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Terms of references

Job Title: National Coordinator and Biodiversity Specialist
Project Reference: Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into Moldova territorial planning policies and land-use practices (Project Preparation Phase)
Duration of Employment: February – September 2014
Contract type: Individual Contract
Expected workload: 57 working days

I. Background

The Government of Moldova has requested support from GEF to prepare the medium-sized project *"Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Moldova's Territorial Planning Policies and Land-Use Practices"* intended to remove, in an incremental manner, the existing barriers for mainstreaming biodiversity priorities into district territorial planning policies and land use practices. More specifically, at the national level the project aims to establishing an enabling environment for mainstreaming biodiversity into land use planning, compliance monitoring and enforcement and test at the local level models of biodiversity compatible spatial planning and land-use. Capacity building for successful mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation envisaged by the project shall also ensure proper participatory spatial planning (including conflict resolution).

The Preparation Grant for the Project *"Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Moldova's Territorial Planning Policies and Land-Use Practices"* shall establish the baseline, collate and analyze the primary and secondary information and outline the GEF increment for the project through a number of relevant studies and stakeholders consultation with a view to further develop the approved project concept into a fully formulated project document.

The final output of the project preparation phase will be an UNDP-GEF project document and GEF CEO Endorsement request and relevant baseline GEF Tracking tool ready for submission to UNDP and GEF.

Project description

The Republic of Moldova is located in the south-eastern part of Europe occupying a land-locked area of 3,384,300 ha. The country straddles three main European eco-regions: the Central-European mixed forests, the Pontic steppe, and the East European Forest steppe. The country has a rich biota relative to its size. Approximately 15% of the country remains under some form of natural vegetation cover, much of this in a degraded state. The majority of this natural vegetation cover comprises *Forest* habitats. Forests are located predominantly in the central region of the country, with the northern and the southern areas less forested. Forest coverage is estimated at 325,400 ha (~9.6% of the country). Natural *steppe* habitats (including meadows ecosystems) tend to occur predominantly in the north and the south of the country, and account altogether for about 65,000 ha (~1.9% of the territory). Semi-natural steppes and meadows, with rich genetic and species diversity yet used for livestock grazing, occupy about 10% of the country. Vegetation communities associated with the *aquatic ecosystems* – notably marshes in the lower reaches of the Prut and Dniester Rivers, and the southern river valleys - cover about 94,600 ha (~2.8% of the country). Some 3,000 rivers and streams, and 60 natural lakes, are distributed across the country, with more than 95% of the water circulation flowing into one of the two major rivers in Moldova - the Prut or Dniester. Moldova is rich in species diversity considering the absence of mountains and moderate variations in climate.

Currently the system of protected areas in Moldova covers 157,227 ha (or 4.65% of the country) of publicly owned land (state or local authorities). The protected areas that correspond to the IUCN classification system account for only 66,048 ha (or 1.96% of the country).

Most of the cropland outside protected areas is privately owned. Pastures, hay-fields and some smaller forest plots are owned by the village councils (i.e. are "communal ownership"). Massive tracts of forests are owned by the state, with some private and communal ownership of forests. The aforementioned representation of biodiversity creates the need to work at multiple scales and across large areas of global and national biodiversity pattern and process if global biodiversity targets are to be met.

The 4.65% of terrestrial biodiversity that is under formal protection is not representative of species and habitat diversity across the biomes, which means that effective biodiversity management outside protected areas is crucial to maintaining the ecological integrity of Moldova's biomes and ensuring that the wealth of biodiversity assets is conserved. This requires a landscape approach to biodiversity conservation working both within and beyond the boundaries of protected areas, to manage a mosaic of land and resource uses through protection, restoration and mainstreaming biodiversity management into production and sustainable use, in order to deliver ecological, economic and social benefits.

