbedzi Norgbey	Chief, EOU
Dr. Michael Spilsbury	Programme Officer, EOU
Ms. Jessica Kitakule-Mukungu	Evaluation Officer, EOU
Ms. Cristina Battaglno	JPO, EOU

UNEP Division for GEF Operations (DGEF)

Ms. Esther Mwangi	Program Officer
Dr. Mohamed Sesay	Program Officer
Ms Carmen Tavera	Portfolio Manager

Department of Environment & Natural Resources (DENR)

Elma Eleria	GEF Desk Officer
Josephine Natividad	Project Assistant
Cristina M. Regunay	OIC-Chief, Multilateral Investments Program Division (MIPD), Foreign-Assisted & Special Projects Office
Attorney Analiza R. Teh	Assistant Secretary and GEF Operational Focal Point
Angelita Brabante	Environmental Management Bureau
Teresita T. Blastique	Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau
Rowena M. Tercero	Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau

Marine Aquarium Council (MAC)

Maria Generosa T. Mislang

National Economic Development Authority (NEDA)

Willy Deperie Project Manager

Nordic Agency for Development and Ecology (Nordeco)

Arne Jensen Natural Resources Management Specialist

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Jocelyn S. Esguerra	National Coordinator, UNDP GEF Small Grants Programme
Imee Manal	Programme Manager
Renaud Meyer	Country Director
Amelia Dulce D. Supetran	Assistant Resident Representative, Environment Unit

World Bank

Caroline V. Figueroa-Geron	Senior Operations Officer and Country Sector Coordinator, Rural Development, Natural Resources and Environment Sector Unit
Bert Hofman	Country Director
Mark C. Woodward	Sustainable Development Leader

WWF – Philippines

Luz Teresa P. Baskinas

Others

Enrique Nuñez Consultant

ROME MISSION (4 – 5 December, 2008)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Cesar Falconi	Chief TCIL, Latin America and the Caribbean Service, Investment Centre Division, Technical Cooperation Department
Barbara Cooney	Coordinator, GEF Unit, TCIL
Katia Medeiros	M.Sc. – Senior Environmental Officer, Investment Centre Division
Carlos Tarazona Cervantes	Evaluation Officer, Office of Programme, Budget and Evaluation
Rachel Sauvinet-Bedouin	Fonctionnaire principale (Evaluation), Service de l’Evaluation (PBEE), Bureau du Programme, du Budget et de l’Evaluation
Carlo Carugi	Evaluation Officer, Evaluation Service, Office of Programme, Budget and Evaluation

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

Naoufel Telahigue	Programme Manager, Global Environment and Climate Change (GECC), Programme Management Department
Miguel Torralba	Evaluation Officer, Office of Evaluation

ANNEX III - Professional Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of the Global Environment Facility. Approach and work plan

Introduction

The Professional Peer Review is conducted in line with the *Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Functions in Multilateral Organizations*, which was finalized by the DAC/UNEG Joint Task Force in early 2007. Following the peer reviews of the evaluation function of the UNDP, UNICEF and the World Food Programme, as well as the start-up of the peer review of OIOS, the GEF volunteered as the fifth multilateral organization for such review.

This document sets out the key elements of the Peer Review of the evaluation function of GEF. It describes the background of the Peer Review, its purpose, the scope and general approach and methods, the composition of the Peer Panel and the time schedule. This document, approved by the Panel members and to be shared with GEF Council members for comments, serves as a basic reference guide for the Review.

Background

The Third Assembly of the GEF held in Cape Town, South Africa, in August 2006 requested the GEF-Council to ensure the preparation of a fourth overall performance study (OPS4) of the GEF for submission to the next assembly meeting. In June 2007, the GEF Evaluation Office proposed to the Council to undertake the Fourth Overall Performance Study as part of its regular work program. The Council approved the principle that OPS4 would be managed and implemented by the Evaluation Office, except for study components that would pose a conflict of interest, notably the assessment of the GEF M&E system.

Accordingly, it was proposed that the evaluation part of the M&E system, especially the role of the GEF Evaluation Office, would be independently assessed by a Professional Peer Review Panel, composed of internationally recognized panel members.

In February 2008, the Director of the Evaluation Office of the GEF requested the assistance of the DAC Evaluation Network and the UN Evaluation Group, who are currently jointly developing the professional peer review process, to organise a professional peer review of the GEF Evaluation function.

In April 2008, the Heads of Evaluation Offices of both the Finnish and the Belgian cooperation agreed to take financial and administrative responsibility for the peer review.

A professional Peer Panel was set up to conduct the peer review. (see below)

Purpose of the Professional Peer Review

The purpose of the Professional Peer Review is to provide the GEF Council members, the Assembly of the GEF and the GEF Secretariat and the Evaluation Office (GEF EO) with

an independent assessment of the Evaluation Function within the GEF, focusing on the functioning of GEF EO and the quality of its work. The findings of the Professional Peer Review will be presented to the GEF replenishment meeting, tentatively scheduled in Paris in April 2009, integrated in the fourth overall performance study (OPS4), and inform further discussions and decisions about the functional and administrative independence of GEF EO. The Peer Review will also be presented to the DAC and UNEG members as feedback on the quality of evaluation in one of the multilateral organizations. In addition to presenting its report, the Panel will also provide feedback on the peer review process to the joint DAC-UNEG task force on peer reviews to contribute to the further development of this instrument.

Subject, Scope of and Limitations to the Professional Peer Review

The Professional Peers will review the evaluation function of the GEF in light of the objectives and structure of the GEF, according to the core assessment criteria summarised below that are further explained in the normative framework in annex A.

