

GEF EO Terminal Evaluation Review Form

1. PROJECT DATA				
		Review date:		01/31/2010
GEF Project ID:	1618		<u>at endorsement</u> (Million US\$)	<u>at completion</u> (Million US\$)
IA/EA Project ID:	2622	GEF financing:	6.45	6.45
Project Name:	Towards a Convention and Action Programme For the Protection of the Caspian Sea Environment	IA/EA own:		
Country:	Azerbaijan, The Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, The Russian Federation and Turkmenistan	Government:	21.5	97.12
		Other*:	4.66	13.21
		Total Cofinancing	26.16	110.33
Operational Program:	8-IW	Total Project Cost:	31.63	116.58
IA	UNDP	Dates		
Partners involved:	UNOPS	Effectiveness/ Prodoc Signature (i.e. date project began)		4/6/2004
		Closing Date	Proposed: January 2007	Actual: December 2007
Prepared by: Tommaso Balbo di Vinadio	Reviewed by: Ines Angulo	Duration between effectiveness date and original closing (in months): 36 months	Duration between effectiveness date and actual closing (in months): 47	Difference between original and actual closing (in months): 11
Author of TE: Dennis Fenton Jeffrey Griffin		TE completion date: October 2007	TE submission date to GEF EO: Feb 2009	Difference between TE completion and submission date (in months): 16

* Other is referred to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries.

2. SUMMARY OF PROJECT RATINGS AND KEY FINDINGS

Please refer to document GEF Office of Evaluation Guidelines for terminal evaluation reviews for further definitions of the ratings.

Performance Dimension	Last PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office evaluations or reviews	GEF EO
2.1a Project outcomes	S	S	NA	MS
2.1b Sustainability of Outcomes	N/A	MU	NA	MU
2.1c Monitoring and evaluation	UA	MU	NA	U
2.1d Quality of implementation and Execution	NA	NA	NA	MS
2.1e Quality of the evaluation report	N/A	N/A	NA	HS

2.2 Should the terminal evaluation report for this project be considered a good practice? Why?

Yes. The TE is evidence-based, very detailed, and its structure is clear. The TE complies diligently with GEF guidelines.

2.3 Are there any evaluation findings that require follow-up, such as corruption, reallocation of GEF funds, mismanagement, etc.?
 There are no such instances in the TE.

3. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

3.1 Project Objectives

a. What were the Global Environmental Objectives of the project? Were there any changes during implementation?

According to the project appraisal document, its main objective was to “support the countries to consolidate and begin to implement the Strategic Action Programme for the Caspian Sea, including filling gaps in information and developing capacity in the region for SAP implementation and project execution” in order “to protect and sustainably manage the environmental resources of the Caspian Sea”.

There was no change during implementation.

b. What were the Development Objectives of the project? Were there any changes during implementation? (describe and insert tick in appropriate box below, if yes at what level was the change approved (GEFSEC, IA or EA)?)

The Development Objectives of the projects were the following:

- “i. To commence implementation of the SAP in the priority areas of Biodiversity, Invasive Species and Persistent Toxic Substances
- ii. To continue with specific capacity building measures to ensure a regionally owned CEP coordination mechanism capable of overseeing full implementation of the SAP and NCAPs and consolidate/update the TDA and SAP following a series of information gap-filling measures.
- iii. To strengthen the environmental legal and policy frameworks operating at the regional and the national levels, and where necessary improve implementation and compliance of those frameworks.
- iv) To achieve tangible environmental improvements in priority areas by implementation of small-scale investments supported by a matched small grants programme”.

There were no changes in the Development Objectives.