Agricultural land occupies about 75% of the total area of Moldova; land conversion and agricultural practices result in significant threats to biodiversity. The country's heavy reliance on agriculture continues to be a major threat to the integrity of the few remaining tracts of the relict subtropical steppes, wet steppes, dry steppes and river floodplains. Native steppe and steppe-associated wet meadows are being systematically converted to arable farm-land, used for unregulated livestock grazing, or afforested by the introduced black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*). Savanna steppes are almost completely lost. Dry steppes are under severe pressure from unregulated livestock (mostly cattle) grazing and the cessation of hay-making, which in some locations are necessary for the maintenance of rare grass species. Overall for the country, steppes are assessed to be at a stage when the reduction of pressures and their regulated management could still reverse the degradation trend (i.e. moderately degraded); yet, every year chances for this are declining. Soil erosion due to poor farming practices and improper grazing is a considerable problem with both direct and indirect adverse impacts on biodiversity. The lack of rotational grazing and unknown carrying capacity for sheep, goats, and cattle reduces soil cover, while animals trample stream banks adding to the problem. Although wet meadows are not readily plowed and converted to cropland as are the steppe habitats, most wet meadow ecosystems are being drained for subsequent arable farming, "improved" as pasture lands (e.g. seeding with non-native species that are preferred as forage), which is the main threat of Corncrake (*Crex crex*) as an example. Many wetlands are severely degraded, having been mowed and grazed intensively for decades, while others continue to make way for farmland. The excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers in the agriculture sector, coupled with the increased sediments in water due to soil erosion, have detrimental effects on aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity.

Moldovan forests were mostly cleared three times in the twentieth century and the remaining natural forests are largely the result of stump or root sprouts and considered by officials to be of poor quality and less stable than forests produced by regeneration from seed. There are no primary forests left in Moldova and for example, 80% of standing oak forests is of coppice origin. Moldova's forests complexes are highly fragmented with sizes of these fragments ranging between 5 to 1,500 hectares. This is mainly to do with the expansion of the agricultural production sector but infrastructure development has also contributed. Historic unsustainable forest management has also contributed to the current forest status in Moldova. This includes harvesting the most valuable species without properly managing their regeneration, with attendant impact on structure and species composition and afforestation and reforestation with species inappropriate to the site conditions. The need for fuel to heat homes is a substantial threat to the remaining forests in Moldova, while the spread of invasive alien species is a growing problem. The Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) – a dominant component in 38% of Moldovan forests – is invasive in the native forests and grasslands. Similarly, Boxelder (*Acer*

negundo) has become an aggressive invasive tree species along the Upper and Middle Prut River. In addition, as open pastures are degrading, local people are increasingly letting their animals enter into forests for grazing. The combined pressure on forests and neighbouring grasslands is the main contributing factor for the loss of nesting sites of the threatened Greater Spotted Eagle (*Aquila clanga*) and Saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*). Even though the forest nesting sites of these birds-of-prey remain safe in some areas, the grassland and meadows around the forests – their feeding grounds – often get plowed forcing the adult birds to relocate.

Despite the Government's reform efforts, the spatial/territorial planning framework is deficient. The **long term solution** lies in reforming the manner in which agricultural, forestry and other production activities are planned and regulated across different land units and tenure categories at the landscape scale—so as to avoid, reduce and mitigate the pressures leading to biodiversity loss. There are two types of barriers to achieving this long-term solution: (i) inadequate planning and enforcement framework and (ii) inadequate demonstrated experiences in spatial planning and biodiversity-compatible land management practices.

Against this background, the project will be be addressing the gaps in land planning and enforcement systems through development of relevant regulations, standards and legislation to accommodate biodiversity conservation objectives while the gap of limited coordination across sectors will be addressed by establishing a multi-stakeholder committee which will ensure a unified approach in the develoment, implementation and enforcement of land-use plans from the different ministries and departments. In addition, a monitoring system will be emplaced among the various regulatory agencies, assigning responsibilities based on comparative advantage, in order to evaluate acceptable limits of change in biodiversity-important areas. The gap of inadequate demonstrated experiences in spatial planning and biodiversity-compatible land management practices will be tackled through development and testing of biodiversity-compatible district spatial (land-use) plans in 2 districts of Moldova, relying on cross-sectoral working groups, GIS technologies for biodiversity mapping, identifiation of sites of conflict between biodiversity and human activities and others.