The Professional Peer Review will examine and comment on:

1. The evaluation policy of the GEF and other policies and procedures having a bearing on GEF EO and its work, in particular the extent to which the evaluation policy conforms with international standards, and whether other policies are relevant to the functioning of GEF EO (e.g. those concerning results-based management, harmonization and alignment, strategic planning, budgeting, evaluation coverage, etc.)
2. Structural aspects of how the evaluation function operates in the GEF, including whether the current functional arrangements are effective in ensuring that GEF EO can contribute to the learning and accountability within the GEF.
3. The internal organization of the GEF Evaluation Office
4. Because Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is a shared responsibility within the GEF, the partnership relations of the GEF EO with:
 - The GEF Secretariat,
 - A selected number of GEF coordination units of the Implementing Agencies (UNDP, UNEP, and the World Bank) and the Executing Agencies (AsDB, AfDB, EBRD, IADB, UNIDO, FAO, and IFAD), with attention to the sharing and learning process and to their handling of GEF EOs instructions
 - The evaluation offices of those Implementing and Executing Agencies, with attention to their handling of GEF EOs guidelines,
 - Other knowledge sources also part of the knowledge management
 - GEF partners such as the GEF Science and Technology Advisory Panel (STAP)

5. Organizational relationships of GEF EO with the World Bank, the Implementing and Executing Agencies, with the Secretariat, the Council, and the Assembly. The roles and responsibilities of GEF EO in relation to the GEF CEO, to the Management Team in the Secretariat and to the staff in the Secretariat.
6. The quality of the evaluations undertaken and/or (partly) commissioned by GEF EO. This includes planning process, the conduct of the evaluations, the quality of the evaluation reports, the independence of evaluation teams and team leaders, the ways in which GEF EO enables them to produce credible reports including the ways stakeholders are facilitated to comment on draft reports (e.g. when do comments become an infringement on independence and when are they warranted to ensure standards of evaluation reports? Are country portfolio evaluations considering member countries perspective?).
7. Quality and use of evaluation results and follow-up. Important aspects are: the actual impact of the evaluations; the ways in which evaluation results are disseminated and lessons used both within the GEF and by others (donors, Executing and Implementing Agencies, cooperating partners etc); the responsibility for the follow-up of recommendations; and how follow-up is undertaken and monitored. How well does the management implement council decisions based on evaluation recommendations?
8. Other actions undertaken by GEF EO such as networking, conferences, website, etc...

Core Assessment Criteria

In line with the *Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Functions in Multilateral Organizations*, the Peer Review of the Evaluation function of GEF will apply three core criteria that need to be satisfied for evaluation functions and products to be considered of high quality:

- A. **Independence** of evaluations and the evaluation system(s). The evaluation process should be impartial and independent in its function from the process concerned with the policy making, the delivery, and the management of assistance. A requisite measure of independence of the evaluation function is a recognised pre-condition for credibility, validity and usefulness. At the same time, the review should bear in mind that the appropriate guarantees of the necessary independence of GEF EO is defined according to the nature of its work, its governance and decision-making arrangements, and other factors. Moreover, like most organizations GEF EO's aim is to encourage the active application and use of evaluations at all levels of management, meaning that systemic measures for ensuring the necessary objectivity and impartiality of this work should receive due attention.
- B. **Credibility** of evaluations. The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the degree of transparency of the evaluation process. Credibility requires that evaluations should report successes as well as

failures. Recipient countries should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluation in order to promote credibility and commitment. Whether and how the organization's approach to evaluation fosters partnership and helps build ownership and capacity in developing countries merits attention as a major theme.

- C. **Utility** of evaluations. To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in development co-operation. Importantly, each review should bear in mind that ensuring the utility of evaluations is only partly under the control of evaluators. It is also critically a function of the interest of managers, and member countries through their participation on governing bodies, in commissioning, receiving and using evaluations.

These core criteria are further elaborated in the Normative Framework elaborated in the annex A.

Normative Framework

GEF's Evaluation Office is a member of UNEG, composed of 43 evaluation functions of the UN System and working in close cooperation with the OECD/DAC Evaluation Network. When assessing GEF's evaluation function, the Peer Review Panel will use the normative framework presented in annex A, which is based on the normative frameworks of previous peer reviews: UNDP, UNICEF, and WFP from within the UN System and that of a recent example of a review of a bilateral evaluation system.

Recognizing that the GEF operates through multilateral development banks as well, the peer review panel will take into account that in some cases norms, standards and actual practices in the GEF may reflect best practices in the multilateral development banks. Since the banks have not adopted norms and standards as UNEG has done, this will be done on an ad hoc and case by case basis, where the guiding principle remains best international practice.

To assess the quality of evaluation reports, the Peer Review will use the quality assessment list used by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Panel Composition

A number of important considerations were taken into account when composing the panel membership: (i) relevant professional experience; (ii) independence – to avoid any potential or alleged conflict of interest or partiality, the panel members don't have any close working relationship to GEF that might influence the Panel's position and deliberations; and (iii) independent multilateral and bilateral members as well as experiences from the South and transition countries

The combination of these criteria together with the voluntary nature of serving on the Panel resulted in the following composition:

- Caroline Heider, Director, Office of Evaluation, World Food Programme

- Heidi Pihlatie, Senior Evaluator, Unit for Evaluation and Internal Auditing, MOFA, Finland
- Oumoul Khayri Ba Tall, Senior Evaluator, President of the International Organisation for cooperation in evaluation (IOCE)
- Zhanar Sagimbayeva, Evaluator
- Dominique de Crombrughe, Special Evaluator for Development Cooperation, MOFA, Belgium, Peer Panel Coordinator
- Karel Cools, Senior Evaluator, Evaluation and Quality Control Service, MOFA, Belgium

The Panel will be assisted by two advisors responsible for data collection and information gathering; preliminary assessment of the collected information which is to form the basis for more detailed information gathering through structured and semi-structured interviews. The advisors will provide the Panel with a consolidated information base, specifying the sources. With the benefit of the information assembled by the advisors, its examination by the members of the Peer Panel, and observations provided by GEF on the information gathered, the Peer Panel will conduct interviews with GEF (GEF EO staff, Senior Secretariat Staff, other senior staff and a selection of Council Members). The advisors will draft the assessment report.

Reporting

The Peer panel will submit its report to GEF's Evaluation Office, which in turn will provide it to the CEO, the Secretariat the replenishment process and the Council. The Panel will discuss its draft report with the GEFEO, the Secretariat, the replenishment meeting, the Council and present the final report at the appropriate Council meeting. The results will also be incorporated into OPS4. The final report will also be provided to the DAC-UNEG Task Force, for dissemination among its respective constituencies and to interested cooperating partners. The Peer Panel will report on the Review's progress to GEF EO and the joint DAC-UNEG Task Force.