Overall Environmental Objectives	Project Development Objectives	Project Components	Any other (specify)

c. If yes, tick applicable reasons for the change (in global environmental objectives and/or development objectives)

Original objectives not sufficiently articulated	Exogenous conditions changed, due to which a change in objectives was needed	Project was restructured because original objectives were over ambitious	Project was restructured because of lack of progress	Any other (specify)

4. GEF EVALUATION OFFICE ASSESSMENT OF OUTCOMES AND SUSTAINABILITY

4.1.1 Outcomes (Relevance can receive either a satisfactory rating or a unsatisfactory rating. For effectiveness and cost efficiency a six point scale 6= HS to 1 = HU will be used)

a. Relevance

Rating: S

The objectives of the project are relevant to the GEF Operational Program 8-Waterbody-based, which involves activities that address the priority transboundary environmental concerns that exist in a specific waterbody, such as a transboundary freshwater drainage basin that is regionally significant or a large marine ecosystem. According to the TE, all the objectives are relevant to the overall project objective and to the GEF focal area. However, given that the TDA and SAP identify many activities and do not firmly establish priorities, it is hard to assess if the

outcomes address priority issues.

b. Effectiveness

Rating: MS

This project constitutes the second stage of GEF support to coordination, cooperation and action amongst the concerned Caspian countries in order to protect and sustainably manage the environmental resources of the Caspian Sea.

In terms of effectiveness, the project has succeeded in its role as regional catalyst of “process” meetings, trainings, surveys, and planning; and excelled in its work to forge inter-governmental cooperation at the regional level so that it enabled the adoption of the Tehran Convention and the countries’ progression towards stronger regional environmental collaboration.

According to the TE, the Project’s main achievement is to have sustained the Caspian Environment Programme (CEP) and the outcomes of the 1st stages (namely, the TDA/SAP/NCAP1 and the CEP regional and national institutional structures and processes). The most recent evidence of this new stage of cooperation is reflected in the May 2007 decision in the first Conference of the Parties to the Tehran Convention (TC).

On the other hand, at national level, the project did not achieve all its expected objectives. In fact, the project struggled more when it came to fulfilling its mandate to catalyze changed practices or new outcomes at the national level. For instance, the NCAP, SAPIC and other project mechanisms were unable to directly catalyze institutional changes and physical investments in the participating countries. Apart from the environment agencies, few government agencies have changed due to the project or benefited from the Project.

The following are the specific achievements of the projects for each of the objectives listed in 3.1. b.

1) All the activities under this objective have started and produced some results. According to the TE the project produced 17 major outputs (i.e. Biodiversity Data base, Interactive Maps, Draft Seals Conservation Plan, studies on Global Pollution Assessment). The TE argues that several studies and reports produced were very useful. In terms of impact, there is evidence that the project activity catalyzed further action and stimulated a process of change. For instance, the surveys on *Mnemiopsis* catalyzed follow-up, as did the work on the Caspian Seal. However, the TE notes that for the majority of activities under this objective, there was little evidence of significant influence or impact. For example, the Caspian Coastal Site Inventory (CCSI) included significant data and information on a series of hotspots around the Caspian yet, there was no evidence that it was received.

2) Each output has been produced or implemented as planned. The PCU has been set up and played a strong role in lobbying, providing information and a project website was developed. On the negative side, the revised NCAP-TDA-SAP have had moderate impact, the Public Participation Strategy, although well prepared, was not implemented and the PCU’s efforts to support environmental awareness and public participation were not institutionalized. According to the TE, there is no verifiable way to measure use or usefulness (i.e. impact) for most of the outputs under objective 2 as the logframe was unclear.

3) The major achievement under this objective was the ratification of the Teheran Convention that also led to the first Conference of the Parties. According to the TE, this is considered by nearly all stakeholders interviewed to be the greatest achievement of the project. Another major output of the project was the draft of protocols on land based sources of pollution, biodiversity, oil pollution incidents and EIA in the Transboundary context. However, the TE has some doubts about the quality of some of them.

4) Matched funding of small—scale investments were awarded and implemented. The TE states the quality of their implementation and impact remains uncertain.

Even though this review agrees with the TE that the project has generated some impressive results with the ratification by all 5 Caspian Countries of the Tehran Convention and the development of draft protocols to the Convention, the project has several shortcomings especially at the design level that may also affect its sustainability. Therefore the overall effectiveness of the achievement of project objectives is rated MS

c. Efficiency (cost-effectiveness)

Rating: MS

The project was implemented within the 4-year timeframe even though there were minor delays in distributing funds and some delays in signature of project document that led to a late start.

