

Dear GEF Secretariat:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Work Program Submitted for Council Approval at the 43<sup>rd</sup> GEF Council Meeting . The United States welcomes the work program. We would like to provide the following comments, which are intended to further strengthen the work program.

**“Development of a National Network of Terrestrial and Marine Protected Areas Representative of the Comoros Unique Natural Heritage and Co managed With Local Village Communities” (GEF ID 5062)**

The United States recognizes the importance of conserving the exceptional marine and terrestrial biodiversity of the Comoros Islands and the outstanding potential that the Comoros Islands have to become a first class eco-tourism destination. Consequently, the United States supports efforts to protect the country’s unique natural heritage. That said, we do have concerns about the very ambitious scope of this project, both in terms of the financial scale of the project relative to the Comoros GDP, the current viability of tourism, as well as the capacity of the GOC to implement this ambitious project.

Specifically, we would like to know what steps have been taken by the project implementers to assure that a supportive business environment is in place to ensure that the “plan/strategy for developing high-end eco-tourism activities in PAs/MPAs” outlined in Output 2.3, is in fact realistic.

Furthermore, while we recognize the potential synergy between new protected areas and increased tourism in the Comoros, as the PIF notes, the Comoros face significant challenges in fostering a viable tourism industry. We would like to know how the project implementers envision the growth of this industry given the current limitations of tourism-related infrastructure and lack of business incentives to expand it, as well as the relative lack of safe air or sea inter-island transportation options.

**“Global Support Programme for Preparation of National Communications and Biennial Update Reports for non Annex I Parties under the UNFCCC”(GEF ID 5141); “Umbrella Programme for National Communication to the UNFCCC” (GEF ID 5119); and Sixth National Communication to the UNFCCC (GEF ID 5140)**

The United States strongly supports these three proposed programs to facilitate reporting to the UNFCCC.

**“Enabling China to Prepare Its Third National Communication (3NC) and Biennial Update Report to the UNFCCC” (GEF ID 4882)**

We were encouraged to see that aspects of this project focus on adaption and on a review of emissions inventory efforts in Hong Kong and Macao. The United States would like, however, to seek clarity on the timeframe for component 7 (support for preparation of the biennial report) to

understand if funding will be made available early on in the project given the submission deadline for the biennial report is Dec 2014 and the timeframe for the full project is Dec 2016 (48 months). We also request that the timeframe of support for component 7 be shortened so that the submission of the biennial report can take place by December 2014.

**“Strengthening the National Protected Areas System of Swaziland” (GEF ID 5065)**

The United States applauds the objectives of this proposed project to strengthen Swaziland’s system of National Protected Areas. We would like to share several comments and concerns with the intention of further improving the project. Firstly, we are concerned whether the GKOS will be able to fulfill the funding commitments indicated under the co-financing arrangement. We would also like to have greater assurance that the project will be able to build sufficient capacity in the Swaziland Nature Conservation Trust (SNTC) to ensure continued sustainability after the GEF project has concluded. We also suggest that, as the PAs are small in area, rather than working with SNTC, it might be more effective to focus on community and private reserve capacity building.

Finally, we would like to have greater clarity about the role that the SNTC will play in implementing Component 1 *New paradigm for PA management enables PA expansion and buffer threats removal through co-management* and suggest that Component 2 may not be essential to the overall objectives of the project.

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