Responsibility of GEF EO

GEF EO serves as the main contact point within GEF for the Panel and its advisors. GEF EO will provide requested information and data, including:

- the names and details of contact persons whom the Panel or its advisors wish to contact, including contact points in implementing and executing agencies,
- the complete list of GEF EO's evaluations,
- the list of whom to meet in the GEF staff and in the Council,
- a timeline of future important events (Council meetings, OPS4, etc,...and
- an e-library accessible via internet

GEFOE will continue to brief the CEO, GEF Secretariat, and the Council (through an Informal Meeting) about the Peer Review. GEFOE will also be responsible for submitting the Panel's report and recommendations to the Council and for reporting on follow-up action.

The Peer Review Panel and the GEF EO will provide the DAC-UNEG Task Force with feedback on the experience of the Peer Review to enable the members of the DAC Evaluation Network and the members of UNEG to learn from GEF EO's experience.

Documents to be consulted (not exhaustive)

- The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policy
- The GEF EO "Minimum requirements for project Monitoring and Evaluation"
- The GEF EO tools and guidelines on:
 - o Measuring results the SMART way
 - o Conducting terminal evaluations,
 - o Administrative procedures
 - o Country portfolio evaluations, including Standard Terms of Reference for Country Portfolio Evaluations and the "Note on the Selection Criteria for the GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation"
- The GEF EO "Ethical guidelines"
- Seven GEF EO led Evaluation reports (2 programme evaluations and thematic studies, 2 country portfolio evaluations, 2 impact evaluations, and the annual performance report 2007)
- The GEF EO ongoing 4 year programme
- The Management Action Records and the GEF annual performance reports
- The third Overall Performance Study (OPS3)
- The terms of reference and any interim reports for OPS4
- Other relevant documents

Persons to meet (by advisors and/or Peer Panel Members)

- GEF EO Director,
- GEF EO Staff
- The CEO, GEF Secretariat Staff dealing with knowledge systems, programme appraisal, management response on evaluations, good practices and portfolio quality improvement
- Members of the GEF Council
- former evaluation team leaders
- Staff members of a selected number of GEF coordination units and evaluation offices of the GEF Implementing and Executing Agencies (Most probably, WB, UNDP and AsDB)
- Stakeholders in 2 countries recently subject of country portfolio evaluations

Review Process and Schedule

1. Initial meeting of the Peer Panel to discuss details of the task and to familiarise itself with the GEF evaluation work.	Brussels, 20 th May 2008
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2. Preparatory (second) meeting of the Peer Panel, to agree on the Approach Paper and Work Plan, on the Normative Framework, and on the Terms of Reference for the Advisors to the Peer Panel.	Rome, 3 rd July 2008
3. Recruitment of Advisors to the Peer Panel	Completed end July 2008
4. Desk review undertaken by the Advisors: During this phase the advisors will analyze the relevant documentation (see list above) and produce a draft factual report to the Peer Panel containing, next to the analysis, an identification of issues for further in-depth discussion and follow-up by the Peer Review.	Completed end August 2008
5. (3 rd) Meeting of the Peer Panel with the Advisors to discuss the factual report and issues raised by the desk study phase.	Probably Brussels, first week of September 2008
6. Production of interview guides by the Advisors.	Second week of September
7. Peer Panel and Advisors visit to GEF and World Bank headquarters in Washington, and to UNDP headquarters in New York to conduct interviews.	Week of 20 October 2008
8. Peer Panel Coordinator + one or two Members to meet with GEF Council Members: update of Peer Review process	Washington, week 10-14 November 2008
9. Country visits in 2 countries object of country portfolio evaluations. The country visits will be performed by one Advisor accompanied by one or two Peer Panel Members. Telephone / e-mail interviews with other stakeholders	November 2008
10. (4th) Meeting of the Peer Panel with the Advisors. During the two days meeting the Panel and the Advisors will share notes, agree on the answers to the normative framework for judgement, consider evidence and findings in order to arrive at draft conclusions and recommendations, and agree on an outline for the draft report.	Probably Brussels, end November or early December 2008
11. Draft Report. The preliminary assessment report will be drafted by the advisors	January 2009
12. Review by the Peer Panel of the draft assessment report. (Will be conducted by E-mail)	February 2009
13. Discussion of draft assessment report with GEF EO by a selection of Peer Panel Members / Advisors.(Washington)	March 2009
14. Production of the final version of the assessment report	End March, begin April 2009

<p>15. Fifth meeting of the Peer Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of the final assessment report to the Replenishment meeting in Paris. - Reflection of the Peer Panel Members / Advisors on the Peer Review process. 	<p>Paris, 15 April 2009</p>
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Notes:

Throughout the period, consultations will take place between the Panel lead agency and GEF EO, within the Panel, and between the Panel and the advisors, as necessary.

The final assessment report will also be provided for information to the DAC/UNEG Task Force.

Resources

The budget for the Peer Review will be covered by the Special Evaluator of the Belgian Cooperation and by the Evaluation Office of the Finnish Cooperation from a specific joint account managed by the Special Evaluator.

Other DAC or UNEG members may provide financial contribution on a voluntary basis.

GEF EO's contribution to the exercise will be in-kind (professional and general service staff time for organizing and facilitating the Peer Review process).

ANNEX IV – Normative framework and questionnaire for interviews

Normative Framework for the Peer Review of the GEF Evaluation Office

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards <i>(reference)</i>	Documented evidence		Perceived policy and practice <i>(Summarize feedback from interviews)</i>
		Normative Framework of The GEF <i>(Summarize documented policy and source document)</i>	Verifiable practice <i>(Summarize documented practice and source document)</i>	
Independence	N.6			
1. Structural Independence				
❖ To whom does the director report/where is the office located in the organizational structure?	N.2.2 N.6.1			
❖ Is the evaluation function distinct from management functions, such as RBM, policy-making, monitoring, etc.?	N.1.4 N.1.5 N.7.1			
❖ Who is responsible for ensuring the independence of the evaluation function?	N.2.1			
❖ Is the independence of the GEF Evaluation Office (EO) affected by the independence of (or lack thereof) the evaluation units of the				