The TE mentions several times in the report that the project managed to produce an impressive number of outputs in the region in a relatively short period of time. Yet, as mentioned above some outputs were of poor quality (i.e. stakeholder participation strategy was developed but not implemented). There were also some delays in implementing

¹ Trans-boundary diagnosis analysis, Strategic Action Programme and National Caspian Action Plan

Matched Small Grants (MSG) projects.

4.1.2 Impacts: summarize the achieved intended or unintended impacts of the project.

The TE notes that there is a lack of evidence of on-the-ground impact, and a lack of activities to catalyze it. For example, the project supported a series of small and micro-grants, but the effectiveness of most of these grants, and their net impact is unknown. The Project also supported awareness raising and NGO strengthening activities, but the impact of these also seems limited. However, the TE lists some concrete impact of MSG. For instance, the MSG project “Artificial Spawning of *Rutilus frisii Kutum* in Iran” appeared to have had a significant impact within the Iranian fishery research agency. Under the MSG project, the agency successfully developed a methodology for artificial reproduction of the fish that it is now operating successfully. The agency released two million fingerlings into Anzali Lagoon in a celebratory event covered by local and national media. The project also dramatically increased the knowledge in Iran of the specific autumn run of kutum.

4.2 Likelihood of sustainability. Using the following sustainability criteria, include an assessment of **risks** to sustainability of project outcomes and impacts based on the information presented in the TE. Use a four point scale (4= Likely (no or negligible risk); 3= Moderately Likely (low risk); 2= Moderately Unlikely (substantial risks) to 1= Unlikely (High risk)). The ratings should be given taking into account both the probability of a risk materializing and the anticipated magnitude of its effect on the continuance of project benefits.

a. Financial resources	Rating: MU
According to the TE, if external funding stops tomorrow, most of the Project-inspired research, survey and planning work would not be sustainable. The TE also argues that it is unlikely that sufficient financial and economic resources will be available for regional activities once the GEF assistance is terminated. In fact, at the regional level countries only contributed 15% of the anticipated direct contributions to the project At the national level instead, countries are already making budgetary allocations to NCAP-related activities, but the leveraging link between NCAP and the actual funding is not clear.	
b. Socio political	Rating: ML
The TE argues that although there are significant political risks in the Caspian region and that these may jeopardize the sustainability of a regional project’s outcomes, such political risks have not concretized during the course of the project. When the TE was conducted there was a strong political support for the Teheran Convention process and the general framework of the Convention as evidenced by the rapid ratification of the TC. The TE also notes that the public in Caspian region seems to be interested and taking action, but there is still low level of officially recognized involvement at the regional level. Also several project stakeholders seem to be interested in keeping the process moving but the TE argues that there is a risk that the level of stakeholder ownership will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes to be sustained.	
c. Institutional framework and governance	Rating: MU
In this regard it is important to mention the Convention process as the ratification of the Tehran Convention gives legal backing to many of the project’s outputs, and this, as the TE states, holds the promise of many of the project’s outputs being sustained in the future. However, when the TE was conducted, the Caspian Environment Programme and its programs do not seem to be yet sustainable. The reason given in the TE is that there would be no central coordinating structure to organize meetings, no SAP Implementation Coordinator champion for NCAP in each country, no ongoing coordinated expert attention and input to key Caspian issues, and no link with the overall SAP. Also the project approach to assessing environmental risk has not been institutionalized yet.	
d. Environmental	Rating: ML
According to the TE, the main environmental risks are well understood and an information baseline of knowledge was developed. However, the TE argues that there are some risks related to the invasion of <i>mnemiopsis</i> , which may affect the health of flagship species and possible oil spills.	

4.3 Catalytic role

a.. Production of a public good
The project produced several research, studies (i.e. Biodiversity Data base, Interactive Maps, Caspian Coastal Sites Inventory, surveys)
b.. Demonstration
The project introduced and demonstrated best practices, methods and techniques for monitoring and analyzing pollution, studying invasive species, identifying priority coastal sites.

