

Kunming Biodiversity Fund

Independent Technical Advisory Group

Terms of Reference

Background

The Kunming Biodiversity Fund (KBF) is a Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MTPF) that was established under the leadership of Ministry of Environment and Ecology (MEE) China and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The KBF is led by an Executive Council (EC) consisting of three permanent members (China, UNEP and SCBD), three Member States (Cambodia, Colombia and Egypt), and two observer members (UNDP and the Global Environmental Environmental Facility).

The Kunming Biodiversity Fund aims to facilitate the successful implementation of the GBF at regional, national, subnational and local level by supporting developing countries to accelerate and upscale their actions for the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). It will seek complementarity with existing biodiversity funds to ensure it adds value and creates synergies with existing efforts. The initial funding is 1.5 billion Yuan (approx. 220 million USD at the time of agreement) from the MEE of China.

Governance

The KBF Multi-partner Trust Fund is governed on four levels:

- An International Secretariat hosted by UNEP and located at the SCBD offices in Montreal is responsible for the general operations and management of the fund.
- The Executive Council (EC) is the Fund's decision-making body, co-chaired by China and UNEP, and it is responsible for overall strategic guidance on the Partnership.
- The MPTF Office serves as the administrative agent in charge of financial and legal aspects.

- The Independent Technical Advisory Group (ITAG) serves as an advisory body bringing independent, impartial expert knowledge and advice on biodiversity conservation and environmental governance to the Fund. Its main purpose is to provide technical advice on monitoring, implementation and knowledge management, science and best practice, and economics and finance for implementation of effective biodiversity action. The EC may also request advice on additional technical matters. The ITAG advises the EC and is coordinated by the Secretariat.

Scope and specific functions

As a group, the ITAG shall:

- Act together, through the combined strengths of their individual professional contributions, to ensure the technical integrity, relevance and complementarity of the KBF activities;
- Help ensure scientific robustness in the planning and implementation of the KBF;
- Review, upon request, relevant KBF reports, project documents and other materials for technical merit and broad applicability; and
- Advise on the research, analysis and knowledge management of the fund.

In line with the overall purpose of the ITAG, the key functions of the experts, in their individual capacities, will be to:

- Bring their own expert advice and expertise as an individual, not representing their employer or any organisation or institution to which they may be affiliated;
- Assess the technical merits of project proposals submitted for financing, and, based on a set of agreed criteria and a proposal scoring system approved by the EC, evaluate and rank funding proposals;
- Review, as necessary, Calls for Proposals, policy papers, reports, and other documents to ensure technical quality, consistency and appropriateness;
- After each completed Call for Proposals, provide an analysis of the lessons learned from the review of the project proposals, including recommendations for the Secretariat, the Implementing Entities and the EC;
- Avail themselves for technical consultation on specific or general issues concerning the KBF as requested by the EC; and
- Provide written advice to the EC on technical matters concerning the KBF which require review.

The ITAG plays an important role in providing guidance in the technical and implementation aspects of the KBF, but it does not have any formal decision-making authority or fiduciary duties. Any advice provided by the ITAG to the EC or the Secretariat is non-binding.

Members of the ITAG must respect the impartiality and reputation of KBF Participating Organizations. Members have an ongoing obligation to disclose any activities that may give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest. Members of the ITAG are not employees or agents of the KBF or of its member institutions and shall not speak on behalf of, or represent, the Participating Organizations or the Fund, individually or collectively, to any third party. Members of the ITAG may not issue any publications on behalf of the KBF without the express permission of the Executive Council.

Expertise of the advisors

Reflecting the need for multi-disciplinary expertise, the ITAG is composed of experts and practitioners from relevant sectors and disciplines in academia, the private sector and civil society. Members represent a broad range of disciplines relevant to the KBF across science-, policy- and governance-related sectors, as needed – in particular from the following fields:

- Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems
- Environmental governance
- Environmental/ecological economics
- Systems analysis and transformation
- Social sciences and behaviour change
- Environmental justice and rights
- Ecosystem integrity, resilience and health
- Climate vulnerability and impacts on biodiversity
- Financing for biodiversity and/or nature
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Desirable Experience

- Working in multidisciplinary teams and initiatives
- Experience applying systems approaches

A maximum of 12 experts will compose the ITAG and serve in their personal capacities. The KBF EC will appoint each ITAG member pursuing balance across expertise, gender, regional representation and will strive to attract applicants from Indigenous Peoples, youth and local communities.

Operation

The Secretariat is responsible for organizing ITAG meetings and for providing all relevant background materials and administrative support needed for the operation of the ITAG and its meetings.

Information and documentation to which ITAG members may gain access in performing their duties on KBF-related activities is considered confidential and proprietary to the KBF and the parties collaborating with KBF stakeholders. Any matters not covered by these Terms of Reference or stated in a formal agreement shall be subject to discussion and agreement by the Executive Council.

The ITAG meets as needed to address the requests of the Executive Council, through the Secretariat, with meetings generally held virtually. Other work of the ITAG may be conducted by email with the Secretariat. It is expected that ITAG meetings are convened between 3 to 4 times per year, depending on need. Members of the ITAG may exceptionally be invited to attend meetings of the EC to provide expert advice to a specific discussion. ITAG members do not receive any remuneration for their work related to the KBF ITAG.

The working language of the ITAG is English. Written communication occurs between the ITAG and the KBF Secretariat by electronic means.

Selection and duration of appointment

A pool of experts is identified by the Secretariat through consultation with relevant organizations. ITAG members are selected by the EC with consideration of an adequate distribution of technical expertise, as well as geographical representation and gender balance. ITAG members are appointed to serve a 2-year term and may be eligible for reappointment. Members of the ITAG serve in their personal capacity and not as representatives of any institution, organization or government.

A Chairperson and a Vice Chairperson of the ITAG are appointed by the ITAG at the beginning of each 2-year term. A ITAG member may only serve one term as Chair or Vice-Chairperson.

Appointments to the ITAG, including the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, may be terminated at any given time by either the member or by the KBF EC. The EC can choose to terminate an appointment in cases of continuous non-engagement, such as after six months of inactivity or three consecutive unanswered communications.

All termination will be in line with the applicable letter of appointment signed by the Co-Chairs of the EC. Where a member is terminated, the EC may decide to appoint a replacement before the beginning of a new term, if deemed necessary.