II. Scope of work and responsibilities

The responsibility of the National Coordinator and Biodiversity Specialist is to offer support to the International Lead Consultant to develop the relevant project's documentation and collate the necessary information/inputs needed for defining the Project Document that will be acceptable to the GEF. In addition, the National Coordinator, under the guidance of the International Lead Consultant, will coordinate the work of the national team of consultants (e.g. land use and pasture management, forest management and others identified).

Expected tasks

The key tasks of the consultant are as follows:

- Coordinate the work of the national consultants and liaise with the International Lead Consultant for realization of the work plan

- Support the International Lead Consultant in preparing the CEO Endorsement request and provide consolidated inputs to the UNDP Project Document, provide consolidated response to UNDP and GEF comments and liaise with the line ministries/LPAs when needed and upon UNDP request

- In discussion with line ministries/ LPAs, build on the description in the PIF of national baseline programs, relevant to the project, and serving as its co-financing, and present this analysis in a detailed table, using the suggested format provided by the international consultant in the draft UNDP project document framework

- Prepare Annex on the Training Output 1.5 in the area of participatory spatial planning with respect to biodiversity concerns – scope, target group, host institution, draft curricular, logistics and sustainability beyond project and on Training Output 2.4 focusing on biodiversity mainstreaming

- Under the guidance of the International Lead Expert initiate discussions with the relevant national stakeholders on development of the spatially based digital decision-making system for biodiversity conservation and together with national experts define the default parameters of the GIS system to be put in place.

    - In this line, the issues to be clarified at the PPG stage would around the hosting institution, appropriate layers, compatibility with the cadaster and other existing land use maps and systems currently used by institutions and connected to satellite, the technologies needed, and how regularly it needs to be updated. Cost identification for a functioning system will also be the concern of the preparation phase, as well as ownership and financing after the project end.

- Hold consultations with potential LPAs and further liaise with them to finalize selection of the two pilot districts including in terms of LPAs commitment for piloting of the project outputs at the implementation stage of the project.

- Secure the agreement/commitments of the LPA's for land allocation for planning and restoration activities.

- Define the criteria for district selection and profile these in terms of:

    - Brief administrative and population data, socio-economic context
    - List threats to biodiversity from territorial planning and territorial-planning related sectors and their root causes and against each of this list the biodiversity species and ecosystems affected. In identifying these guide by the IUCN Red List species as indicators as per GEF requirements, not only species of national importance. Define indicator species and ecosystems that will be used to measure the success of mainstreaming in each district.
    - Define measures that would need to be put in place to eliminate or mitigate the threats, justify provisioning of alternative livelihoods in relation to the identified threats and local capacity needs to implement them. Prepare the budget of the proposed mitigation measures and of identified alternative livelihoods to be shared between GEF funds and the co-financing.
    - Prepare a detailed TORs for setting biodiversity standards through species passport and habitat in each district as an Annex to Project Document
    - Prepare TORs for a study/ assessment of the economic values of biodiversity and ecosystem services in areas of high biodiversity areas or in critical areas within the target districts. This study, which will be undertaken during the early stages of project implementation, will be an important input into the development of spatial plans. It will also be used by local governments to broker public and private resources for increased funding towards mainstreaming biodiversity concerns. Attach the description and topographic/orthophoto and other relevant maps of the two pilot districts, as above, as Annex to the CEO and UNDP Project Document.
    - Together with the LPAs and under the guidance of the Lead International Expert identify the best option for the biodiversity compensation scheme in the pilot areas and jointly with the national team work out the mechanism/required agreements/technical details for its implementation in an Annex to the Project Document

- Identify the co-financing to be used at the implementation stage of the project

- Contribute to identification of technical and knowledge barriers, and of operational, political and administrative risks that might prevent from effective mainstreaming of biodiversity concerns into territorial planning and land-use practices and from implementing successfully the project. Coordinate finalization of the project risk matrix.

- Conduct and finalize Social and Environmental Screening of the project in accordance with UNDP rules and conduct public disclosure, if needed.

- Support the International Lead Expert in completing the required GEF SO-2 Tracking Tool (baseline) which will be further used to track the project progress and the Capacity Needs Assessment Tracking Tool.