According to the TE, the project demonstrated a thorough approach to problem diagnosis and planning, and to environmental monitoring and measurement, at regional and national levels. Moreover, Match Small Grants (i.e. Introduction of innovative technology of marketable fish production in Tumak village) were innovative and pilot in nature.

c.. Replication

No examples of actual replication mentioned in the TE.
Some initiatives developed under the Match Small Grants (i.e. Promoting Sustainable Development in local communities of Caspian region through alternative sources of energy) might be replicated in the future.

d.. Scaling up

No examples of scaling up mentioned in the TE.

4.4 Assessment of processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes and sustainability.

a. Co-financing. To what extent was the reported cofinancing (or proposed cofinancing) essential to achievement of GEF objectives? Were components supported by cofinancing well integrated into the project? If there was a difference in the level of expected co-financing and actual co-financing, then what were the reasons for it? Did the extent of materialization of co-financing affect project’s outcomes and/or sustainability? If it did, then in what ways and through what causal linkages?

As noted in the TE, actual co-funding levels for this project were impressive as final co-funding was 422% of the planned levels (planned co-financing was 26,16 while actual co-financing was 110,33). The additional parallel co-funding for implementation of NCAP-relevant activities in each country was more than five times the figure anticipated in the Project document, increasing from an estimated US\$ 19 million to over US\$ 96 million.

The reasons for this increase are essentially two: the capacity of the project team to get funds for follow-on activities (i.e. the Seal Conservation work funded by the Darwin Fund) and increases in tax revenues that were allocated to wastewater treatment, sustainable agriculture, fisheries and other programs being implemented in the Caspian watersheds of each of the five countries. Interestingly, the TE notes that leveraging of parallel co-financing is not attributable to project.

Even though overall actual co-financing increased to a great degree, it should be noted that some of the leveraged co-funding most relevant to the project’s financial planning did not materialize as expected. In fact, only 15% of the planned co-funding from Governments actually materialized for project activities in support of the PCU, of regional coordination, regional advisory groups, and joint regional activities. The TE lists some of the possible explanations for that, such as the perception of countries that the project lacks a ‘formal legal basis’ or the fact that national environmental agencies are still amongst the weakest in the government (environment is still not amongst the top priority issues in the Caspian countries). However, as the TE notes, it is doubtful whether the reduced delivery of co-funding from the countries to the PCU affected the project’s outcomes appreciably as the project was able to fill in the gaps. Yet, it did lead to some lost opportunities (i.e. the TE mentions that “the Ministry was unable to provide the Programme Coordinator with any additional budget for travel within the region” and so he was unable to fulfill his role in the project.).

Overall the co-financing was important for the achievement of project objectives. For example, the additional co-financing from international partners affected the Project’s outcomes work under the first three objectives, especially in terms of the project’s work on the Tehran Convention, the TC protocols, biodiversity (such as the Caspian Seals), and pollution monitoring. However, the TE notes that the co-financing had little effect on the project’s overall sustainability.

b. Delays. If there were delays in project implementation and completion, then what were the reasons for it? Did the delay affect the project’s outcomes and/or sustainability? If it did, then in what ways and through what causal linkages?

There were no major delays and the project was implemented within the 4-year timeframe. However, there were minor delays at the beginning of the project and in the distribution of funds that proved to be slower than expected due to bureaucratic delays and the complexities of the banking system in the region. It does seem that those delays did not affect the achievement of objectives.

c. Country Ownership. Assess the extent to which country ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability? Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability highlighting the causal links.

Overall, country ownership of this project was high as evidenced by the rapid ratification of the Tehran Convention and subsequent steps taken at the first meeting to the Convention.
The Project document lists six indicators for rating national commitment like Ratification of the Framework Convention. At the end of the project only 2 indicators were totally achieved. The TE tries to give some explanations

about that. First, it was unrealistic to expect a high level of country ownership at this stage as the Project's focus on commencing implementation of the SAP was slightly ahead of its time. Moreover, at project inception the countries had not yet ratified the Tehran Convention. This hampered stakeholders' efforts to secure official endorsement and financial support for PCU, NCAP and SAP-related activities.

