

**Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund**  
No Objection Approval Pursuant to Section 2.03(c) of the Financing Agreement

16 July 2019

**Selection of WWF-Russia as the Regional Implementation Team  
for the Mountains of Central Asia Biodiversity Hotspot**

**1. Recommended Action Items**

The Donor Council is asked **to approve on a no-objection basis**:

1. The selection of WWF-Russia, with its subordinate partner, ARGO, as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the Mountains of Central Asia Biodiversity Hotspot.

The deadline for no-objection approval is **30 July 2019**.

**2. Background**

On 11 February 2019, CEPF requested that organizations interested in serving as the RIT for the Mountains of Central Asia Biodiversity Hotspot submit an expression of interest by 27 March 2019 in order to pre-qualify to submit a formal proposal. Thirteen organizations submitted an expression of interest by the closing date and were invited to submit full proposals. The Request for Proposal (RfP) was released on 1 April 2019. The RfP placed the maximal value of proposals at \$1,200,000 per the approved Spending Authority for this Strategic Direction in the Ecosystem Profile. Six organizations submitted valid proposals by the closing date of 13 May 2019: ACTED, the Biodiversity Conservation Fund of Kazakhstan, Panthera, Wildlife Conservation Society, a consortium of WWF-Russia and ARGO, and Zoï Environment Network. The CEPF Secretariat evaluated these proposals and ranked WWF-Russia first. The Secretariat then shared the full proposals and its evaluation summary with the Working Group.

On 16 July 2019, the Working Group met to discuss the assessment presented by the Secretariat. The Working Group agreed with the assessment and authorized preparation of this request. During the presentation, the Working Group expressed its satisfaction with the quality and breadth of the competition. The Working Group advised the CEPF Secretariat to ensure, in negotiations prior to award, that WWF-Russia address issues of balancing coverage of area with impact of grants, safeguards, long-term visions and exit strategies, mitigation strategies for difficulties in receiving reimbursement of funds from grantees, and aligning WWF's goals with those of CEPF. After discussion of these issues, the Working Group members agreed to recommend to the Donor Council the selection of WWF-Russia, with ARGO as a subordinate partner, as RIT for the Mountains of Central Asia Biodiversity Hotspot.

The documents provided to the Working Group through this review process are available for Donor Council review at the following link and are listed below.

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/h1xbmx42hm5i4a7/AACG4BIdYVWDEuLzV6b7SmSNa?dl=0>

1. Attachment 1: **Call for Proposals**, 1 April 2019
2. Attachment 2: Proposal of 13 May 2019 from **ACTED**
3. Attachment 3: Clarification questions sent to **ACTED** on 6 June 2019 and response from **ACTED** on 20 June 2019
4. Attachment 4: Proposal of 13 May 2019 from **BCFK**
5. Attachment 5: Proposal of 13 May 2019 from **Panthera**
6. Attachment 6: Proposal of 13 May 2019 from **WCS**
7. Attachment 7: Clarification questions sent to **WCS** on 6 June 2019 and response from **WCS** on 20 June 2019
8. Attachment 8: Proposal of 13 May 2019 from **WWF-Russia**
9. Attachment 9: Clarification questions sent to WWF-Russia on 6 June 2019 and response from WWF-Russia on 20 June 2019
10. Attachment 10: Proposal of 13 May 2019 from **Zoï**
11. 3 WG60 Selection of Mountains of Central Asia RIT (*summary of review and recommendations by the Secretariat*)
12. Working Group 60.16 July 2019.pdf (*PowerPoint presentation to Working Group on 16 July*)

### **3. Next Steps**

With approval of WWF-Russia by the Donor Council, the Secretariat will begin negotiations in August with the goal of contract preparation and signature in September, leading to a 1 October 2019 start-date for the RIT grant and a formal commencement of CEPF's investment in the region.