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards <i>(reference)</i>	Documented evidence		Perceived policy and practice <i>(Summarize feedback from interviews)</i>
		Normative Framework of The GEF <i>(Summarize documented policy and source document)</i>	Verifiable practice <i>(Summarize documented practice and source document)</i>	
Executing and Implementing Agencies (EAs/IAs)?				
2. Institutional Independence				
❖ Do other policies than the evaluation policy (e.g. on RBM, budgeting, etc.) affect the independence of evaluation?				
2.a. Choice/Planning of Evaluations				
❖ Are subjects for evaluation chosen independently from managers' influence?				
❖ Can anyone stop an evaluation when e.g. poor performance is an issue and management does not want it to come out?				
2.b. Funding of Evaluations				
❖ Who decides over the funding of evaluations?	N.2.3			
❖ Can funding be withheld in case an evaluation topic is considered to sensitive?				
❖ What proportion of funding is allocated to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - regular staff of EO - evaluation work (consultants, travel, etc.) - others? 				
❖ Are resources adequate? Are financial resources adequate to ensure an adequate evaluation coverage? How many staff does EO have; what	N.2.3			

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards (reference)	Documented evidence		Perceived policy and practice (Summarize feedback from interviews)
		Normative Framework of The GEF (Summarize documented policy and source document)	Verifiable practice (Summarize documented practice and source document)	
is the typical work load? <i>Adequacy has not been defined by UNEG, but we could consider what would be an appropriate level of evaluation activities (e.g. 30% of portfolio, or minimum 30 evaluations, etc.) to approximate adequacy.</i>				
2.c. Conduct of Evaluations				
❖ Is a system in place to ensure evaluations are conducted/undertaken independently?	N.6.2 N.6.5			
2.d. Submission of Evaluation Reports				
❖ To whom are evaluation reports submitted?				
❖ Who clears the reports before distribution?				
❖ How are comments on evaluation reports treated? Is there scope for exercising influence and, if so, of what nature?				
3. Behavioural Independence and Integrity of EO staff				
❖ Are there provisions that ensure evaluators have the right competencies?	N.9			
❖ Are there provisions to prevent or manage conflicts of interest?	N.6.3			
❖ How is behavioural independence and integrity safeguarded?	N.6.4			

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards <i>(reference)</i>	Documented evidence		Perceived policy and practice <i>(Summarize feedback from interviews)</i>
		Normative Framework of The GEF <i>(Summarize documented policy and source document)</i>	Verifiable practice <i>(Summarize documented practice and source document)</i>	
	N.11			
❖ Do evaluators take professional/career risks by acting independently and with integrity?	N.2.4			
Credibility				
1. Impartiality (N.5)				
❖ Choosing Evaluation Subjects. Is a system in place to choose subjects of evaluation in a way that ensures an impartial choice, i.e. is the choice of subjects for evaluation balanced (including good and poor performers) and/or otherwise representative of the GEF portfolio? How is the work programme established of the GEF/EO and of the evaluation units of the EAs/IAs?				
❖ Identifying Evaluation Consultants. Is a system in place to ensure conflict of interest is avoided in the identification and selection of consultants?				
❖ Evaluation Design. Which evaluation criteria are used, are they clear and in line with common definitions of terms? Are corresponding indicators incorporated into project or programme design to enable evaluability? Do evaluation terms of reference (or equivalent) spell out the evaluation methodology to be used, and if so does it ensure impartiality (e.g. approach to selecting country case studies or site				

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards <i>(reference)</i>	Documented evidence		Perceived policy and practice <i>(Summarize feedback from interviews)</i>
		Normative Framework of The GEF <i>(Summarize documented policy and source document)</i>	Verifiable practice <i>(Summarize documented practice and source document)</i>	
visits)?				
❖ Systematic Assurance of Impartiality. Is a system in place to ensure the impartiality of the evaluation design and methodology, the conduct of the evaluation and its reporting? Does the system cover GEF/EO, EA, IA evaluations?	N.2.4			
2. Quality and Accuracy (N.8)				
❖ Professionalism. Is a system in place to ensure the professional competence on the evaluation team that is necessary for arriving at accurate and credible evaluation reports? Is the code of conduct for evaluators applied and enforced? Is a system in place to review the quality of work (and associated, competence) of evaluators? How frequently are the same consultants used?	N.2.5			
❖ Systematic Quality Assurance. Is a system in place to ensure the quality of the evaluations in their design, methodology, the conduct of the evaluation and reporting? What does the quality assurance system entail and how reliable is it for ensuring the credibility of evaluations? Who plays a role in quality assurance, especially of the technical content of evaluations (role or opinion of the STAP)? Does the quality assurance system apply to GEF/EO, IA, EA evaluations?	N.4.2 N.7			

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards <i>(reference)</i>	Documented evidence		Perceived policy and practice <i>(Summarize feedback from interviews)</i>
		Normative Framework of The GEF <i>(Summarize documented policy and source document)</i>	Verifiable practice <i>(Summarize documented practice and source document)</i>	
❖ Dealing with Comments and Disagreements. Is a system in place to ensure stakeholder views are considered in the process of finalizing evaluation reports? Which stakeholders have the opportunity to comment? How are dissenting views handled? Does the process balance well the issue of independence and credibility/accuracy?				
❖ Presentation of Aggregate Evaluation Results. Is the annual evaluation report based on a representative sample, presents credible, well-substantiated conclusions and can therefore credibly depict the overall performance of the GEF programme? If not, what provisions are made to ensure findings are qualified? Does this apply to GEF/EO, IA, EA evaluations, if they are synthesized in one report?				
3. Transparency (N.10)				
❖ Evaluation Design. Is a system in place to ensure that the evaluation design and methodology is shared with stakeholders?				
❖ Evaluation Conduct. Is a system in place to ensure that the evaluation process is clear and transparent to stakeholders, that they understand how the evaluation is being conducted and how conclusions are arrived at?				
❖ Evaluation Reporting. Is a system in place to ensure transparency in the reporting of evaluation findings and how comments are dealt with?				