4.5 Assessment of the project's monitoring and evaluation system based on the information in the TE

a. M&E design at Entry	Rating (six point scale): U
<p>The project's M&E system was one of its main weaknesses because of its poor logical framework, inadequate indicators and inadequate resources allocated to it.</p> <p>One example that the TE mentions for explaining the poor quality of the M&E system is that the latter does not provide a clear baseline with respect to the project objective, nor does it set targets.</p> <p>Moreover, the Project Document suggests an ambitious approach to monitoring including reports, missions, mid-term evaluation, extensive use of indicators, yet it does not provide a clear plan as to how the M&E will be implemented nor it provides a clear allocation of M&E roles (no PCU staff member was given the task of M&E). Another major weakness of the M&E system is related to the quality and quantity of indicators. According to the TE, there are far too many of them, and there are no indicators for Outcomes, for Objectives or for the overall project Objective. Because of that, the TE argues that the indicators are not sufficiently SMART.</p> <p>The TE notes that when the project was designed and developed (2003) GEF guidelines on M&E had not been finalized and most GEF projects approved at that time had similar M&E systems. On the other hand the TE argues that results-based management, adaptive management and effective use of monitoring had been accepted as important concepts for some time.</p>	
b. M&E plan Implementation	Rating (six point scale): U
<p>As mentioned above M&E system had many major weaknesses and consequently it was difficult to implement. Yet, it is also clear that no effort was put in addressing its weaknesses during implementation.</p> <p>Moreover, during the lifetime of the Project, no evidence is available that the project team used this primary objective as either a monitoring or reporting tool. For instance, this Objective is not mentioned in the PIRs.</p> <p>In the relevant section, the TE lists all the main tools used for monitoring activities (RSC, TPR, RAG, PCU, the project implementation review) underlining some of their weaknesses. According to the TE none of these tools was really effective in terms of monitoring project activities. For instance, the PIR was considered a 'reporting' tool rather than a monitoring tool. There does not seem to have been an effective annual review or monitoring mechanism. According to the TE, the use of the PIR was inconsistent and inadequately documented. For example, in 2005, the CEP-SAP PIR attempted to create indicators at the Objective level by using (rephrased) Outcomes as indicators. At the Outcome level, the PIR 2005 used the activities from the Project Document as indicators. No use was made of the indicators in the Project document. Hence, indicators were very confusing in the 2005 PIR.</p> <p>Finally, a mid-term evaluation was planned initially but was not undertaken. Even though the TE argues that this may have been a good decision given that the project was only due to last three years, there is no documentation of this decision.</p>	
b.1 Was sufficient funding provided for M&E in the budget included in the project document?	
No. It is difficult to ascertain the amount of project funds allocated to M&E, given that many activities (e.g. RSC meetings, RAG meetings) served several purposes, including M&E. The most costly M&E item was the end-of project evaluation. Overall costs are likely to be in the range 2-3%. This is below the recommended 5-10% for GEF projects.	
b.2a Was sufficient and timely funding provided for M&E during project implementation?	
No.	
b.2b To what extent did the project monitoring system provided real time feed back? Was the information that was provided used effectively? What factors affected the use of information provided by the project monitoring system?	
No. The poor quality of indicators and the unclear allocation of responsibilities negatively affected the capacity of the M&E of providing feedback.	
b.3 Can the project M&E system (or an aspect of the project M&E system) be considered a good practice? If so, explain why.	
No. Major weaknesses are underlined above.	

4.6 Assessment of Quality of Implementation and Execution

a. Overall Quality of Implementation and Execution (on a six point scale): MS
b. Overall Quality of Implementation – for IA (on a six point scale): MU
Briefly describe and assess performance on issues such as quality of the project design, focus on results, adequacy of

supervision inputs and processes, quality of risk management, candor and realism in supervision reporting, and suitability of the chosen executing agencies for project execution.

According to the TE, although the official project IA was UNDP the project benefited from the support of two IAs because of the close cooperation between UNDP and UNEP on this project, and UNEP's active involvement in and support of the Convention and protocol development process.