- Analyze and propose a biodiversity monitoring system which would enable identification of acceptable level of change in biodiversity important areas in terms of which institution will host, financing and sustainability beyond the project, regularity of monitoring, monitoring methods to be used, how it will be used to monitor biodiversity results at the project implementation stage.

- Ensure organization of the validation workshop at the end of the project preparation phase.

The timeframe and duration of activities are estimated to be broken down as follows:

Activity	**Duration (estimated) / days**	**Estimated Timing and deadline***
Prepare the workplan of the national team with acceptable timeframes and expected outputs	2	February 2014
Coordinate the work of the national consultants	13	February-August 2014
Support in preparing the CEO Endorsement request and provide consolidated inputs to the UNDP Project Document, liaise with the line ministries/LPAs	10	February-beginning of May 2014
Prepare Annex on the Training Output 1.5 and on Training Output 2.4	3	February-May 2014
Discussions with the relevant national stakeholders on development of the spatially based digital decision-making system for biodiversity conservation and define the default parameters of the GIS system	4	February-May 2014
Selection of the two pilot districts, secure the agreement/commitments of the LPA's for land allocation for planning and restoration activities	12	February-May 2014
Identification of technical and knowledge barriers, of political and administrative risks that might prevent from effective mainstreaming of biodiversity concerns into territorial planning and land-use practices and from implementing successfully the project. Coordinate finalization of the project risk matrix	5	February-May 2014
Conduct and finalize the Social and Environmental Screening of the project	1	February-June 2014
Provide support for finalizing the required GEF SO-2 Tracking Tool	2	February-June 2014
Analyze and propose a biodiversity monitoring system	2	February-May 2014
Organization of the validation workshop	1	June 2014
Provide inputs to GEF Secretariat comments	2	September 2014

Activity	Duration (estimated) / days	Estimated Timing and deadline*
TOTAL working days	Approx.**57**	

*The proposed time frame will be discussed and coordinated with the International Lead Consultant.

Prior to approval of the Request for CEO Endorsement, UNDP Project Document, and GEF Tracking Tool, a draft version shall be submitted for comments to UNDP by mid-May 2014.

UNDP and the stakeholders will submit comments and suggestions within 10 working days after receiving the draft. It is envisaged that the finalized package of documents shall be submitted by mid-June 2014 to UNDP BRC and by mid-August to GEF Secretariat.

III. Management Arrangements:

Responsibility for Managing the Consultant

The consultant will work under guidance and is primarily reporting to the International Lead Consultant: Biodiversity Specialist and GEF Specialist and UNDP CO assigned officer.

Payment for Services

The Expert shall be paid in five installments upon submission and approval of deliverables, and certification by UNDP Moldova Programme Manager that the services have been satisfactorily performed.

Installment	Payment Amount
Prepare the workplan of the national team with acceptable timeframes and expected outputs	10%
Two pilot districts selected and profiling of the pilot area completed	20%
Acceptable consolidated inputs for the CEO Endorsement request and UNDP Project Document provided in a timely manner	30%
Organization of the validation workshop	10%
Finalization of GEF Request for CEO Endorsement and Project Document following inputs from UNDP Moldova, UNDP Regional Centre, and GEF Secretariat	30%

Responsibility for Expenses and their Reimbursement

The Consultant will be responsible for all personal administrative and travel expenses associated with undertaking this assignment including office accommodation, printing, stationary, telephone and electronic communications, report copies and maps and others identified.

IV. Requirements for experience and qualification

Academic Qualification

- Advanced university degree in natural resources management, biodiversity conservation, environmental planning, environmental economics and other related areas

Experience:

- At least 5 years of experience in developing projects related to biodiversity conservation and planning
- Extended coordination and team leading experience
- Experience working with UNDP and/or other international organizations on biodiversity conservation projects
- Previous experience of work with GEF biodiversity related projects will be an asset.

Competencies

- Strong interpersonal skills, communication and diplomatic skills, ability to work in a team
- Strong analytical, reporting and writing abilities
- Openness to change and ability to receive/integrate feedback

Language requirements:

- Fluent in written and oral communication in English and Romanian
- Knowledge of Russian will be a strong asset