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards <i>(reference)</i>	Documented evidence		Perceived policy and practice <i>(Summarize feedback from interviews)</i>
		Normative Framework of The GEF <i>(Summarize documented policy and source document)</i>	Verifiable practice <i>(Summarize documented practice and source document)</i>	
❖ Networking. Does the evaluation unit network with professional evaluation associations (through conferences, workshops and websites) and, if so, does this contribute to enhancing the quality/credibility of evaluation at the GEF?				
Utility				
1. Intentionality (N.4.1)				
❖ Intentionality of the Evaluation Function. Is the purpose that evaluation fulfils for the organization clear, i.e. what is the intention of the organization in having an evaluation function? Is the evaluation function linked to the results-based management system (if one exists), if so in which way?	N.1.1 N.1.3			
❖ Choosing Evaluation Subjects. Is a system in place to choose subjects of evaluation with the intention to contribute to decision-making, accountability and learning? In how far is the selected sample representative enough to enable comparative analysis and drawing lessons across the GEF portfolio? Does this apply to GEF/EO, IA, EA evaluations?	N.1.3 N.1.5 N.2.6 N.4.2			
❖ Evaluation Design. Is a system in place to ensure that the evaluation design and methodology have a clear intent, and if so which?				

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards <i>(reference)</i>	Documented evidence		Perceived policy and practice <i>(Summarize feedback from interviews)</i>
		Normative Framework of The GEF <i>(Summarize documented policy and source document)</i>	Verifiable practice <i>(Summarize documented practice and source document)</i>	
❖ Evaluation Conduct. Is a system in place to ensure that the evaluations are carried out with a clear intent, and is that intent the same as stated in the evaluation design?				
❖ Follow-up. Is a system in place to ensure formal, corporate, substantive and timely management responses are given and that follow-up actions to evaluation recommendations are taken, recorded/tracked, and reported on? Does this reporting provide evidence of the impact of evaluation results, if so on which part of the GEF (policies, strategies, operations, etc.)?	N.12			
❖ Client Views. Is the opinion of key stakeholders asked about the utility of evaluations?				
2. Timeliness				
❖ Choosing Evaluation Subjects. Is a system in place to consider the timing of the evaluation and its relation to decision-making processes? Does this apply to GEF/EO, IA, EA evaluations? How are potentially divergent schedules reconciled?				
❖ Evaluation Design. Is a system in place to ensure that the evaluation design and methodology considers milestones when evaluation information is needed and can be fed back into decision-making processes?				

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards <i>(reference)</i>	Documented evidence		Perceived policy and practice <i>(Summarize feedback from interviews)</i>
		Normative Framework of The GEF <i>(Summarize documented policy and source document)</i>	Verifiable practice <i>(Summarize documented practice and source document)</i>	
❖ Evaluation Conduct. Is a system in place to ensure that the evaluations are carried out in a timely manner? Does this apply to GEF/EO, IA, EA evaluations?				
❖ Evaluation Reporting. Is a system in place to ensure that the evaluation reports are produced and shared in a timely manner?				
3. Accessibility				
❖ Unrestricted access. What is the disclosure policy and practice of the agency?				
❖ Readability. Are evaluation reports written in clear, concise and understandable ways?	N.8.2 N.10.2 N.13.2			
❖ Retrievable. Are evaluation reports easily retrievable, e.g. through a searchable website?	N.2.7 N.13.2			
❖ Dissemination. Does the agency have an active policy/practice of disseminating evaluation findings and reports? ❖ To which stakeholders and in which formats (are the different needs of audiences taken into account)? ❖ Is a system in place to generate and share knowledge or contribute	N.2.7 N.13			

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards <i>(reference)</i>	Documented evidence		Perceived policy and practice <i>(Summarize feedback from interviews)</i>
		Normative Framework of The GEF <i>(Summarize documented policy and source document)</i>	Verifiable practice <i>(Summarize documented practice and source document)</i>	
evaluation knowledge to the organization's knowledge management system? ❖ Has there been an assessment of the effectiveness of this dissemination strategy or practice?				

Questionnaire for interviews

Assessment Criteria	Questions for Council Members/National Stakeholders
Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you find evaluations to be independent in the sense of being impartial, acting without bias or pursuit of political agendas? If not, who influences them and how? • How closely knit is the network of professionals that conduct evaluations in the technical areas, that is in how far is anyone independent? If not, could you give examples of influence that you found undue and how it affected the results of the evaluation? • What effects does the Council/member country have on the independence of EO? On what aspects/issues do you expect GEF EO to consult the Council/member country? Is the communication sufficient and timely? • Who plays a role in what gets evaluated and what does not? Are you satisfied with what is being evaluated? Is the coverage and the topics of the evaluations of importance for enhancing the GEF mission and local benefits? Are there gaps, and if so for what reasons? • From your perspective, what are the advantages and disadvantages of approving the budget for evaluation independently from that of the GEF? • Would the independence of EO change, if the office reported to the CEO? • Have you experienced cases when evaluations were held back from public distribution, and if so what do you think were the reasons?
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you find the evaluation consultants competent and credible (gender balance, geographical diversity, inclusion of professionals from countries or regions concerned)? • Do you find evaluation reports to be unbiased, substantiated with the necessary evidence including enough credible counterfactuals, presenting a “good argument” and making valid recommendations? • Were there any examples of evaluations that you found particularly credible or that you found not trustworthy? To what do you attribute this? • How do evaluations deal with disagreements between the evaluators and the managers responsible for programmes? Do you find that the mechanism for resolving disagreements enhances or reduces the credibility of the evaluations?

Assessment Criteria	Questions for Council Members/National Stakeholders
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the evaluations meet technical standards so that they are credible in the scientific and technical community? If not how would you suggest that technical quality should be improved? • Does the GEF EO adequately involve the IAs and EAs in its evaluation process? How do you assess their performance? • Do the IA/EAs adequately involve national stakeholders in their evaluation process (consultations during planning, design, conduct and follow-up)? How do you assess their role? • Do the IA/EAs adequately involve GEF Focal points in their evaluation process (consultations during planning, design, conduct and follow-up)? How do you assess their role? • Are you aware of any use of peer reviews or reference groups during evaluations? Has their role been positive or negative in ensuring the credibility of evaluations? • Do you find the summary reports that EO prepares based on evaluations conducted by other agencies to be credible? • Do you consult your colleagues in the governing bodies of these agencies about the reports that the GEF presents?
Utility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the evaluations been useful to your decision-making and/or work? Please give examples of how you have used the findings and/or recommendations of an evaluation and what follow-up action you have taken. • Have the evaluations had any impact on your organization as a whole? In what ways? • Have the evaluations had any impact on other organizations? In what ways? • Are there ways in which the utility (usefulness) of evaluation could be enhanced from your perspective? If so, how? • Has the dissemination of the outcome of evaluations been extensive and transparent enough? • Are you satisfied with the response of the GEF to the recommendations of evaluations?