The TE lists a series of major weaknesses at the project design and implementation level that affected the achievement of project objectives. As mentioned above, the project had a poor quality logframe and indicators that were not SMART. Moreover, the project was too ambitious, and its implementation plan as how to achieve its objectives was unclear. According to the TE, the project had too many activities in a diverse range of fields, and often in sectors that require more resources (e.g. strengthening civil society) than were available to the Project.

Those weaknesses were not addressed during implementation. According to the TE, UNDP never improved the Project's M&E and adaptive management approach, in order to fine-tune the logframe and bolster the project's effectiveness and efficiency.

The quality of PIRs is not considered satisfactory.

On a positive note, the TE argues that UNDP Staff were regularly involved in providing support and advice to the Project. IA, EA and project staff (including international experts) met frequently and communicated by email regularly. Yet, that proved not to be sufficient to make needed changes during project implementation.

c. Quality of Execution – for Executing Agencies² (rating on a 6 point scale) S

Briefly describe and assess performance on issues such as focus on results, adequacy of management inputs and processes, quality of risk management, and candor and realism in reporting by the executive agency.

According to the TE, UNOPS execution of the project was highly satisfactory based on the evidence reviewed. In fact, there was a productive rapport between the PCU and UNOPS and it seems both sides have strived to minimize administrative delays through the use of tools such as the establishment of imprest accounts to facilitate project implementation. However there were some problems related to disbursing financing to MSG projects and other activities.

The project's staffing level, continuity and skill mix was highly satisfactory.

5. LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Assess the project lessons and recommendations as described in the TE

a. Briefly describe the key lessons, good practice or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report that could have application for other GEF projects

The TE makes a long list of all the lessons that can be learned from this project.
Lessons for those involved in the design and appraisal of future projects

1. It is of paramount importance to have a clear logical framework. This will include:
 - A clear overall objective and project goal;
 - A manageable number of SMART indicators, at least at the objective and outcome levels;
 - A sharp focus on impacts/outcomes or results. This should be in terms of changed practices, changed behavior and/or changed situations;
 - Clarity and simplicity so all stakeholders can understand the project's goals and aims.
2. Strengthening NGOs and civil society is a major challenge requiring significant resources. It can also be an overly vague goal in the absence of specific targets. If projects of this nature are to attempt civil society strengthening, they must have very clear and realistic targets. This should not be an add-on or a secondary aim.
3. Awareness raising is an important aspect of many projects' work. A challenging, resource-intensive task, it is

² Executing Agencies for this section would mean those agencies that are executing the project in the field. For any given project this will exclude Executing Agencies that are implementing the project under expanded opportunities – for projects approved under the expanded opportunities procedure the respective executing agency will be treated as an implementing agency.

not an objective that can be added-on easily. It is important to clarify the specific targets – in terms of stakeholder groups and improved knowledge or changed behavior, not in terms of documents produced. It is also important to ensure the right expertise is mobilized.

4. Project design should be adapted to the dynamic environment where government staff turnover is high. Indeed, this project may have some good practices to share in this regard.

5. GEF regional projects cannot make major region-wide investments, not even in data collection. They can only be catalytic. Hence, do not expect regional projects to directly undertake significant groundwork, but expect them to influence, catalyze and leverage.

6. Small grants programmes should be designed to clearly contribute to overall project objectives and the question should be asked, “Are small grants projects the most efficient way to achieve objectives?”

7. Individual small grant projects require significant managerial support, technical support and oversight. They also require clear objectives and “mini” logical frameworks. Ensure this is all included in the project design.

8. Inter-governmental coordination and cooperation and convention processes are complex. Expectations should be appropriate. Project should not be burdened with too many ambitious tasks. They should focus on clear and catalytic roles.

9. To achieve sustainability of the project-inspired outcomes, the project design needs to include a focus on sustainability. Care and attention should be given to defining just what sustainability means and what specific activities and functions are targeting sustainability.

Lessons (“Recommendations”) to those responsible for project monitoring and evaluation

10. Projects should upgrade a logical framework that is not working well. This is best done at inception or in the first year, through a well-documented, transparent process.

11. Ensure there are regular (annual and mid-term) learning and reflection management exercises for the project staff and the Steering Committee. These reflections should discuss project strengths and challenges. For example, the PIR process should be adapted into an annual monitoring and management exercise that links workplans to indicators. The mid-term review should be an integral part of project learning and planning. Outside facilitation to these would be beneficial.

12. Keep the contents of the PIR constant and/or document any changes clearly.

13. Maintain a documented record of the impact and changes brought about by the project. Projects like this should, as a matter of priority, document the actions taken by stakeholders in response to project work or as a result of the project’s work.

Specific lessons (“recommendations”) pertaining to ‘Second Phase’ projects

The CEP-SAP constituted a second phase of GEF support to the CEP process. Other second phase projects in other regions/countries may have similar opportunities and face similar challenges to CEP-SAP. Notably:

14. Typically, during the first phase, national ownership will have been generated. This must be considered a starting point, and must be consolidated during the second phase. Steps must be in place to further build ownership during the second phase with specific targets that define what “ownership” means and to monitor this consolidation.

15. The balance between ‘continuing the actions of the first phase’ and ‘rejuvenating and transforming the project approach’ is an important one. Phase 2 must maintain the gains from Phase 1, but not simply be a continuation of Phase 1.

16. Take care to avoid a supply-driven nature to the project design and implementation. At the end of the first phase, the required activities may appear obvious, and the required inputs ‘standing by’. However, it is necessary to strategize, go back to basic planning, and ensure the activities are geared towards the needs and objectives, or to addressing the threats and root causes.

Other lessons

17. In regional projects it is important to pay attention to specific economic trends and factors in each country

that could affect staff and expert recruitment. In this case, “one size does not fit all” when it comes to salary requirements of qualified experts across the five countries.

18. Health and Safety Considerations. One MSG project involved incinerating POPs in a small-scale, local incinerator. These kinds of “on-the-ground” funding programs should include consideration of health and safety issues among their criteria.

Examples of Best Practice.

1. The project did an excellent job in obtaining ratification of an international treaty by all five participating countries, and in advancing the related protocols. The exact nature as to how this was achieved should be documented.
2. The project’s ongoing successful engagement of the region’s oil sector is relatively unique. The key elements of the approach and how this was done should be documented and disseminated.
3. The key elements that created and sustain the exemplary cooperation among UNDP, UNEP and UNOPS should be documented and disseminated.
4. The project demonstrated a thorough approach to problem diagnosis and planning, and to environmental monitoring and measurement, at regional and national levels.
5. Although many project technical activities were completed at a regional level, the project influenced domestic planning and development processes. This is mostly likely through the NCAP (prepared by national teams, under the guidance of the regional TDA-SAP) and through the SAPIC (financed by the project, but well anchored in national institutional frameworks). This was achieved without the NCAP being fully approved (i.e. no budget allocation).

b. Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation

According to the TE, the following are the recommendations that needs to be addressed preferably during the remainder months of the CEP-SAP project

For the Project Team

1. The design of any future intervention should be carefully adapted to present context, conditions and needs. Hold a strategic reflection on how best to utilize available international support in the future. What are the aims of CEP/emerging TC Secretariat, how to get there, who should do what?
2. Consolidate the documented record of project impact, including:
 - What changes the project has catalyzed in each country in terms of laws, policies, budgetary allocations, institutional and individual knowledge, institutional arrangements, and research and environmental management practices. This will serve as a valuable baseline for any additional efforts in the region;
 - The main lessons learned from this project. Utilize sufficient project resources to capture these. What has worked well and not so well and why;
 - Encourage each country unit of the project (National Focal Point, SAPIC, RAG leaders) to document the country-specific policy and institutional barriers (and as a result, opportunities) to improved environmental management and monitoring. Each country has learned a great deal about their own institutions and policies as a result of their participation in the Project. This needs to be considered and captured on paper to enable effective next steps.
 - Conduct an assessment of the effectiveness of the MSGP. This would give the project a much better idea of the kinds of tangible impacts the program produced.
3. It is noted that it proved far easier to register large investments into NCAP related activities than to mobilise small funding to regional cooperation and coordination actions. The reasons for this are not fully clear, and further analysis is recommended.
4. Look to the ABC for lessons learned (positive and negative) regarding sustainability of a mechanism for regional cooperation.