Assessment Criteria	Questions for Implementing and Executing Agencies
Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you perceive the independence of the GEF EO? • How does the structural independence of the GEF EO compare to yours? Do any issues arise for you from that in terms of independence of evaluation? • How do you view the requirements of EO for evaluation of GEF-funded components – do these requirements affect your independence? Do you comply with the GEF requirement for terminal evaluations and how does that affect your (independent) choices of setting up your work programme? • Do you have a say/can you comment or influence the evaluation plans of GEF EO, (projects to be evaluated, TORs, etc)? • Do you share information on your own evaluation plans with GEF EO?
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you the reports of GEF direct evaluations to be unbiased, substantiated with the necessary evidence including enough credible counterfactuals, presenting a “good argument” and making valid recommendations? • Were there any examples of GEF direct evaluations that you found particularly credible or that you found not trust-worthy? To what do you attribute this? • Do you find the summary reports that EO produces based on your evaluations to reflect the messages that are coming out of your reports? • EO has organized events – most recently the conference in Alexandria. Do you find that these events and networking with other organizations contributes to the credibility of evaluations at the GEF?
Utility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do evaluations of the GEF make a useful addition to your own evaluations? Have they been useful to your decision-making and/or work? Please give examples of how you have used the findings and/or recommendations of such an evaluation and what follow-up action you have taken Please give an example or explain how. • Have your evaluations of GEF components been useful to your decision-making and/or work? Please give examples of how you have used the findings and/or recommendations of an evaluation and what follow-up

Assessment Criteria	Questions for Implementing and Executing Agencies
	<p>action you have taken.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the dissemination of the evaluation results of GEF-EO impartial and transparent? Are they shared with all necessary stakeholders? • Who do you consider as having primary responsibility for responding to the recommendations of evaluations – IA/EA project management or GEF Coordinators in the IAs and EAs?

Assessment Criteria	Questions for GEF Staff (Management/Technical)
Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you find evaluations to be independent in the sense of being impartial, acting without bias or pursuit of political agendas? If not, who influences them and how? • How closely knit is the network of professionals that conduct evaluations in the technical areas, that is in how far is anyone independent? If not, could you give examples of influence that you found undue and how it affected the results of the evaluation? • What effects do the Council/member countries have on the independence of EO? On what aspects/issues do you expect GEF EO to consult the Council/member country? Is the communication sufficient and timely? • Who plays a role in deciding what gets evaluated and what does not? Are you satisfied with what is being evaluated? Is the coverage and the topics of the evaluations of importance for enhancing the GEF mission and local benefits? Are there gaps, and if so for what reasons? • From your perspective, what are the advantages and disadvantages of approving the budget for evaluation independently from that of the GEF? • Would the independence of EO change, if the office reported to the CEO? • Have you experienced cases when evaluations were held back from public distribution, and if so what do you think were the reasons?
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you find the evaluation consultants competent and credible (gender balance, geographical diversity,

Assessment Criteria	Questions for GEF Staff (Management/Technical)
	<p>inclusion of professionals from countries or regions concerned)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you find evaluation reports to be unbiased, substantiated with the necessary evidence including enough credible counterfactuals, presenting a “good argument” and making valid recommendations? • How do evaluations deal with disagreements between the evaluators and the managers responsible for programmes? Do you find that the mechanism for resolving disagreements enhances or reduces the credibility of the evaluations? • Does the GEF EO adequately involve the IAs and EAs in its evaluation process? How do you assess their performance? • Do the IA/EAs adequately involve national stakeholders in their evaluation process (consultations during planning, design, conduct and follow-up)? How do you assess their role? • Do the IA/EAs adequately involve GEF Focal points in their evaluation process (consultations during planning, design, conduct and follow-up)? How do you assess their role? • To what extent are you involved in evaluation process (selection of topics, participation in evaluations, discussion of draft reports, submission of reports to Council/stakeholders)? Do you feel your level of involvement is adequate? • Do you find the summary reports that EO prepares based on evaluations conducted by other agencies to be credible? • EO has organized events – most recently the conference in Alexandria. Do you find that these events and networking with other organizations contributes to the credibility of evaluation at the GEF? • Do the evaluations meet technical standards so that they are credible in the scientific and technical community? If not how would you suggest that technical quality should be improved? • Are you aware of any use of peer reviews or reference groups during evaluations? Has their role been positive or negative in ensuring the credibility of evaluations? • Has the EO adequately assessed the quality of IA/EA conducted evaluations? • Were there any examples of evaluations that you found particularly credible or that you found not trustworthy? To what do you attribute this?

Assessment Criteria	Questions for GEF Staff (Management/Technical)
Utility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the evaluations been useful to your decision-making and/or work? Please give examples of how you have used the findings and/or recommendations of an evaluation and what follow-up action you have taken. • Have the evaluations had any impact on your organization as a whole? In what ways? • Have the evaluations had any impact on other organizations? In what ways? • Are there ways in which the utility (usefulness) of evaluation could be enhanced from your perspective? If so, how? • Has the dissemination of the outcome of evaluations been extensive and transparent enough?

ANNEX V – Quality assessment sheet for evaluation reports

GEF PEER REVIEW - Evaluation Report Assessment Sheet	
Title of Evaluation Report being assessed:	
Assessors' Name:	Date of Evaluation Report:

Question	NA	Insuffi- cient Inform ation	Grade <i>(1 = poor; 6 = excellent)</i>	Comments
1: Evaluation purpose & scope				
1. Was the purpose of the evaluation clear?				
2. Was the scale of the evaluation appropriate to the purpose, including resources and time?				
3. Was the overall approach of the evaluation appropriate to the purpose				
2: Design and process				
4. Were the ToR clear or was there clarity in the process approach applied to the evaluation?				
5. Was the scope of the evaluation well defined?				
6. Was the evaluation scheduled at a timely moment?				
7. Independence - Does the evaluation team appear to have been truly without link to any major stakeholder OR representing all major stakeholders?				
8. Was there balanced diversity of cultural identity and gender in the team?				
9. Was the evaluation report peer reviewed?				