For the Participating Country Governments

4. Resolve the location of the TC Secretariat – one possibility would be to have a TC Secretariat with several centres of expertise established for key areas of focus in each of the other countries. The most obvious and practical

place for the Secretariat is Baku, which is located in the middle north-to-south and the only capital on the Caspian, with air travel connections to each of the other four countries. PCU can facilitate discussions.

5. There is likelihood that any future GEF support will include a strong focus on the Fisheries sector. Fisheries are a major issue in the Caspian and it is one of the most difficult issues. Any fisheries effort must be driven by the fisheries sector, and must have the full support and backing of all Caspian countries, particularly Russia, with the largest fishing fleet in the Caspian. Undertake stakeholder analysis and generate stakeholder buy-in. For example, in order to facilitate cooperation on fisheries, the Aquatic Bioresources Commission of the Caspian Sea (ABC) has a clear mandate and is a key stakeholder. Any CEP-SAP action in fisheries should be preceded by a political effort to link the CEP-SAP with the ABC work programme.

Recommendations to ensure the sustainability of the existing CEP-SAP project outcomes

6. It is unrealistic to expect a regional process to reach sustainability in such a short time. The process has taken important steps forward, but has not yet reached sustainability. International support to this process is still critical. For example, this would facilitate the determination of the Secretariat location, mobilize resources to the Secretariat's mid-term budget and support the process to sign and ratify protocols. However, a proper exit strategy for international support is essential, with good indicators and milestones of progress towards sustainability.

7. Be careful to maintain conceptual integrity individual investments/projects, when part of a larger programme. At times, the lines between the CEP-SAP project and the CEP (programme) seem to have been blurred. This is helpful and unhelpful: helpful because it means the stakeholders do not distinguish between CEP-I and CEP-II (CEP-SAP) and see only a continuous programme. It is unhelpful because it has perhaps contributed to the CEP-SAP losing some project-specific focus.

8. Subsequent to the ratification of the TC, the Convention now has the force of legal obligation in each country. This is an excellent basis for strengthening sustainability. Future international support should focus on empowering countries to take responsibility for specific actions in line with the TC.

9. To increase country driven-ness, future investment should consider giving more thought to balancing the regional role of international funders with creating strong incentives for robust national action and national support for transboundary coordination.

6. QUALITY OF THE TERMINAL EVALUATION REPORT

6.1 Comments on the summary of project ratings and terminal evaluation findings based on other information sources such as GEF EO field visits, other evaluations, etc.

Provide a number rating 1-6 to each criteria based on: Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, and Highly Unsatisfactory = 1. Please refer to document GEF Office of Evaluation Guidelines for terminal evaluations review for further definitions of the ratings. Please briefly explain each rating.

6.2 Quality of the terminal evaluation report	Ratings
<p>a. To what extent does the report contain an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and the achievement of the objectives? The TE makes a thorough assessment of the achievement of project objectives and impact. It should be noted that this review rates achievement of objectives MS instead of S as it considers sustainability part of achievement of objectives.</p>	HS
<p>b. To what extent the report is internally consistent, the evidence is complete/convincing and the IA ratings have been substantiated? Are there any major evidence gaps? The report is evidence-based and there are no gaps.</p>	HS
<p>c. To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and /or a project exit strategy? The TE assesses project sustainability appropriately.</p>	S
<p>d. To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and</p>	S

<p>are they comprehensive? The section on lessons learned is comprehensive (there is a slight overlap between lessons learned and recommendations)</p>	
<p>e. Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used? The report has a section on actual costs and actual co-financing used.</p>	S
<p>f. Assess the quality of the reports evaluation of project M&E systems? The section on M&E is comprehensive and evidence-based.</p>	S

<p>7. SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR THE PRERATATION OF THE TERMINAL EVALUATION REVIEW REPORT EXCLUDING PIRs, TERMINAL EVALUATIONS, PAD.</p>