Question	NA	Insuffi- -cient Inform ation	Grade (1 = poor; 6 = excellent)	Comments
If not would this have been a useful addition to the evaluation process? (Answer in 'Comments')				
3: Methodology & Tools				
10. Were all key stakeholders involved/consulted in a balanced manner?				
11. Does the methodology appear appropriate to the ToRs and to the stakeholders?				
12. Specifically, was a gender analysis of findings done? (and if not would it have been relevant to do so)				
13. Do data collection methods and tools appear sound?				
14. Were the ToR met?				
15. Do the sources of key evidence seem appropriate for that particular evidence?				
4: Evidence of results (outputs, outcomes &/or impact)				
16a. Was there sufficient triangulation (cross checking) between different sources (interviews, observations, secondary data)				
16b. Are there both quantitative figures and qualitative evidence?				
17. Do the sources of key evidence seem appropriate for that particular evidence?				
5: Analysis & Conclusions				
18. Are the findings and conclusions substantiated or supported by the evidence?				
19. Does the analysis reflect means – ends?				
20. Was resource use adequately identified and linked to priorities and results?				
21. Was there analysis of cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness to the extent reasonably possible?				
22. Does the analysis go to a satisfactory				

Question	NA	Insuffi- cient Inform ation	Grade <i>(1 = poor; 6 = excellent)</i>	Comments
depth? Is the question "why" and "And why is that so" asked enough times?				
6: Recommendations				
23a. Are the recommendations in the technical report well-founded in analysis?;				
23b. Are the recommendations in the report to Council well-founded in analysis?;				
23c. Is here a direct link between the recommendations in the technical report and those in the Council report?				
24. Are the recommendations realistic;				
25. Are the recommendations operational/actionable: at a level of abstraction appropriate to the nature of the subject being evaluated?				
26. Are the recommendations comprehensive?				

ANNEX VI – Peer review panel members and advisors

Mr. Dominique de Crombrugghe was the Peer Panel coordinator and represented the DAC-evaluation network on the Panel. He has a legal background and over 30 years of work experience. He practiced law at the Bar of Brussels both in civil and European law. For several years he was a legal advisor to a major Belgian trade union confederation. He did legal research in Germany on the transfer of technologies to developing countries; he also worked on comparative not for profit law in various Member States of the EU and in Romania before its EU-accession. From 1994 onwards, he became involved in program planning and evaluation. He undertook assignments for the EU-Commission, the Belgian cooperation, multilateral organizations and for various Belgian, European and international NGOs in the field of humanitarian aid and development cooperation. Since 2003 he is the Special Evaluator of the Belgian Development Cooperation. He has established a permanent evaluation function in the Belgian cooperation. In that quality, he has designed and led strategic evaluations such as country-program and institutional evaluations; he has undertaken the peer review of the Evaluation Function for International and Development Cooperation at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and participated as a peer to the System Wide Review of Evaluation Functions in the German Development Cooperation. He is a Vice-Chair of the OECD-DAC-Evaluation Network.

Mr. Karel Cools is a Senior Evaluator at the Quality Control and Evaluation Service of the Belgian Directorate General for Development Cooperation. He has 25 years of work experience, of which 15 years is practical experience in long-term assignments in the fields of water management for FAO in Bangladesh, afforestation and soil conservation for FAO in Comoros and for ILO in Pakistan, and agro-sylvo pastoralism for UNEC in Burkina Faso. He joined the Belgian Federal Administration in 1997, first as Resident in Vietnam, responsible for the Belgian funded agriculture projects, then at Headquarters. He has 12 years of experience in evaluation, ranging from project to thematic and strategic evaluations. Since he joined the Evaluation service in 2003, next to being the Team Leader for various project evaluations, he has been responsible for the management of program evaluations (Migration and Development, Financing of local NGOs), sector evaluations (Education, Agriculture), the evaluation of the Belgian Survival Fund and the evaluation of the Belgian contribution to Budget Support operations. He is also co-chair of the internal working group on Managing for Development Results.

Mrs. Caroline Heider represents the UN and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) on the Panel. She has 21 years of work experience, the majority of which in evaluation. She has worked with five multinational organizations, including the Asian Development Bank and IFAD, a technical agency (UNIDO) and two funds and program of the UN System (UNDP and WFP). She has experience in leading and managing evaluations, including determining evaluation methodologies, undertaking background research and fieldwork, presenting findings verbally and in writing to various stakeholder groups. Her experience encompasses complex strategic evaluations (such as global or thematic evaluations), country-level evaluations, and program and project

evaluations in a vast array of technical sectors. She has worked on evaluation guidelines for various agencies, contributed to the finalization of the UNEG Norms and Standards for evaluation, and has been a peer reviewer for a number of evaluations of other agencies. She is a lifetime member of the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) and has been a member of the American Evaluation Association and the Australasian Evaluation Society. Her experience includes managing evaluation units: in IFAD in the position of the deputy director responsible for coaching nine evaluators and ensuring the quality of evaluations produced by the unit and since 2007 in WFP where, as the director of the office of evaluation, she gives directions to evaluation at WFP, its policy and strategy and evaluation work.

Dr. Oumoul Khayri Ba Tall is one of the two Peer Panel members from a developing country. She accounts for 21 years of professional experience in various but related fields from auditing, accounting, evaluation, organizational, microenterprise, microfinance, and community based and development fields, including seven years of evaluation experience and 18 years of auditing. She is the Executive Director of her own audit and management consultancy business she started in 1997 in Nouakchott, Mauritania, and is heavily involved in voluntary activities to help promote evaluation in Africa and worldwide and also provide support services to several grass-roots women organizations in the field of microfinance and microenterprise mainly. Although she does not represent evaluation organizations she is involved in the review. Oumou is currently the president of the IOCE (www.ioce.net), a past president and board member of the African Evaluation Association (www.afrea.org) and a founder of the Association Mauritanienne de Suivi-Evaluation (AMSE). She also holds membership of IDEAS and the French Evaluation Society (SFE), and is currently involved in initiatives to organize a network dedicated to strengthen evaluation in French speaking countries around the world. Oumou is actively involved in evaluation meetings, conferences acting as organizer (chair of the 3rd AfrEA Conference in January 07 in Niger), session facilitator, and panel discussant of plenary discussion like in the last CES conference in Quebec. She also intervenes as facilitator of the UNEG Evaluation courses for French speaking participants (Bamako, March 08). Oumou has also coordinated the revision of the African Evaluation Guidelines in September 2007, which are adapted from the US Program Standard Evaluation in 2000. Her evaluation work experience includes assignments for UNICEF microfinance program in Mauritania, and a maternal health program of the WHO in Mauritania. She was involved in larger evaluation assignments for the international francophone organization (OIF, Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie), the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF). Most recently, she is undertaking assignments to assess Evaluation Capacity Development experiences in West African countries, for the OECD-DAC secretariat.

Mrs. Heidi Pihlatie is the Senior Evaluator at the Unit for Evaluation and Internal Auditing of the Department for Development Policy of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland since September 2007. In this capacity she has designed and managed various types of evaluations from country portfolio evaluations, to strategic, sector and thematic evaluations being responsible for ensuring methodology and quality issues of evaluations and contributing to the general planning of evaluation program and policy and strategic work of the unit in evaluation issues. She has over 30 years of experience

in the Finnish development cooperation since 1975 out of which approximately 12 years at the field level. She is well conversant with all issues concerning the management, monitoring and evaluation of aid program and issues affecting aid efficiency and sustainability in various sectors and geographical areas. Through her work experience she has also gained experience in personnel management, planning, leading and coordinating the Finnish development cooperation. In the years 1992-1994 she acted two years as Director for East, West and North African Unit and in 1994-1997 as Director for Asia, Latin America, Mediterranean, Bosnia, and Middle Asia regions. In 1990-1992 she was responsible for the Finnish cooperation with the World Bank (IDA and poverty reduction activities). At the field level she has worked at the Embassy of Finland in Lusaka in 1973-1975 as Assistant prior to entering the service of the MFA. In 1986-1990 she served at the Embassy of Finland in Dar es Salaam being responsible for management of Finnish water, agriculture, education and forestry programs. In 1997-2000 she served as Charge d'Affaires in Managua, Nicaragua being also responsible for the whole development portfolio of Finland. During 2003-2007 she held the position of Permanent Representative of Finland for the Multilateral Agencies in Rome.

Mrs. Zhanar Sagimbayeva represents the Eurasian Development Bank, a new regional organization set for promotion of integration processes in Eurasia. Zhanar has more than 10 years of experience in the development area including United Nations Development Programme and government organizations in Kazakhstan. During 10 years, Zhanar lead the production of the National Human Development Report and other UN analytical publications presenting social, economic, political developments in the country. As the head of UNDP Environment and Sustainable Development unit, Zhanar had to deal with various GEF funded projects including their design, implementation and evaluation. Zhanar became the Head of all UNDP Kazakhstan programs and one of the main areas of her responsibilities became monitoring and evaluation including mid-term and outcome evaluations of various projects and programs including National Poverty Reduction program and Sustainable Development Concept of Kazakhstan.

Dr. Horst Breier appointed as one of the two advisors to the Peer Panel, is a German national who has spent all his professional life in development cooperation. In 1964, he started his career in the German Development Service for which he worked for 11 years, both in headquarters and in Southeast Asia as a country director for Malaysia and Thailand. In 1976, he joined the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in New York, which he left after two years to return to Germany in order to become the Press Secretary and Spokesman for the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). This was the beginning of Breier's distinguished career in public service, which included assignments as Head of the NGO Section and Head of the EU Section in the Ministry, and as Counselor and Permanent DAC Delegate in the German Permanent Delegation to the OECD in Paris. From 1992 to 1997, Horst Breier was on special leave to work as Head of Division in the OECD Development Cooperation Directorate, responsible for Aid and Environment as well as Economic Relations with Developing Countries. After five years at OECD, Breier returned to the Development Cooperation Ministry in Bonn to become Head of Evaluation, a post that he held until his retirement in spring 2004. Since then, Horst Breier has worked as a free lance consultant and accepted a number of evaluation

assignments, including work for the Danish and Austrian Foreign Ministries, for OECD (DAC, CCNM and CES), BMZ, FAO, EC, Swiss Development Cooperation, and the World Bank). Horst Breier has published numerous articles, essays and radio features on aid, development cooperation, international relations and evaluation, and is the author of two books: “The Sudan between Africa and Arabia” (1970) and “Intelligentsia and Politics in South Sudan: From legal Action to Revolution”.

Dr. Dunstan Spencer is one of the two Advisors to the Panel. He is currently a Senior Partner with Enterprise Development Services Ltd, Sierra Leone. In this role he has been a consultant in the evaluation of several agricultural development projects for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Bank, and World Vision Sierra Leone. In the last 15 years, Dunstan has consulted independently for diverse international organizations and government ministries involved in food, agriculture and rural development issues globally with a focus on Central and West Africa. The organizations include the: FAO, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), African Development Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Rockefeller Foundation, and Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) centers. The assignments have involved agricultural project identification, design, appraisal, supervision and evaluation, drawing on his expertise in institutional – and environmental assessments, impact evaluations, poverty alleviation, and national policy formulation. Previously, Dunstan has worked as the Director of the Resource and Crop Management Division at the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Ibadan, Nigeria; as Principal Economist at International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in Niamey, Niger. Before that he was the Director of the Research and Development Department at the West Africa Rice Development Association (WARDA) in Monrovia, Liberia. He has also taught agricultural and development economics to undergraduate students in Sierra Leone, and graduate students in the USA. Dunstan is a native of Sierra Leone, though he was born in Lagos, Nigeria. He obtained his BS in Agriculture from Wye College, London University, UK; MS in Agricultural Economics (with a minor in Animal Science), from University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, USA and a PhD in Agricultural Economics from the same university. He is a member of several professional societies, is the first Fellow of the African Association of Agricultural Economists, and has authored more than 60 publications in refereed journals and conference proceedings, in the course of his career.